‘Busy Working with Materials’

Transposing Form,
Re-exposing Medardo Rosso

Damian Taylor, St. Edmund Hall, University of Oxford
DPhil Fine Art, Trinity term 2015

Abstract

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This thesis examines how making extends artists’ thoughts beyond their conceptions. Central to this is consideration of how an artist’s statements and their work relate: this thesis argues that the relationship is neither of identity nor contradiction, but of a productive tension from which emerges a richer understanding of thought. A similar approach underscores this doctorate’s relationship of studio and written components, both of which desire self-sufficiency. The studio work consists of discrete yet mutually informing series, all engaged with the specificity of a moment of exposure, whether here and now or recording a past moment. The notion of ‘documentation’ underscores these works, which include large chemical photographs, high-definition video, cyanotypes and extensive exploration of casting to reveal latent images. The written component is a thorough study of the various instances of Medardo Rosso’s sculpture *Ecce Puer*, offering art-historical and theoretical grounding of hands-on making as a way pressing cultural issues inhere in a work at a more fundamental level than understood by its contemporaries or maker. The first chapter locates Rosso in his historical milieu. Chapter 2 assesses the elements constituting *Ecce Puer*; it argues that no definitions of a ‘work’ adequately encompass these, and coins the term ‘complex work’ to designate artworks indivisibly singular and plural, concrete and abstract. Chapter 3 offers phenomenological interpretation of Rosso’s confused writings, illuminating them through Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s late philosophy but understanding Rosso’s thought as inadequate to the complexity of his work. Chapter 4 examines Rosso’s photography, specifically his photography of photographs, connecting what this achieves to his phenomenology. Chapter 5 introduces a key notion of ‘friendship’ to understand how the connections between instances of *Ecce Puer* became ‘meaningful’. Having offered a fundamentally new interpretation of Rosso’s project, chapter 6 extends Michael Fried’s history of French painting to relocate Rosso within early twentieth-century art.

Foreword

Introduction to the Doctorate

'Thesis' and 'dissertation'

The provisional idea for this doctorate was suggested by C. S. Lewis's comments on friendship in *The Four Loves* (1960). My motivating questions could perhaps be reduced to: across artworks, how are *meaningful* relationships established? How do these inhere in the work as apprehended by the viewer? And how through a work's production do they arise? A key suggestion threading through the dissertation is that meaningfulness is produced or revealed by essaying a common point using varied materials and conflicting speeds of working. As we shall see, Medardo Rosso's photographs re-veil and re-reveal his sculptures; new casts shed new light on prior works; photographs assume a blatant materiality to undermine the materiality of their sculptural subjects: sculpture, photography and words antagonise and enrich one another. Rosso was an artist who emphasised the creativity of making; as he wrote in a late letter, which lends this thesis its title: 'I am busy working with materials … I have done work not yet done by celebrities with every resource available to them' (1996 p. 290). His results were not premeditated; they were the unforeseeable fruit of physical inquiry, of making. The interplay of different materialities is not a means to an end. Nor is it subsequently translatable into another medium, or into some lingua franca of theory and practice. The connections between elements are tacit and effective only insofar as they remain specific to their materiality, their recalcitrant otherness to what will be dubbed their 'friends'.

I shan't offer Rosso's practice as an unreserved exemplar of practice-led research, yet the way in which his theories of art and vision relate to his works will be consistently understood as a productive dialogue. Given this, it is important to note that whilst both artworks and writings have clear reciprocity of influence and are fascinating in themselves, on key issues they contradict. That they are able to contradict so successfully is, in part, owing to their individual self-sufficiency – a self-sufficiency it is hoped this dissertation shares, that it may enter into a more productive dialogue with my work.

Perhaps if Rosso could have reconciled the contradictions between his works and his theoretical statements it would have led to a stronger body of theoretical writing. I doubt it would have resulted in better artworks and I doubt it would have led to as rich and still-resonant an oeuvre. Both claims are integral to the methodology of this doctorate and I can prove neither. Both claims sit awkwardly with the DPhil handbook's demand for studio work to be 'clearly presented in relation to the argument of the written thesis' and 'set in its relevant theoretical, historical, or critical context'. However, the theories of parthood and 'friendship' which will emerge from discussion of Rosso will offer lenses through which to view the relationship of theory and practice on at least three levels: within Rosso's practice, as explored in this thesis's dissertation;[1] as a doctoral thesis developing from my practice, explored *between* my studio work and the dissertation; and, more broadly, as an approach which might pertain to other practice-led doctorates and to fine art research more generally.

The nature of the relationship between a theoretical body of knowledge and an artistic oeuvre will be returned to following the dissertation in the afterword, which will also develop notions of 'practice-led' and 'thesis'. It is positioned after the main dissertation to allow the theoretical and art-historical thought developed through Rosso to inform and be inflected by the discussion.

A narrow focus?

Whether or not this dissertation can be said to focus on a single work is debatable and this debate is an important theme of the dissertation. Either way, the project was always grounded in my desire to focus as completely as possible on a very limited topic. As will become clear when discussing Rosso, this approach can prompt a very confused interplay between narrow focus and extreme range. To develop the lens metaphor, it is as though a lens's iris had been stopped down as far as possible. I.e., the smaller aperture, rather than promoting a limited depth of field, has the opposite effect: although far less light enters (i.e. things take longer), the light which does pass through the lens is absolutely focused.

It is necessary to highlight the increased depth of field which results from a decreased aperture, especially given that the accusation of specialisation, leading to intellectual myopia, seems to dog the professionalisation of research

1 'Thesis' I understand to encompass the entirety of the submission for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, consisting of a dissertation (this volume), a volume developed from documentation of my work (submitted as a .pdf), and physical artworks, which together form one complex entity. 'Dissertation' refers only to the written component. More precisely, the dissertation is the written component of this volume numbered with Arabic numerals; that in Roman (i.e. this section and the afterword) are parts of the thesis not the dissertation. This is clearly not a perfect division, given that the afterword requires the reference list which is numbered as part of the dissertation, etc.

implicit in a doctorate.[2] Throughout my DPhil seminars I have attempted to highlight an understanding of 'focus' opposed to simple limitation. Reflecting upon my research I come back to a set of positions I've encountered, leading back many years. About the only part of *Tom Brown's School Days* I remembered after nearly twenty years was the narrator's early comment: 'I only know two English neighbourhoods thoroughly, and in each, within a circle of five miles, there is enough of interest and beauty to last any reasonable man his life' (Hughes 1896 p. 7). Frank Auerbach, a dogged explorer of a motif, is the first twentieth-century artist about whom I cared, and one whose formal connections to Rosso, although undeveloped in the following, have stimulated me throughout. A similar logic of the local pervades John Constable's work, which I've always known and which has clear relevance to my current practice. As an 1830 reviewer put it, Constable 'appears to have fed his genius, like a tethered horse within a small circle of his homestead' (quoted in Hill 1985 p. 26). An analogous position is memorably and rather beautifully articulated by David Foster Wallace in *The Pale King*, regarding a chained dog (2011 p. 119).

The importance of these influences isn't their championing of the limited, but the profound resonances this focus promotes. A paradigmatic use of a well-honed understanding of the local to cast light on something larger is Miss Marple, specifically as played by Joan Hickson: 'she knows the world only through the prism of that village and its daily life; by knowing the village so thoroughly, she seems to know the world' (*The Body in the Library*, 1984).

In the context of a doctorate, the greatest influence I've returned to is Joseph Knecht, the protagonist of Hermann Hesse's *The Glass Bead Game* – a work which weaves in and out of the background of my investment in the doctorate. In the rarefied intellectual community in which Knecht lives, students, after their years of prescribed education, are given a period (for Knecht, the fairly standard three years) in which they can explore a specific area of their choosing. It is the convention to select and explore a theme or motif which informs the community's 'glass bead game' – a synthesis of varied human knowledge, in which themes from diverse fields (philosophy, music, linguistics, etc.) are stated and developed through increasingly complex and elegant analogies. Rather than studying an intellectual theme of the game, or its formal structure, Knecht decides instead to unpick and pursue to their deepest roots the specific details of the individual themes which characterised a single instance of the game. This unique approach greatly changes Knecht's understanding of the game. Beyond this, the apparently esoteric knowledge he gained during his research became unexpectedly relevant to his life's development.

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2 There is some truth in this accusation, no doubt, and most people have their own corroborating anecdotes: I have known entire years of undergraduate fine artists, whose work spans the breadth of contemporary art, each having a bespoke potpourri of Deleuze foisted upon them as the most appropriate thing to read by a soon-to-complete doctoral candidate.

In the studio this emphasis on the local, this belief that the local can find relevance to the bigger picture, is something of a matter of faith. The dissertation is an opportunity to review a similar faith shown by another artist and to subject their work to considered and critical examination. This is undertaken in the belief that there is always rather more going on than meets the eye at once and that the crossed paths between making, looking and writing can sustain the revelation of a very different understanding of a work, one which can resonate within and between these approaches.

Notes on referencing

Words: Medardo Rosso's writings are much cited in the dissertation. With few exceptions I quote translations collected in a single volume (Moure ed. 1996). As such, when quoting Rosso from this source I've deemed it as clear and more elegant to omit the volume date from quotations of Rosso's writings, where it is explicit that I am quoting Rosso. Part of the motivation for this is to free the parenthesis: in considering the development (and repetition) of Rosso's thought, the date of original publication is of far greater interest and, when not directly mentioned in the main text, is given in square brackets after the page reference.

Images: To keep pages uncluttered a reference to all images is given at the foot of the spread, with full details collected in the reference section at the end of the dissertation. A key concern of this dissertation (and a long-standing pre-occupation of my practice) is the documentation and reproduction of objects and images. Beyond the issue of what is reproduced and how, I have found it impossible to provide a referencing system which I feel is adequate to the task of presenting Rosso's works. Whereas reference to images of works not by Rosso, and to specific reproductions of Rosso's sculptures – either by the artist or by another photographer – are offered as a list of figures, where I refer to an instance of Rosso's *Ecce Puer* I have resorted to a different indexing system. In this, even when a specific view of a Rosso work is presented in the text, the reference to it is the same as to the sculpture as presented in the collection of images in the final chapter. I cannot fully justify this irregular approach, which may seem conceptually pedantic or simply misguided, but either way confusing. Initially its unconventional form may be off-putting, yet I believe it more adequate to the complexity of Rosso's art and ideals than the alternative of having all in-text images cited in the same way. It would certainly be peculiar if a work that strained the boundaries of how one discusses the nature of a work would happily lend itself to the conventions of how one would visually represent one.

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For their patience, insight and support throughout my time at Oxford I cannot offer thanks enough to my supervisors, Professor Maria Chevska and Professor Brandon Taylor. Both endured various species of my stubbornness with remarkably good grace. Dr Anthony Gardner was an invaluable Director of Graduate Studies, treating research as something which defined as much as it conformed to the conventions of a doctorate.

This doctorate would not have been possible without the support of my department, college, and university. Jason Gaiger was my college advisor and head of department for two years, and was wonderfully supportive despite my occasional impertinences. Brian Catling proved an oddly reassuring presence. Jon Roome and Simon Lewis offered invaluable technical support. No administrative matters have been delayed; speaking to students at other institutions I realise the rarity and colossal value of this and I extend my gratitude to Jeremy Moyse and to all the staff in the Ruskin office. I owe great thanks to my colleagues on the DPhil for their support and stimulation, and also to those on the undergraduate programme.

Access to Rosso's works has been crucial to this project. At ca' Pesaro, Venice, I am most grateful to Laura Poletto and to the director, Dr Silvio Fuso, for taking the time to show me the Rossos out of hours, affording me the privilege of photographing them in quiet. In Milan, my thanks to Alessandro Oldani; in Edinburgh, Shona Corner; at Harvard, Michael Dumas; and in Piacenza, Ambra Visconti. The Boijmans exhibition of Rosso, Brancusi and Man Ray (2014) offered a rare opportunity to view many of Rosso's photographs alongside his sculptures. My thanks to curator Francesco Stocchi and director Sjarel Ex for support, discussion and tea.

My research would not have been possible without the funding of the AHRC. Beyond this, my research was augmented by three months as an AHRC visiting fellow at the Yale Center for British Art, researching Constable's cloud studies. To those at Yale, my thanks to Martina Droth for offering a different perspective on late nineteenth-century sculpture, and to Ed Town, Claire

Shepherd, Lars Kokkonen, Mark Aronson, Lisa Ford amongst many others, for a great many things.

Whilst in America I had the opportunity of seeing the Barzio plaster *Ecce Puer* in the major Rosso exhibition at the Center for Italian Modern Art (CIMA, 2014-15). My thanks to director Heather Ewing for encouragement and lunch, and, for permission to photograph this work, to Danila Marsure Rosso.

At CIMA I had the pleasure of attending a conference organised by Sharon Hecker, whose depth and rigour of scholarly attention to Rosso I can't pretend to emulate. We had independently been undertaking research on each iteration of a single 'work' – hers, *Bambino ebreo*, another four-year-old boy. Subsequent meetings in New Haven and London have been a stimulating pleasure. More than anything, Sharon's openness to sharing her research and her interest in the artistic side of my project restored faith in art history and, more especially, Rosso studies.

Similarly, I'd like to thank Emily Pulitzer, whom I met around this time. Her long association with Rosso's works, her interest in new research in the area, and unflagging alertness at conferences, are all inspiring.

In the first year of this doctorate a solo show at Museum Beelden aan Zee, The Hague, offered the opportunity to rethink my work in relation to sculpture. My thanks to all the staff and to the director, Jan Teeuwisse, for his ongoing encouragement.

Metaphorical considerations of friends and relations are intrinsic to this thesis; real-life counterparts were no less intrinsic to its development. I owe an incalculable debt to my family for coping with the youngest's waywardnesses. Over the years my artistic development saw most areas of my father's house lightly destroyed – from garden to garage to bathtub (let alone 'my' room). The laptop on which I wrote my application to Oxford I borrowed from Nathaniel, with the promise of its return within about a month; the computer gave up the ghost as I was completing the dissertation's final draft. Benedict has always been a remarkably generous and thorough proofreader. His wedding and honeymoon coincided with my submission date, and the errors which follow I dedicate to his, and Pamela's, felicity. I have no doubt they will be very happy together.

This project has been greatly aided by friends who have lent me their thoughts and things: my thanks to Richard Bevan, Ed Atkins, Luke Burton, Qas Ashfaq, Melissa and Rosanna, Mali Morris, Hidde van Seggelen, Bea Schulz, Jessica Lawrence, Virginia Verran, Helen Plummer, and to Andy Holden for drawing my attention to Erin Shirreff's Rosso-based work.

The animation of matter by the unfathomable wonder of light permeates Rosso's work. Few have had as deep and playfully reverent an engagement with light as Roger Ackling, whose work and presence offered my understanding of art so much, especially in the first year of this doctorate. He is greatly missed.

This doctorate was motivated by a desire to explore the ever-mysterious depths of what once seemed knowable; for this I am indebted to its greatest influence and first reader, May, who has given me so much during these years.

Lastly, for nobody have I dearer regard or greater thanks than Tash, a sculptor who brings to this world life.

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1. Work to Practice

Medardo Rosso

Medardo Rosso (Turin 1858–Milan 1928) produced his first sculptures in 1881–1882 (*Bersagliere* (1881–1882); *Il birichino* (1882); *Locch* (1882)). It is testament to the high regard in which Rosso continually held his earliest works that, spanning his lifetime, he recast *Il birichino* at least eight times, the last known being in 1919. Such use of reproduction to deny the closure of a work was to define Rosso's practice.

After expulsion from the Brera Academy in 1883, Rosso remained in Milan, associating with the *Scapigliatura democratica* – a loose affiliation of anarchists, socialist poets, artists and thinkers.[1] In 1889 he moved to Paris (where he had spent half a year in 1886), befriending artists Auguste Rodin and Edgar Degas, and collectors Henri Rouart and, later, long-standing supporter and collector Etha Fles. In 1895 he had constructed in his Paris studio a small foundry, allowing himself complete control of the casting process. From the turn of the century until his death his life became increasingly itinerant, travelling throughout Europe, accompanying exhibitions to Vienna, London, through The Netherlands, Germany, France and Italy. His final decade was spent almost entirely in Italy. From 1900 onwards Rosso produced only one 'new' work, 1906's *Ecce Puer*. From then until his death twenty-two years later he engaged solely in recasting and photographically reproducing works, drawing, writing and other typically subordinate activities.[2]

As the only work to have been modelled after Rosso's comprehensive turn to photographic exploration, *Ecce Puer* is uniquely relevant in understanding Rosso's artistic development. It is the work in which the artist's experiences with photographic printing and manipulation could most fully be expected to affect all stages of the work's creation, from conception and

1 For more on the history of this affiliation, see Caramel 1988 p. 20.

2 Biographies of the artist abound, Mola 2007 pp. 149–156 offers a concise, recent, overview. A fairly comprehensive bibliography is also included, pp. 165–175.

modelling through to reproduction in sculpture and photography. *Ecce Puer* will form the major focus of this dissertation. However, in order to understand this work's relevance, it is necessary to situate it within a broader outline of Rosso's practice and its interpretation, which is the subject of this chapter.

At the turn of the century Rosso's reputation as a sculptor was, perhaps, second only to Rodin's. In 1904 the influential critic and art historian Julius Meier-Graefe wrote in his monumental *Modern Art*: 'Rosso represents a great intelligence … whose perceptions have perhaps been keener than those of any of his predecessors, and who has had the courage to act upon them; the only artist in our time who has not been depressed by compromise' (1908 pp. 22–3). Later Emile Zola, on Rodin's death in 1917, referred to Rosso as the 'greatest living sculptor' (see Hecker 1999 pp. 47–8). His influence on fellow artists was also felt; Umberto Boccioni's 'The Futurist Sculpture' (1912) refers to 'the genius of Medardo Rosso, an Italian, the only great modern sculptor …' (1996 p. 223). Rosso had a marked influence on several other luminaries including Constantin Brancusi, André Masson and Alberto Giacometti (see Hecker 2003 pp. 27–8).

After his death Rosso's works continued to be exhibited, with solo exhibitions in 1929, 1946 and at the 1950 Venice Biennale.[3] In the early 'sixties Rosso's reputation underwent an apparent *rinascimento* in the English-speaking world, beginning with 1958's accurately titled *The First Exhibition in America of Sculpture by Medardo Rosso*, Peridot Gallery, New York, and culminating in 1963's retrospective exhibition at Museum of Modern Art, New York. This exhibition was accompanied by a monographic study authored by the exhibition organiser, Margaret Scolari Barr, which remained the standard English text on the artist for several decades. The momentum of the early 'sixties wasn't sustained – as Hilton Kramer put it in 1989, Rosso 'regularly goes into eclipse' (Kramer 1989).

The past two decades have seen renewed scholarly interest in Rosso, both in Europe and the United States, with increasing attention paid to Rosso's innovative uses of the reproductive techniques of casting and photography. The past ten years have witnessed a flurry of exhibitions and new publications intending to establish the dates and scope of those sculptures and photographs produced directly by Rosso, developed from research conducted by Paola Mola in collaboration with Museo e Archivio Medardo Rosso, Barzio, Italy.

3 For a chronology of Rosso's exhibitions see Moure ed. 1996 pp. 303–5.

Work: Sculpture

Making

From 1881 until his death nearly fifty years later Rosso produced approximately forty discrete 'works'. With notable exceptions – *Impressione d'omnibus* (1884–5), *Paris la nuit* (1896–8), *La conversazione* (1899), *Dr. Fles* (1900) and a handful of commissioned funerary monuments dating from the mid-1880s – Rosso's sculptures were small, eschewed clear narrative or allegory, and his subjects were limited to at most two people, more often one. Rosso repeatedly emphasised a desire that his works present an 'impression' drawn from life – 'we ourselves are the real saints. More women and fewer Madonnas in art!' (in Moure ed. 1996 p. 193).[4]

Rosso produced sculptures using flexible gelatine moulds which allowed multiple near-identical casts in bronze,[5] plaster and plaster-filled wax.[6] Unique

4 The catalogue for the 1996 Rosso exhibition at Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea, Santiago de Compostela, contains the most comprehensive collection of Rosso's writings in English translation. Throughout this dissertation direct quotations from Rosso will be given as simple page references to this work, unless from another source or I deem there to be any ambiguity over the source, in which case I will offer fuller reference.

5 'Bronze' is used here for conventional familiarity; of the two Rosso sculptures whose alloy compositions have been analysed, zinc predominated over tin, making them technically 'brasses' (research undertaken by Sharon Hecker, unpublished and ongoing).

6 See Lie (2003) for a thorough, illustrated account of the casting processes Rosso employed. Derek Pullen (2003) details the extent to which study of Rosso has continually maintained that he covered or modelled his waxes, rather than casting them. Pullen's examples extend into the 1990s, yet, still, in 2003 one finds Ann Dumas writing: 'He [Rosso] left large pieces of plaster used in the original modelling wedged into the finished bronze … Degas roughly working the wax with his fingers and thumbs and Rosso slapping it over a plaster base' (Dumas 2003 p. 29). In 2007 Paola Mola, one of today's pre-eminent Rosso scholars commented: 'it was only in Paris that Rosso covered *Ruffiana* in wax' (Mola 2007 p. 19). Even in 2014, in the catalogue of the Boijmans van Beuningen's *Brancusi, Rosso, Man Ray – Framing Sculpture* exhibition, Francesco Stocchi claims: 'Rosso dipped plaster in wax, and successively layered wax by hand, creating distinct sculptures from the same cast' (Stocchi and van der Coelen 2014 n. 3, p. 74). Somewhat perversely, Stocchi then directs the reader to Lie's study, which clearly demonstrates the contrary case. Hecker's essay 'Fleeting Revelations', extends the argument for why such an assumption was desirable for critics (2008a). It may seem pedantic to call to account such errors but, as will be evident later, understanding the works' facture clarifies many further issues.

amongst prominent late nineteenth-century sculptors, Rosso produced many of his bronzes himself, having a small forge constructed in his Paris studio in 1895 (see Mola 2007 pp. 31–2; p. 151). From this point onwards Rosso's use of materials became ever more experimental; not only in his alloys and patinas for bronzes but in his varnished and patinated plaster casts and in the production of wax casts with plaster armatures, for which he became, perhaps, best known. Prior to the nineteenth century the fleshy lifelikeness of wax had made it a widely exploited material in portrait busts, death masks and polychromed sculptures.[7] 1881 saw Degas's infamous wax figure *La petite danseuse de quatorze ans*. Rosso's use of wax is different from these: it is cast as though for use in the intermediate stage of lost-wax bronze casting. Similarly, a plaster impression after the clay model was the first stage in traditional bronze casting, the plaster being a stable form from which to produce subsequent moulds. Rosso's plasters typically (although not exclusively) received a surface finish, giving the material an appearance and status significantly different from plaster left in the state ready for bronze casting.[8]

It is clear that Rosso's works are developments of traditional sculptural techniques; they begin a thorough and *intensive* consideration of his practice, attending to what exists and how it could be otherwise. They don't represent an artist turning to a different medium simply to achieve a sought visual effect, or for its novelty, as Jane Becker suggests: 'for Rosso experimental techniques had associations of defiance and independence' (1999a p. 160). Rather, Rosso's use of wax is not novel but truly *radical*, radically inquisitive – that is, '*radix*, *radicalis* relating to or forming the root, original, primary' (OED). Viewed in this light one sees Rosso's use of materials instantiating a project of reconsidering his works' potential, a project which would be ever-enriched throughout his career.

Rosso also exploited the theatrical potential of casting, organising exclusive evenings with guests invited for a glass of champagne and to witness the process of creation. Accounts tell of the drama of this scene, with the giant form of Rosso in his leather protective clothing and mask, the molten metal, etc. 'Rosso … stokes the fire with a strong and long iron rod … gas and fumes escape

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7 For a recent study of the use and re-emergent interest in was as an artistic medium, see Hanneke Grootenboer's 'Introduction: On the Substance of Wax' (2013). For a study of wax portraiture contemporary with Rosso, see Julius von Schlosser's 1911 *History of Portraiture in Wax* (2008).

8 Indeed, such a finish was perhaps necessary for the work to be read as a 'work', given that at this time exhibiting plasters as a provisional example of a conception's potential in bronze was much more customary than exhibiting finished works: 'When visitors to the Salons of the turn of the century went into the rooms where sculptures were displayed, they would have been struck by the undifferentiated whiteness of the plaster in which almost every piece was presented. The exhibits were lined up, as if in a warehouse, waiting to catch the eye of a prospective purchaser who might pay to have the plaster cast in bronze or carved in marble' (Curtis 1999 p. 107).

– he swallows, coughs, spits and stokes. He looks like a Cyclops … the molten metal flows with blue flames' (Jehen Rictus quoted in Hecker 2003 p. 23).

Drawing from Rictus's account Sharon Hecker argues that Rosso was 'the only artist of his time to locate the creative moment of sculpture in the act of casting' (2003 p. 23). Although this is certainly correct, it is important to stress a broader claim: *Rosso was the only artist of his time to emphasise the creative act as permeating all stages of making*. As he writes in his first published essay (1902): 'I believe a work of art can only be done by he who has conceived it'; and in 1907: 'Is it possible that a work of art is not the property of an idea, and that any hand but that whose owner has conceived this idea should be able to express it?' (p. 141)[9] This unprecedented advocacy of attending to all stages in artistic production is evident in Rosso's consistent attacks on Rodin, i.e.: 'I don't know which of these practitioners collaborated in finishing the works of Rodin while he was alive … Of course, this master never lacked such gentlemen: his studio was always full of them' (p. 204); and 'even today such-and-such a celebrity enlists the collaboration of mechanical workers to manufacture here one portion, there another, of a material mass which is in the case so justly described as a "statue" – the expression of the negation of life' (p. 141).[10]

Indexicality

Emphasising that all sculptures are produced by casting is to emphasise the indexical connection between all sculptures of the same subject. Although the term 'index' has at least several decades' history in discussions of art, clarification may be helpful. In the latter half of the nineteenth century Charles Sanders Peirce developed the tripartite division of the sign's mode of

9 Rosso's views on the centrality of making find echo in those of Adolf Hildebrand in *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture* (first published in German in 1893); Hildebrand argues that 'since Art does not depend on a mere knowing, but on doing which puts this knowledge into practice, a treastise on artistic problems can be fruitful only when it follows the artistic process in its practical as well as its theoretical aspects. We must strive to understand clearly the connection between the artist's inner mental process and the realization of his ideas in his work' (1907 p. 15). Hildebrand was himself a sculptor, although in a vein of neo-Classical clarity remote from Rosso's works, and does not emphasise casting or reproductive processes.

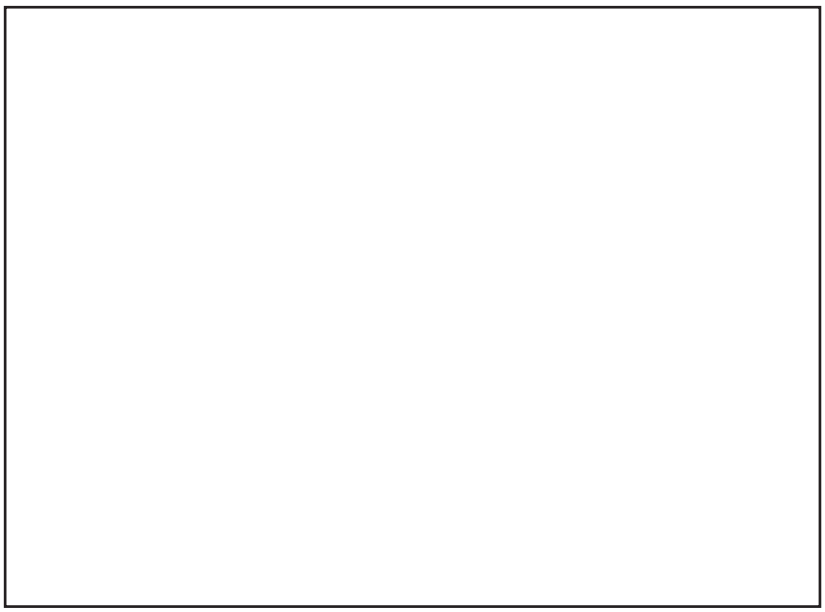
10 As Penelope Curtis notes, the dependency on the production-line techniques in sculpture resulted from the vast proliferation of public monuments in late nineteenth-century France. She sees the first few years after Rodin's death as the time of serious questioning of this practice: 'It took perhaps fifty years to take stock of what such progress meant, to slow down and turn around this relentless machine, but by the 1920s the most typical questions in sculpture involved escaping the bit-part efficiency of the production line and reversing the whole process to oneself' (1999 p. 75). Although these artists typically turned from modelling and casting to carving in stone and wood, Rosso stands as a prescient figure in reconsidering the artist's relationship to technology.

signification into symbol, icon and index.[11] Roughly, iconicity depends on resemblance/similarity; symbolism on convention/usage; and indexicality on physical or existential connection. This isn't a division of signs into three groups; the division is internal and non-exclusive – a 'perfect' sign would equally blend all three. Margaret Iversen concisely notes: '[Peirce] described the index as the most 'forceful' type of sign, in that it establishes an existential or causal link to its referent, directing, focusing and heightening attention. A pointing finger and the demonstrative pronoun "this" are indices of this kind … While a pointing finger or a shadow are simultaneous with and normally adjacent to their objects, most indexical marks are traces of something that was present in the past' (2012 §. 3): a classic example being the footprint of 'Man Friday' – a *striking* proof of existence. Rosalind Krauss's 'Notes on the Index' (1977a; 1977b) attempts to use both the indexicality of the demonstrative pronoun (dubbed, after Roman Jakobson, 'shifter'), and of the trace, to survey prevailing trends in the art of that time. It is the latter use – the causal connection between a referent and reference – which will inform this study. This is also this sense of indexicality which has pervaded photographic theory from at least Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida*, to which this study will return.

11 It seems 1867's 'On a New List of Categories' was Peirce's first explication of this division, although what will become 'icon' is given as 'likeness' and the term 'sign' is used interchangeably with 'index' to mean 'those whose relation to their objects consists in a correspondence in fact' (2008 vol. II p. 56).

Oeuvre: Photography

Apparently Archivio Rosso contains around 350 photographic prints and 285 negatives taken by or for Rosso (see Mola 2006 p. 18).[12] Despite this evident commitment to the medium Rosso maintained an explicit hostility to photography, at least as practised in general. He writes in 1927: 'I have never known worse criminals than photographers … Enormous enemy of seeing' (p. 295). However, artists' use of photography was well established in Rosso's time, and by 1883, only a year into his career, Rosso had used it as, in effect, an inventory of his works (fig. 1). It is a much reproduced image, being the frontispiece of Luciano Caramel's 1988 study and prominent in Hecker's reading of reproduction in Rosso (2003).



12 Francesca Bacci's catalogue of the negatives in the Rosso archive numbers just shy of two hundred (2004 pp. 247–9). The disparity between accounts is hard to explain, not least not having been granted access to the archive myself. Mola notes elsewhere the difficulty of assessing the photographic oeuvre, which required 'the systematic sifting of the archival remnants carried out in 2005' (2007 p. 33).

Above, fig. 1.

Centrally placed, though not facing the camera, a cast of *Locch* dominates. A second cast of this work features in the left of the photograph, being the highest of the standing pieces. Next to this, the artist himself is semi-present, insinuating himself into the *mis en scène* as a surrogate sculpture.

This is an early and direct example of Rosso's engagement with his oeuvre through photography. However, by this point in the nineteenth century an integration of diverse objects into a reproducible, transmittable and comparable format wasn't novel.[13] Indeed photography may well be attributable to forming an important sensibility of the artistic climate of Rosso's era, which Jonathan Harris sums up:

> Modern artists, by the end of the nineteenth century, had begun to develop a highly self-conscious sense of their own identity and to think of their working life as a 'career'. They were also considering how they and their work would be seen in the future and thus had a stake – along with dealers, curators, critics, and eventually art historians – in attempting to influence how their artworks and lives could be seen, retrospectively, as continuous, developmental, and coherently meaningful. (2005 p. 159)

The ability to present a 'continuous, developmental' oeuvre is one opened by photography. The first wholly photographic catalogue raisonné (a remarkable undertaking and object) was produced in 1858, following Paul Delaroche's death (Delaroche 1858).[14] As Stephen Bann notes: 'In Goddé's Delaroche album, the artist's career has been packaged, not simply as a life, but as an oeuvre' (2011 p. 2). We shall see that Rosso was concerned with tailoring his legacy; yet, stemming from his hands-on engagement with sculpture and photography, he asked questions which greatly complicate the notion of oeuvre as taken-up by his contemporaries.

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13 Photographing multiple sculptures in one frame was a common trope of the earliest days of photography, e.g., Arman-Pierre Séguier's *Still Life with Plaster Casts* (1839–42), François-Alphonse Fortier's *Still Life* (1839–40) and William Henry Fox Talbot's *Classical Statuettes on Three Shelves* (c. 1841). Of more direct interest is the ever-inventive Hippolyte Bayard's *Bayard Surrounded by Statues* (1845–8), in which the photographer integrates himself into the composition, appearing to be pushed by a small statue. For more on the statue as an early photographic subject, see Geoffrey Batchen 2010 pp. 20–6.

14 Although most famous for the (almost certainly apocryphal) claim that photography heralded the death of painting (see Gernsheim 1982 p. 45), Delaroche was the perfect subject for such an impressive photographic undertaking, having been instrumental in the positive artistic evaluation of the medium outlined by François Arago in 1839's 'Report of the Commission of the Chamber of Deputies' on Daguerre's invention. Delaroche apparently noted that: 'The remarkable invention of M. Daguerre is a great service rendered to the arts' (in Eder 1978 p. 225).

Rosso behind the camera?

Rosso was hostile to Rodin's approach to sculpture: 'Is it possible that a work of art is not the property of an idea, and that any hand but that whose owner has conceived this idea should be able to express it?' (p. 141). Photographic documentation clearly expresses something of the 'idea', if at a remove. This raises the contested issue of the directness of Rosso's involvement in his photographs. Rodin's works were shot by many photographers, several of whom were already pre-eminent: Gertrude Kasebier, Alvin Langdon Coburn and Edward Steichen. In contrast, Rosso's photographs seldom bear attribution other than to the artist, and their authorship is still disputed. Caramel claims that: 'Contrary to what is often groundlessly asserted, it is not clear whether Rosso personally took the photographs. Thus they should be attributed to an anonymous photographer, although it is clear that Rosso, as did Rodin, directed the photographer' (Caramel 1996 p. 106). Caramel's essay appeared in an exhibition catalogue which broadly claims the photographs as 'original photographs by Medardo Rosso', the catalogue's editor, Gloria Moure, arguing that the photography should be attributed to Rosso, photography being 'the only medium in which Rosso achieved the vital effect he sought' (1996 p. 47).

Recent 'discoveries' by Francesca Bacci and Paola Mola each suggest Rosso's direct involvement. Bacci sweepingly claims that she 'dealt with the thus unresolved problem of the attribution and chronology of the photographs, by firmly proving Rosso's authorship through new evidence found among the artist's possessions' (2004 p. ii), namely, a printing frame (pp. 16–7) – a device to make contact prints from negatives. This does suggest that Rosso made some of the prints himself. It doesn't suggest he printed the enlarged ones. It suggests nothing about the negative; about photographing the work.

Mola claims: 'We are now able to add one more decisive document which proves that Rosso not only followed the stages of printing but also personally attended to the shooting. It is an undated letter [later given as 1904, see 2007 p. 153] to Auguste Artaria in which he complains of not having been warned he was supposed to return a camera and in which he adds he would return it the moment work was finished' (2007 p. 33). This at most suggests that at a pivotal stage in Rosso's career he had direct involvement in taking some photographs, presumably of his work. Beyond that one cannot claim with certainty: 1904 was a time of great change and experimentation for Rosso, and that the only documentary support for his direct involvement with photography is from this time might equally suggest that it wasn't a practice he maintained.

One can be clearer concerning how Rosso understood his relation to the photographs, and what he did with them. In a letter to Carlo Carrà (1926) he writes: 'I cannot allow other photographs to be taken. I want those of mine

and no others. I also believe these are the best. I don't want any others' (p. 299). Even though 'I want mine' would allow simply for those Rosso selected, rather than directly produced, that he is unwilling even to consider those somebody else might now produce implies that his involvement beyond selection was crucial to his understanding of photography in relation to his sculpture – that he saw them as *his* much more deeply than did Rodin. Likewise there can be no doubt of Rosso's involvement with the photographs after printing. Rosso approached photography with an inquisitiveness allowed only by hands-on engagement: staining, cracking and spray-painting negatives; painting, incising with blades, folding and irregularly cropping prints; photographing these prints and re-transforming them.

Self-sufficient representations

The studio shot discussed above differs from Rosso's mature photographs, which complicate their representational function – their ability to catalogue – achieving an artistic self-sufficiency whilst retaining an indexical connection with the sculptures: paradoxically autonomous yet bound. Bacci contends that: 'Rosso did not start the intense phase of his photographic enterprise until 1900 at the earliest' and that this production increased still further around 1904–6 (2004 p. 20).[15] Hélène Pinet's study of Rodin's use of photography suggests a reason for this heightened interest: 'It took until 1904, mainly for technical reasons … for photographic reproductions to appear in daily newspapers' (1998 p. 24); as Sabine Kriebel notes elsewhere: 'the refinement of photogravure techniques in the early 1900s enabled text and image to be printed simultaneously on a single page' (2007 p. 8). That is, as Rosso's earliest turn to photography produced a successful response to the need to collate and promote his production in a concise format which could be sent to collectors (in effect a *carte de visite*, at the height of their popularity), his mature engagement was also a response to commercial exigencies. Or, perhaps better, possibilities. Rosso shows an alertness to the possibilities which this technological development opened, and managed to reconcile his hostility to its typical practice by reconsidering its conventions – as he had with sculpture's.

Compare two photographs of the plaster *Yvette Guilbert* (1895) now in Venice: one is from a recent publication on the artist (fig. 2); the other, a Rosso print from around 1910 (fig. 3).

15 Accurately stating the dates of Rosso's photographic work isn't possible; Bacci's are reasonable conjectures to work from in the absence of more conclusive evidence. Gauging Rosso's commitment to the medium later in life is also difficult.

Facing: top, fig. 2; bottom, fig. 3.

Rosso's is a silver gelatine print from a negative taken of an earlier photographic print of the sculpture. The background on the right is blocked-out in tempera. On the bottom right is a passage of lead-white. Along the left edge run vertical blade incisions, which continue through an area shaded vertically in graphite. Although not precisely analogous, Rosso's attention to the photograph's surface resonates with his sculptural practices. The translucent tempera mask echoes his varnishing of plaster far more than the shadowless, dead-infinity against which the head appears in the modern image. The paint also extends into the subject's torso, denying an absolute boundary between object and world. The knife incisions in the paper (apparently the result of beginning to crop the print more tightly) are akin to incisions on the original plaster, accrued when it was removed from its plaster mould and in subsequent de-mouldings of gelatine moulds, etc. Yet, although a wonderful object which merges photography, painting and sculpture, the print's ostensive purpose was to document the work. In this capacity it was reproduced in a 1914 issue of *Vita d'Arte* which coincided with Rosso's exhibition at the Venice Biennale.

Rosso's use of photography from 1900 onwards blurred the boundary between document and artwork, likewise between photograph and object. Early studies of Rosso, such as Claris's (1902), Soffici's (1909 and 1929) and Etha Fles's (1922), are illustrated entirely with Rosso's photographs, evidently included as documents of the sculptures. Subsequent studies freely mixed without explicit division professional photographs with those by the artist (Barbantini 1950; Borghi 1950). Moving to Margaret Scolari Barr's 1963 study, all reproductions are contemporary commercial shots, the sculptures presented against a plain background (with the exception of the frontispiece, which although contemporaneous with the other photographs has paintings in the background). From the 1980s onwards Rosso's photography has been frequently reproduced explicitly as something separate from the documentation of his work (although not necessarily asserted as 'works' in their own right). In the last decade, collaboration between Paola Mola and the Rosso Archive has resulted in publications in which the greater part of the book is illustrated exclusively with Rosso's photographs, followed by a catalogue of thumbnails of the sculptures, evenly lit on a black ground – highlighting their stark contrast with Rosso's approach and emphasising the 'artistic' rather than 'documentary' nature of the photographs (Mola 2006; 2007; 2009).

Putting sculpture out to stud?

Scholarship of the last twenty years has attended to Rosso's photographs and how to consider them in relation to his sculpture. Paola Mola recently asserted: 'what we see unfold before our eyes is a process of work in series, whether of sculpture or photography. Beyond any putative confinement to the nineteenth century, Rosso worked far into the new century on an "*oeuvre* of the *oeuvre*"' (2007 p. 14). An important consequence of asserting that Rosso constructed an oeuvre inclusive of sculpture and photography is that it allows interpretation of Rosso working 'far into the new century'. As noted above, between 1900 and 1928 Rosso produced only one 'new' work, *Ecce Puer* of 1906. This was a historical thorn in the side of his champions: Barr contested that 'new work could not come to fruition in a mood of defensiveness and indignation' aroused by Rosso's conflicts with Rodin (1963 p. 55); Caramel presents a more considered position: 'Rosso, in his last years, concentrated on re-fashioning what he had already made, since he probably did not share the most extreme ideas of the avant-garde' (1994 p. 38). For those less positively disposed, 'after 1898 Rosso produced only replicas, modified from piece to piece, as though putting them out to stud and enjoying the proceeds' (Feaver 1994 p. 16). Even Sharon Hecker, explicitly arguing that the vitality of his career extended into his last years, in a study of authority which places the creativity of casting as central to Rosso's significance, still implicitly suggests otherwise: 'Moving … to the end of Rosso's career, we find the photograph of his small installation in the Salon d'Automne of 1904' (2003 p. 64) – 1904 being a pivotal period exactly in the middle of Rosso's career (1881–1928).

On the matter of Rosso's practice, its vitality and where that vitality is focused, Rosso himself is eloquent, writing in a late, undated letter: "*I am busy working with materials* … I have done work not yet done by celebrities with every resource available to them. I am not resting on my laurels, but I don't want to work in a frenzy or work for the sake of working' (my emphasis, p. 290); and in 1926: 'I have never retired, and never shall retire, nor will I be a tool for fashion' (p. 299). Throughout this study Rosso's emphasis on 'working with materials' will remain ever present. It is important to note that Rosso was aware of the role this had in generating new ideas, in finding a path beyond conventions and doing work 'not done by celebrities with every resource available to them'.

Practice: Writing, Selling, Curating History

Writing

Rosso's move from modelling to an exclusive focus on reproduction, both sculptural and photographic, coincided with his intensified pursuit of several other practices. These extend his thought and significance beyond creating an '*oeuvre* of the *oeuvre*': assessment of Rosso's art from 1900 onwards is most productive on the level of *practice*, not oeuvre.

From 1902 until his death Rosso published over a dozen essays, interview transcripts and open letters. Rosso's views on writing mirrored his opinions on traditional sculpture and photography. Rosso scorned traditional sculpture for 'objectifying' the transience of life: as he put it in 1925, it was an art of 'wait while I copy you!' (p. 192). Similarly, in 1927 he suggested that photography is an 'enormous enemy of seeing – because it limits – because it is objective' (p. 295). Towards writing Rosso adopts a somewhat Socratic position, believing that it ossifies the vitality of speech: one interviewer from 1923 opens with: 'I will transcribe your own words, because you said not to write in an elegant style, but rather with writing that is speaking thought' (p. 179). Later in the same interview Rosso urges: 'Writing does not render your thought completely. And when you are in front of an empty sheet, your memory goes blank, and then when there is little left in you, you invest it in good style, and good style is the antithesis of good thought' (p. 185).

With this in mind, Rosso's words present something of a dilemma, although one also present in his art works. In style, Rosso repeats certain maxims almost verbatim across essays and letters and across thirty years. These passages read sometimes as insight, sometimes as slogans which have descended to clichés, i.e., spanning his writings: 'I believe that it is impossible to see a horse with four legs at a time' (p. 131 [1902]); 'that is like the four legs of a horse, it is something objective, and I have always been against objectivity in art' (p. 180 [1923]); 'it is an objective thing like the four legs of a horse, which no one has ever seen together' (p. 195 [1925]); 'everything moves, nothing in space is material, it is impossible to ever have seen the four legs of a horse' (p. 202 [1926]). For

Moure this represents 'a transfer of his radical plastic poetics into the discursive fabric with a determination reminiscent of Nietzsche'; she asks us to 'evaluate his contribution to this field, alongside those of Roussel, Pound, Joyce, Jarry, Brisset and many others' (1996 p. 36). Barr, although not as gushing as Moure, claims Rosso's writings 'rival in free association, though not in poetic content, the writings of Gertrude Stein and James Joyce' (1963 p. 63). Such views betray not simply a desire to promote Rosso's writing above their station, but, in Moure, a gross misunderstanding of the nature of repetition and variation within his works.

Attending to how repetition and Rosso's bizarre syntax interact in his theorising, Hecker makes the rather more considered claim that 'in the Rosso case, language and orthography have been distorted to the point that Rosso wanted them to exist as public traces that nevertheless could not be fully deciphered, just as with his art' (1999 p. 21). Certainly Rosso makes interpretation very difficult, but, as this study's chapter on phenomenology will argue, insightful views on art and vision are present in his first two essays and gain richness in light of later writings.

Rosso's maxims – i.e. 'nothing is material in space'; 'you can't walk around it'; etc. – have been used and reused in scholarship, often without attending to what they might, or possibly could, mean. Rosso's contemporary Julius Meier-Graefe was more circumspect: of 'nothing is material in space' he suggests: 'it is hard to understand how such things could be formulated and printed without contradiction' (1908 p. 34). This is echoed a century later by Hecker: 'Thus far, no attempt has been made to understand the relationship between Rosso's intellectual and material enterprises, perhaps because of a reluctance to admit the contradictory nature of his aims' (2003 p. 37). This raises a very important point, which will emerge more fully in the chapter on Rosso's writings: Rosso's theoretical reflections offer occasionally brilliant considerations of perception, and of art's ability to engage with lived experience. However, when considered in the light of his contemporaneous material practices, a gulf opens between theory and practice, in which the artworks clearly extend beyond the compass of his theories. That is, around 1900 Rosso developed dual approaches to considering the works he had previously made: one through writing, the other through focusing upon manual reproduction in sculpture and photography. Although stemming from the same corpus, these practices lead in different directions and his theorising failed to grapple with the new life which the sculptures had assumed.

Rosso's writings will be attended to as fascinating theories of art and perception; also as documents illuminating Rosso's sculpture; thirdly, as an early exemplar of how theory and practice can productively relate, through an overlapping which never becomes merger. A relationship which establishes resonances, often antagonisms, across discrete parts – a continuation of what Rosso's sculpture and photography was achieving.

Reproduction and exchange

This study will pay particular attention to Rosso's involvement in casting his own works; it emphasises the importance of making and, stemming from this, the uniqueness of each iteration of a work as central to understanding the works' originality and curiousness. However, there is truth in William Feaver's above comment, about Rosso putting his works 'out to stud and enjoying the proceeds'. For all Rosso's stubbornness and unswerving dedication to his artistic ends, he was also someone who needed to survive through sales of his art. Rosso was active within this: as he comments in 1903: 'I came with my work which I brought with me, my visiting cards, in the same way as Genoese goldsmiths in ancient times travelled with their merchandise and visited people' (pp. 85–6). For all the stress placed on Rosso's direct casting of works, even after 1895 many were made by professional foundries. The choices of works reproduced in this manner attest more to market desires than to Rosso's urge to re-explore a work's potential (which may have been a motivation for those he cast himself), or his desire that they should gain greater prominence in his oeuvre (in 1923 one finds Rosso trying, unconvincingly, to justify works he considered inferior, yet which he was still having recast until this time: speaking of *Bambino malato* and *Bambina che ride* Rosso notes, 'the material is too present … I have always shown them in order to show their inferiority compared to my other works' (p. 184)).

Another practice which Rosso had adopted by 1900, blurring boundaries between commercial enterprise and the intentional re-framing of his artworks (quite possibly the former becoming the latter), was the production and sale of what Luciano Caramel terms *pezzi di paragone* – comparison pieces. Rosso modelled and cast replicas (or miniaturised models) of around two-dozen works by other artists, ranging from Roman sculpture, through Donatello and Michelangelo, to Rodin.[16] Through these Rosso had a chance to refine techniques such as novel patination; to have a second string on his commercial bow;[17] to dispel any claims that his works' loose modelling was founded upon an inability to emulate prior 'masters'; and for their use as direct comparisons with his own.

16 See Mola 2007 p. 39 for details of the works reproduced. For more on their significance, see Caramel 1994 pp. 41–3. The Victoria and Albert museum holds examples, both acquired in 1896, of the *Head of Emperor Vitellius* and *Head of an Ancient Roman* – oddly the only lifetime works by Rosso in an English public collection.

17 Rosso outlines the merits of his copies from the antique in a letter of 1903, adding: 'Do you want my advice? Well, with all the sincerity of a friend, I'll tell you! Your brother has decided to buy the bust of the senator. You, his brother, in turn, buy the head of the Caesar' (p. 279).

Assembling histories

Rosso's move, around 1900, away from modelling to an absolute focus on reproduction allowed an internal reconsideration of what his sculptures were achieving. Concurrently, through writing and constructed confrontations with other artists' works, Rosso embarked upon an external reconsideration of his works' place in art's history. Rosso interprets sculpture's history as a narrative leading from ancient Greece, through Rome, through the Renaissance and leading to Rodin. In 1921 he stated that 'the works of the second Greece, of its subsidiary, Rome, and of the Renaissance, sub-subsidiary of the latter (without mentioning the sub-sub-subsidiary and rightly called "Empire", as useless as paperweights, by Mr. Antonio Canova) belong to the most objectively conceived periods. Mr Rodin belongs to these three periods and will endure as one of their great representatives' (pp. 202–3, see also p. 142, p. 171, p. 269). Similarly, in 1906 Rosso expounded his belief in Rodin's enduring classicism: 'It is not by repainting an old house that one can make people believe that it is a new one' (p. 269). Opposing his work to a specifically sculptural heritage, Rosso asserts his work as a continuation of another tradition: 'No, I am not a great innovator. The doctrines I present were those of the great masters. Rembrandt, Velasquez, Turner, Constable were Impressionists' (1904 p. 5).

Rosso believed his works marked a decisive break from a sculptural tradition. His tool for asserting his own position was *comparison*, conducted in public and in private. His targets were Rodin, the pre-eminent figure of his day – 'I had it placed next to a group of works by Mr. Rodin. According to your orders, the placement was to be my choice' (p. 270 [1920]) – and the master from Italy's past, still the touchstone of Rosso's age: 'I wish to be exhibited with the works of Michelangelo and naturally in adequate space. I have always held convictions opposing him' (p. 291 [1911]).[18] In *Modern Art* Julius Meier-Graefe recalls a singular studio visit paid to Rosso, in which the artist makes full use of his *pezzi di paragone*:

> He built up a little bit of art-history in the form of a singular still-life. He placed on a table a very fine bronze copy, made by himself, of the large head of Vitellius in the Vatican, beside it a wax after Michelangelo's small group of the *Madonna and Child* at Berlin, then a torso of Rodin's *John the Baptist* and finally a work of his own, the *Head of a Child*. (1908 p. 21)[19]

18 Rosso also sought comparison with painters he admired: 'With the boldness that characterises him, he had carried *L'Enfant à la Bouchée de Pain* into the room that is devoted to Cézanne's paintings, for he courts comparison between sculpture and painting' (Rosso 1904 p. 5).

19 The Rodin sculpture was one Rosso had acquired as an exchange, in 1894, at a time of their friendship. The work is actually Rodin's *Torso*, a discrete work derived directly – though

Rosso's sculptures after the antique were of service in the private setting of his studio and his view of history found a sympathetic ear in Meier-Graefe.[20] For 1904's Salon d'Automne – Rosso's largest and most prominent show – the artist turns, primarily, to photography to construct a constellation of images within this highly public exhibition (fig. 4).[21]

amputated and mutilated – from his *John the Baptist*.

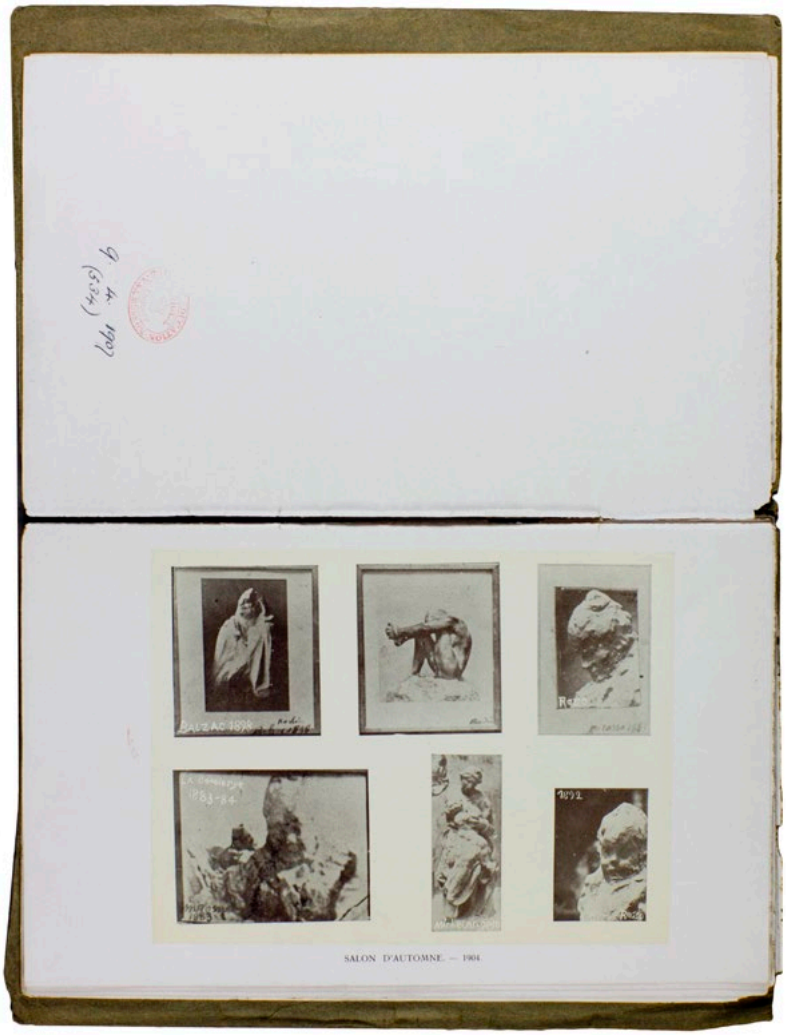
20 Meier-Graefe writes in *Modern Art*: 'Michelangelo and Rodin are congruous phenomena … There is an early Greek Rodin of the first decade of the Phidian century … In the monument to President Lynch he has all the nobility of a North Italian equestrian statue of the early Renaissance … In *Le Baiser* he seems to simplify Michelangelo. In the *Eve* he continues him. The French Renaissance proclaims itself in details of the *Porte d'Enfer*' (1908 pp. 9–10). Whereas Rosso 'is a man who has been able to free himself from all those hereditary conceptions which are wont to be sources of unconscious inspiration' (1908 p. 22).

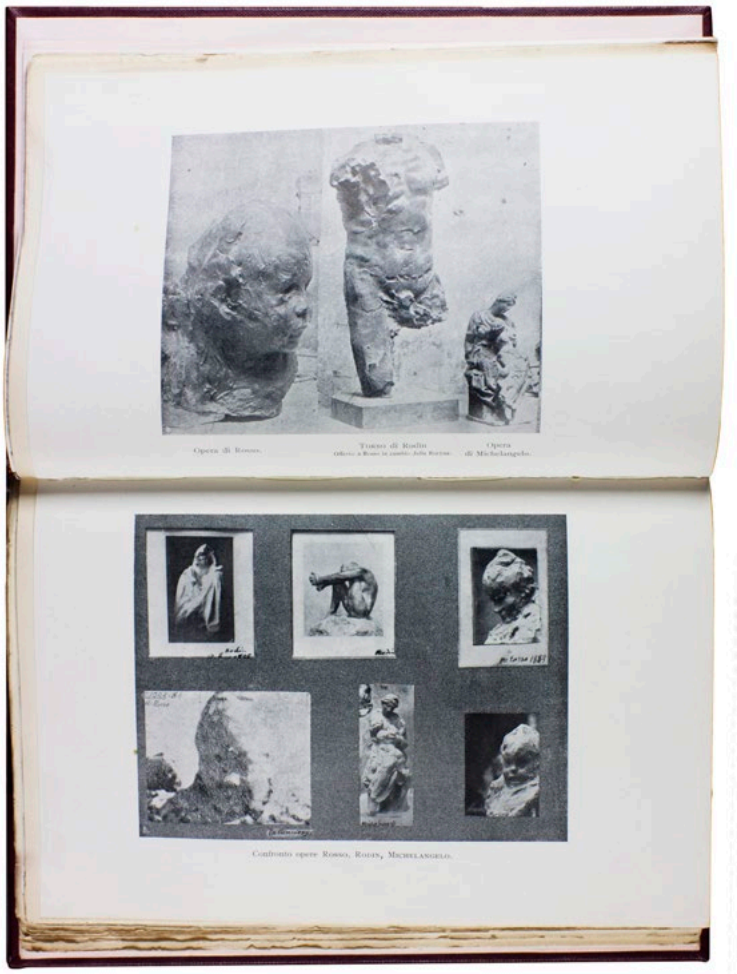
21 Published scholarship asserts that Rosso orchestrated this installation, e.g. Hecker: 'his small installation in the Salon d'Automne of 1904' (2003 pp. 64–5); Mola: 'He composes the photographic assemblage at the Salon' (2007 p. 153); also Caramel 2004 p. 23. However, Bacci's PhD states: 'It is important here to notice that Rosso did not set up this arrangement' (2004 p. 133). She bases this on a contemporary critic's account which claims Rosso asked the organising committee if he could put his works near already installed Rodin photographs. *The Manchester Guardian*'s article on the 1904 Salon d'Automne notes having interviewed Rosso whilst he was 'grouping his exhibits – accidentally or purposely – in front of the photographic reproductions of Rodin's sculptures' (Rosso 1904 p. 5). This study tentatively follows the bulk of Rosso literature in assuming Rosso's direct involvement with the installation: it seems unlikely that the four Rodin prints would have been arranged in such a way as to accommodate Rosso's own photographic additions quite so naturally. More importantly, it is clear that Rosso prized this installation; he returned to it, both through collaging other works of his onto prints from this installation, and, as illustrated below, by constructing similar six-image grids of his and Rodin's photographs for illustration in both the publication accompanying his 1906 exhibition at Eugene Cremetti, London, and in Ardengo Soffici's 1909 *Il caso Medardo Rosso*.

Above: fig. 4. Facing: fig. 5.

Four of the six photographs are of works by Rodin: left to right on the top row, Eugene Druet's print of Balzac; a lesser-known Druet photograph of *Despair*; and Henry Coles' *Crouching Woman*. Central in the bottom row, Druet's *Douleur* is visible through the vitrine of Rosso's *Après la visite*, to the right of which sits a copy of Michelangelo's *Medici Madonna*. The two Rosso photographs on the bottom row are, on the left, a detail of *Impression d'omnibus*; on the right, *Dr Fles* (interestingly, both works are unusual in Rosso's oeuvre for having only a single sculptural iteration).

Considering that Rosso juxtaposes his work with Rodin's and Michelangelo's it might seem apparent that Rosso uses this public opportunity to demonstrate his art-historical relevance as a decisive break from the Michelangelo–Rodin lineage. Given that Rosso returned to this grouping for illustrations in both the Cremetti Gallery catalogue (fig. 5) and Soffici's 1909 *Il caso Medardo Rosso* (fig. 6), books championing the artist's originality in conceiving 'Impressionism' in sculpture, this was probably his aim.



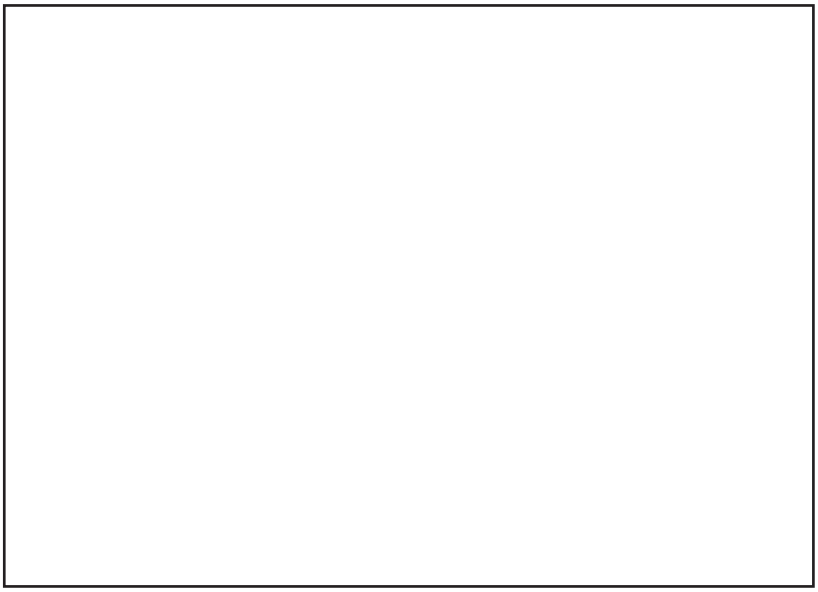


The result reads differently. Rosso dislikes the 'objectivity' he believed characterised the photographic reproduction of sculpture – making the work materially apprehensible. Yet it is precisely this objectivity which would establish grounds for comparison between images: when Rosalind Krauss argues that Rodin's 'radical' absoluteness of surface surpassed Rosso's contribution to modern sculpture, she illustrates this with images which present the works as matters of fact (1977c). In Druet's *Balzac* and Coles' wonderful *Crouching Woman* one encounters the most atmospheric and elliptical photographs of Rodin's works which could have been chosen (far more so than those Rodin typically did choose, as will be discussed later). Indeed the top row is almost a catalogue of variety, eking-out as much latent possibility in Rodin's oeuvre as possible. *Balzac* in Druet's print is positively aglow. The central image presents sculpture analytically, in the manner we will see espoused at this time by Heinrich Wölfflin; neutral background, even tonal modelling, a defining silhouette. Coles presents a silhouette; the sculpture is of course opaque, the intense backlighting modelling only the work's edges – yet the *print* is translucent on the paper, making the substrate a part of the image and making the image unsettlingly diaphanous.[22]

22 Hecker (2003 pp. 45–7) offers an explication of this photograph, which also suggests

Above: fig. 6. Facing: fig. 7.

Such variety voids comparisons, let alone clear narrative argument. It is as though, whatever theoretical position Rosso wanted to advance, in the act of selection and display – in curation – his curiosity and playfulness wrested the upper-hand, exploring through the works of others what he was exploring within his own. This playful curiosity is evident in his re-exploration of the 1904 display through the use of collage, in which photographs of other sculptural lives are layered onto the 1904 assembly, creating bizarrely fractured spaces (fig. 7).[23]



Through his innovative hands-on exploration of the photographic Rosso begins to point to his more profound difference to Rodin, beyond a simple formal comparison: to an arbitrariness in Rodin's variety; an openness which perhaps betrayed – as Rosso's 'any hand but that whose owner has conceived this idea' may suggest – a restless breadth contrasted with Rosso's depth of inquiry. Perhaps this openness was Rodin's greatest artistic strength; it lead to some remarkable results. But it was something fundamentally at odds with Rosso's artistic convictions, and with what Rosso's works achieve: an internal complexity and intensification of what a work can be.

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there is more to the image than simple comparison. Rather than considering the aesthetic merits and specificity of the individual works or of the tableau, she focuses instead on notions of reproduction, asking: 'What, in simple terms, has Rosso done here? He has taken works of two other famous sculptors and performed upon them multiple acts of flattening and copying, divesting them of their three-dimensional identity, robbing them of their tactile qualities, erasing their differences of size and material, and denying their unique locations in time and space' (p. 46).

23 Indeed Paola Mola goes so far as to suggest that they are 'of some years before and alternatives to Cubism' (2007 p. 38), an optimistic claim, made problematic by the impossibility of dating Rosso's photographs.

Foregrounding practice

From 1900 onwards Rosso sustained several distinct approaches to considering both art and what it was to be an artist. Evidently his desire to be involved in all stages of making sculpture – seeing the creative moment as one permeating all stages of making – extended beyond the conventional limits of the 'work' and embraced all areas of practice. This led him to highly original involvement in pursuits which would often have been undertaken by other parties, or at least shared between artist and another – documentation, publicity, sales, the theoretical and historical framing of work.

Through commitment to these areas Rosso highlights the realities of being an artist and the reality of the forces an artwork undergoes. However, it is through withdrawing completely from the act in which was typically vested a sculptor's 'creativity' – i.e. modelling – that Rosso foregrounds these matters in a way evident in no other artist of his time, forcing them into view. It would be going too far to claim Rosso emerging, Robert Smithson-like, as an artist consciously 'exploring the apparatus [he's] being threaded through' (Smithson 1996 p. 262). One cannot claim for Rosso this 'criticality'. Rather, it is his very brazenness which opens the same questions and highlight the same concerns. To consider Rosso's practice – to engage openly with the wealth of fascinating avenues he pursued from 1900 onwards – is to acknowledge that art practice is rightly more nebulous and, in a sense, richer than prior conceptions of 'work' allowed. Yet this is achieved not through ignoring or obviating the importance of the artwork (as one might believe is too frequently the case in a 'critical' investigation of the artwork, its production and its framing, e.g. Michael Asher, and his less interesting followers, etc.), but through attending as closely and as openly to the artwork, directing attention back to the artwork from many sides – exploring what it asks of one and what it desires.

The Ambiguous Status of Rosso's 'Works'

Rosso's extended practice opens precisely onto this question of the *work* – what are *Bambino malato*; *Carne altrui*; *Bambina che ride*, etc.? How do the varied elements united under a single title relate? The question is easily overlooked in scholarship, even in recent studies which focus explicitly with the interactions of varied elements – Mola's middle-ground of an '*oeuvre* of the *oeuvre*' is a telling example.

One of the richest analyses of a work – of how the discrete elements inflect one another, how a single work can encompass diversely affecting objects – is offered by Sharon Hecker (2003). Exploring the sculptural iterations of *Aetas Aurea* (1886), Hecker briefly but adroitly charts how the multiple casting processes Rosso employed allow subtle psychological shifts in the work's tenor, through alterations of the relative positions of the heads of mother and child, the removal of periphery elements, changing the angle of display, etc. However, despite the essay being explicitly engaged with materiality, the complexity of the material interactions is near-impossible to deal with in discussion. Hecker notes: 'by casting the *Aetas Aurea* in wax, Rosso transcended the work's banal, sentimental subject through the material's ability to suggest an almost excessively fleshy fusion between mother and child' (2003 p. 37). There is much in this. But what of the superb *Musée d'Orsay* bronze of the same 'work'? It is decidedly not excessively fleshy. The unplugged pin-hole in the mother's right temple still offers something other – very other – than banal sentiment, but the 'other' is of a very different nature. If the wax imbues the form with a pulsatingly human vitality, a 'fleshy fusion', the bronze is, rather, rough-hewn from the fabric of the earth. That is, each sculpture opens entirely different worlds, yet they achieve self-identity both in name and in how they are discussed.

Mola's 2007 'The Transient Form' offers investigation of the interaction of elements and directions taken within Rosso's practice. Yet Mola's fleeting approach never does justice to the *specific* nature of interactions Rosso

establishes.[24] This is evident in the claim that: 'Rosso worked far into the new century on an "*oeuvre* of the *oeuvre*," through a series of variations and repetitions that find parallels in the production of Brancusi, Morandi and Rodin' (2007 p. 14). As the analysis of the Salon d'Automne montage begins to suggest, and as will become very clear later in this study, Rosso's practice led in a direction entirely counter to Rodin's. As will be explored more fully, whereas Rodin could be seen as constructing an '*oeuvre* of the *oeuvre*', Rosso diverges twofold from this. Firstly, as this introduction has sought to argue, he highlights in an unexampled manner those elements of practice which extend beyond the physical elements constitutive of an oeuvre, foregrounding *practice*, rather than *oeuvre* as the vital concern. Secondly, the following study will demonstrate that Rosso uses reproduction to focus on the nature of a 'work' as something *intensely* private: each group of artefacts united under a single title becomes hermetic, denying the relevance of other 'works' within Rosso's output, by the strength and complexity of associations drawn across elements within itself.

When considering Rosso the question of what a work is and how this fits into art-historical discourse cannot be posed abstractly. One must delve into the particulars of what, for instance, *Aetas Aurea* is, does, and can be. And although one can presume similarities between the complexity of one work and another, it could never amount to a scheme mappable onto all Rossos. Hence the vast majority of this dissertation will be devoted to thinking about a single 'work': Rosso's *Ecce Puer*.

Of the approximately two-dozen works which Rosso cast in varied mediums, there are half-a-dozen which recommend themselves as deeply engaging and which are reproduced in significant number (the number of iterations of a work potentially signifying Rosso's desire that these works be prominent in his legacy). Of these *Ecce Puer* stands out for its centrality in writings on Rosso, being broadly considered his masterpiece and the work on which his position within Western art history is based; this implies that re-evaluations of this work would more readily recommend reconsiderations of Rosso's historical status and contemporary relevance.[25] Of far greater significance, it is his final work, and the only one whose modelling occurs when Rosso's *practice* had reached full diversity. As such, it is the only work in which the influences of Rosso's commitments to reproduction – both sculptural and photographic – could potentially inform the modelling, and indeed subject-matter, of the sculpture.

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24 Mola argues the 'fleeting' nature of her study is desirable to avoid trying to tie Rosso down, 2007 p. 14; implicitly, p. 45.

25 Hecker (2003 pp. 51–2) offers discussion of *Ecce Puer*'s position as Rosso's 'masterpiece', of the conflicting readings it has provoked and the potential deeper relevance of this conflict as a tension intrinsic to *Ecce Puer*.

2. *Ecce Puer*

The Parts

The model

Before considering what is specific to Rosso's engagement with a 'work' and how it locates him within broader artistic and cultural endeavours it is helpful to survey the elements which comprise the work. This is the task of the first half of this chapter. The second half assesses the nature of the relationship between elements in the light of how one might traditionally classify multi-part artworks.

Ecce Puer is a commissioned portrait of the four-year-old Alfred William Mond, son of Emil Mond, the nephew of industrialist and renowned art collector Ludwig Mond.[1] As has been mentioned, it was the final work Rosso modelled, and the first which he had produced since 1900/1901. Despite this six year hiatus, located within his practice *Ecce Puer* emerges during a

1 The subject's age is often given as six, or five or six, and Becker gives it as eight (1999a p. 168). Paddington birth records for Alfred William Schweich (Alfred William's birth name) show that he was born in the third quarter of 1901. Rosso is generally believed to have produced the model when in London for an exhibition, which must have been the *New Gallery* group show of February–March 1906 (Caramel 1988 p. 113; Hecker 1997 p. 148; Mola 2007 p. 153); the Cremetti Gallery exhibition opened in December 1906 and a wax *Ecce Puer* was included in the catalogue to 1906's Salon d'Automne, published 5th October. As such, if my basic arithmetic holds good, one can fairly confidently make the unprecedented claim that the subject's age was four. Of similarly little relevance to understanding the artistic significance of *Ecce Puer* is the photograph below (fig. 8). The source of this image is an anonymous post on *ancestry.com*. My justification for believing it is what it purports to be are that it is presented with two paintings of (pretty clearly) the same subject, also claimed as of Alfred William, and undoubtedly by society painter Sigismund Goetze, Alfred William's uncle by marriage. Given Goetze's typical subject-matter, and that of his most famous painting (*Harebells*, 1902), it seems highly likely that he would have painted the child. In their inter-relations by marriage and changes of names the Monds were a fitting subject for Rosso at a time of preoccupation with reproduction and alteration. The connections of the Monds are as confused as those in Rosso's art. J. M. Cohen's *The Life of Ludwig Mond* offers: 'Emil Schweich [Alfred William's father], his [Ludwig's] late sister Phinchen's eldest child … who later changed his name to Mond … On the family side Emil drew the links tighter by marrying Mrs Alfred Mond's sister [Alfred being Ludwig's son], Angela Goetze: and these same links were pulled even closer still when her artist brother Sigismund, through whom the connection had originally been formed, married Emil's sister' (1956 pp. 190–1).

busy and productive period: 1900's *Portrait of Doctor Fles* marks both his first break with modelling and the beginning of his acquaintance with friend and champion Etha Fles. This led to Fles organising the 1901 Dutch touring show of Impressionism, in which Rosso featured prominently; exhibitions in 1902; 1903's Vienna Secession show; and the most important show of this time, the Salon d'Automne in Paris, 1904. As the introduction noted, this period also coincides with Rosso directing increasing attention to photography.

Unlike any other Rosso work, a narrative behind *Ecce Puer*'s modelling has prefaced almost every discussion of actual sculptures. In 1922 (i.e. during Rosso's lifetime) Etha Fles recalled that Rosso had modelled *Ecce Puer* in an inspired moment, after fleetingly glimpsing Alfred William (1922 p. 36). There are two posthumous strands of narrative which develop from this; those stemming from Ardengo Soffici's 1929 monograph and those from Mino Borghi (1950 p. 69), fully embellished in Margaret Scolari Barr's book of 1963. In Soffici's 1929 monograph Rosso encounters Alfred William in strong sunlight; the sculpture's vertical grooves are a presentation of rays of light. Such an interpretation also makes sense in relation to Rosso's photography-inspired tenet of sculpting: 'If the light was four times stronger, everything would be consumed, except one or two variants. This dominant plane, this thought, *this thing that survives,* this is what one must sculpt' (p. 171).

Although recent scholarship has noted Soffici's account (i.e. Mola 2009 p. 218; van der Coelen 2014 p. 122), and Hecker takes characteristically full note of Fles and Borghi's versions (1997 p. 148), interpretation of *Ecce Puer* over the past half-century has been dominated by Barr's framing narrative. Below are quotations from three major examples, starting with Barr in the first English-language monograph on the artist, followed by Krauss's story in her influential *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, and concluding with Paola Mola's account in the recent *The Transient Form*:

> There he was, a guest in a wealthy home because he was supposed to do the portrait of the little boy. He saw the child daily in the course of living with the family. Try as he might, he couldn't produce a thing. He was overstaying his welcome, he was beside himself. One evening there was a reception, the drawing room was full of elegant guests. Suddenly a curtain was drawn aside a few inches, the little boy peered in, his lips parted in amazement, and he was gone. Triggered by this snapshot vision, Rosso rushed to his room, worked through the night and into the next day until he had brought the head to completion. (Barr 1963 pp. 58–9)

Facing: fig. 8.

> The story surrounding this late work places its origins in a visit Rosso paid to some friends in Paris. There he caught a glimpse of the young son of the family half hidden behind the curtained entry to the living room, shyly talking to the adults talking within. Surprised by Rosso's glance, the boy started back, and Rosso discovered in that visual melee of drapery, shadow and expression a momentary fusion of timidity and curiosity. (Krauss 1977c p. 33)

> *Ecce Puer* is the twice natural size portrait of Alfred William of the Mond dynasty, English industrialists of Jewish origin. Their name remains in history for the immense collection that Ludwig – Alfred's father and Emil's grandfather – left to London's National Gallery … Literature relates the familiar account of Rosso's stay in Hyde Park Square where the Monds lived. After a couple of weeks during which he could not work, he finished the sculpture in one night after having seen the boy appear through two curtains of a room. (Mola 2007 p. 120)[2]

Barr's narrative is supplied by Rosso's daughter-in-law, Tilde, and is the one most frequently analysed. It seems to be the narrative from which others descend, Chinese-whisper-like. No other Rosso sculpture receives this attention to presumed subject-matter; this work above all others seems to demand definition from something outside its material or overtly depicted subject. It is instructive that Krauss's sweeping rewrite of modern sculpture offers detailed description of the curtains' specific living-roomliness (yet in the wrong country), describing at length an episode relating to a single sculpture by a sculptor she is in the process of relegating to a secondary status. Paradoxically, for Krauss *Ecce Puer* is the only work of Rosso's to 'draw close to the deepest resources of Rodin's art … *Ecce Puer!* begins and ends in this surface; nothing is implied beyond it' (1977c p. 33). Yet she is compelled to offer something beyond the object, beyond the surface – a linguistic hold on something visually elusive, a linguistic hold curtailing other associations. In all the above accounts there is a suggestion that the extreme generality of the work's title must be augmented by an extreme specificity in framing narrative – one which isn't conveyed fully (or, possibly, at all) within the work.

Although offering conflicting accounts, both Barr and Soffici emphasise the sculpting of something via a mediating layer, be it the immateriality of light made material, or the material of cloth. And for both, this layer of mediation offers not just a distancing but an editing of the depicted face. Light acts as a veil, a mediation of the object world, yet a necessary means through which the

2 For more curtain narratives Caramel 1988 p. 102; Messinger 1991 p. 63; Caramel 1994 p. 36.

world is known. There is a reason why Rosso may have wished to grapple with the effect of veiling. The effect was not new to Rosso, 1896's *Femme a la voilette* (fig. 9) explicitly engaging with it (the explicitness of encounter and the look of surprise, however, is specific to *Ecce Puer* and shall be discussed at length in the following chapter). It is this work which Julius Meier-Graefe, in his influential *Modern Art*, singled-out for condemnation:

> The *Femme a la Voilette* is a trifling with accidents. He has succeeded, certainly, in giving the space with which he wished to unite the figure; but this does not impress as a well-regulated cosmos, as it does in painting, but as an accidental addition, which neither gives nor receives the life that glances off it. The face is an enigma, but it does not impel the beholder to a reconstructive solution. The veil that shrouds it obscures not this alone, but art. (1908 p. 25)

Meier-Graefe was a great supporter of Rosso.[3] However, he believed the veil to be a gimmick, an effect – a part not successfully unified into an artistic whole. It will later be argued that both Rosso's attitude towards touch in his writings from 1907 onwards, and the unparalleled scale of *Ecce Puer*, are plausibly understood as responses to positions in Meier-Graefe's 1904 study to which Rosso took exception. It is equally plausible that the issue of veiling was one to which Rosso desired to return, as a matter of setting the record straight, rather than simply the result of a chance encounter in a London drawing-room. This isn't to deny the potential truth of the typical anecdotes. It is rather to suggest that even in *Ecce Puer*'s ostensible subject, thus, a fortiori, how it was developed, there is already an engagement with how this work could re-align considerations of Rosso's preceding ones.

3 'There is something of Rosso in all our modern art. He was more in sympathy with the age than any of the rest, and believed more honestly in its promises. Only time can avail anything, a new epoch, to give a vigorous support to the daring personality' (Meier-Graefe 1908 p. 28).

Above: fig. 9.

The casts

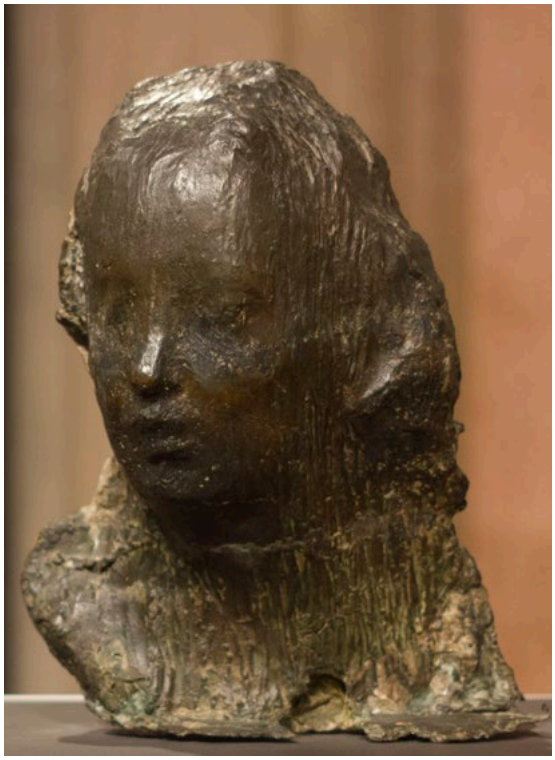
According to Paola Mola's 2009 catalogue raisonné, *Ecce Puer* is the final of 39 known works.[4] Of these, eleven are believed only to have had a single sculptural instance, of which six were memorial commissions of the 1880s. *Ecce Puer* is the joint-third most prolific work: *Bambino ebreo* (1892–3) existing in fifteen instances, *La portinaia* (1883–4) fourteen, and *Il birichino* (1882–3), *Uomo che legge* (1894) and *Ecce Puer* nine. Limiting study to lifetime works isn't unproblematic given that Rosso authorised his heirs to reproduce 'authentic' works after his death.[5] The approach also excludes the *Ecce Puers* in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, the Musée d'Orsay, etc. These may not be a part of Rosso's direct oeuvre, but they have had considerable effect on the work's reception. Later discussion of the importance Rosso placed in making will clarify why, in terms of this study, posthumous works must stand remote. Below are listed, chronologically, the known sculptures of *Ecce Puer*.[6]

4 Reliance upon Mola's catalogue is more an expedient than an endorsement. Whereas other catalogues raisonnés might include works of dubious authenticity, whilst making this dubiousness known, Mola's research takes her own view to be authoritative and omits those she considers unworthy – and her judgement on these matters in by no means uncontested amongst Rosso scholars. However, having found access to the archives unforthcoming, I rely upon Mola's attributions.

5 Sharon Hecker, considering posthumous casts (1999 pp. 241–7), urges that 'while the prevailing tendency in the Rosso literature since the 1960s is to disqualify all posthumous casts, even those made by Francesco [Rosso] and Vinanello Chiodi, these casts form part of the artist's legacy and were in fact a function of the artist's intentions' (p. 247). This is somewhat at odds with the account I have given above, of Rosso being so concerned with the exact legacy he was leaving – that his oeuvre be arranged and approached as he intended. However, it was common practice for an artist's heirs to make 'authentic' posthumous casts even against the artist's wishes (i.e. Degas's waxes cast in bronze, likewise of Boccioni's plaster and mixed material sculptures). The fact that the year before his death he wrote to his friend Mario Vianello Chiodo: 'it is understood that the plaster works of mine you have – you can reproduce them in bronze and in wax – if the future need be' (Mola 2011 p. 68), and that one of Rosso's last acts, in the week before his death, knowing death was approaching, was to dispatch to Chiodo three crates containing between them seven plasters, including the *Ecce Puer* which is now in Edinburgh, is not evidence that he was unconcerned with his posthumous legacy. Given Hecker's account (1999 p. 265) that Chiodo is not known to have made any casts in the 32 years after Rosso's death, and that Francesco had begun production by the following year, with no will authorising these casts (it was his right as natural heir), sending the plasters to Chiodo could be seen both as generous and as Rosso protecting his works. Also, whereas most artists could destroy their plasters if they didn't want 'authentic' posthumous bronzes cast, for Rosso this wasn't an option – his plasters were works.

6 Of the seven catalogue *Ecce Puer*s known as still extant, this study considers only the six I have been able to view first hand. The Italian private collection holding the seventh was unwilling to allow me access (for an image of this work, see Stocchi 2014 p. 124). All photographs are taken by me, with the exception of c., which I was unable to photograph myself, owing to my poor organisation rather than any lack of support on the part of Galleria Ricci d'Oddi.

ep. a



ep. b

	Material	Date	Current location
a	Varnished plaster	1906	Milan, Civica Galleria d'Arte Moderna
	Wax on plaster	1906	Unknown
b	Bronze	1908	Venice, Galleria Internazionale d'Arte Moderna
	Wax on plaster	1908	Unknown
	Wax on plaster	1914–17	Private collection
c	Wax on plaster	1917–26	Piacenza, Galleria d'Arte Moderna Ricci Oddi
d	Varnished plaster	c. 1920	Edinburgh, National Galleries of Scotland
e	Polychromed plaster	c. 1920	Barzio, Museo Medardo Rosso
f	Bronze	pre-1923	Private collection

As has been discussed, all sculptures were produced by casting from flexible gelatine moulds. As such, all sculptures share a common ancestry in the clay model, to which they relate indexically, that is, causally. The introductory section highlighted the 'radical' nature of Rosso's engagement with casting; his isolating and elevating the materials used in the production of a bronze sculpture into the material of the final work. From 1900 onwards this isolation of material begins to break down. In some respect the materials of individual sculptures within a work begin to hybridise or blend across sculptures. Of all Rosso's works this is best exemplified by the multiple casts of *Ecce Puer*.

Above: my photographs of *Ecce Puer* are referenced alphabetically. See foreword for more information on this.

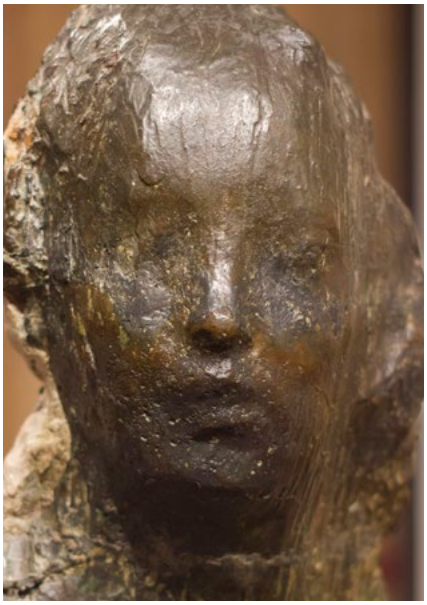
ep. c

ep. d

ep. e

ep. f

Compare the bronze now in Venice (ep. b) with the plaster in Barzio (ep. e). The 'patina' of the plaster lends it the gloss, warmth and solidity of a conventionally well finished, richly patinated bronze. A similar patina and warmth is evident on the cheeks of the actual bronze now in Venice. This warmth is emphasised by the cool tones around the mouth and under the chin – the chromatic play of warm and cool reminiscent of Rembrandt's modelling in the 1669 self-portrait in the National Gallery, London.[7] The coolness is intensified near the head's proper-right ear and proper-left neck; not in the bronze but in the residual plaster investment. Typical casting practice would remove this. Rosso retained the plaster and in the neck and torso copper carbonate from the bronze has leached into it, imparting to the plaster bronze's familiar verdigris patina. This fusion of typically exclusive mediums offers in microcosm something of the complexity of *Ecce Puer* as a whole.

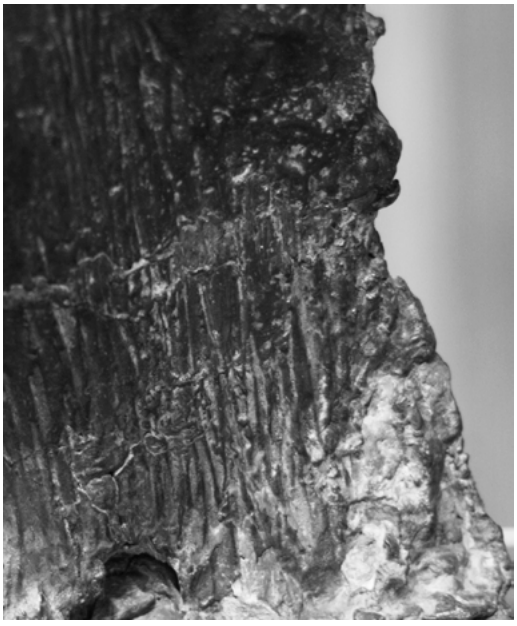


With the majority of the plaster investment wire-brushed from the surface of the bronze, the residual plaster of the Venice sculpture is concentrated in the furrows. Consequently the form's raised areas are dark (bronze), the clefts light (plaster). The plaster sculpture in Edinburgh (ep. d) reverses this; the surface is coated with shellac varnish which naturally accumulates more thickly in the grooves, resulting in these being dark, the ridges light.

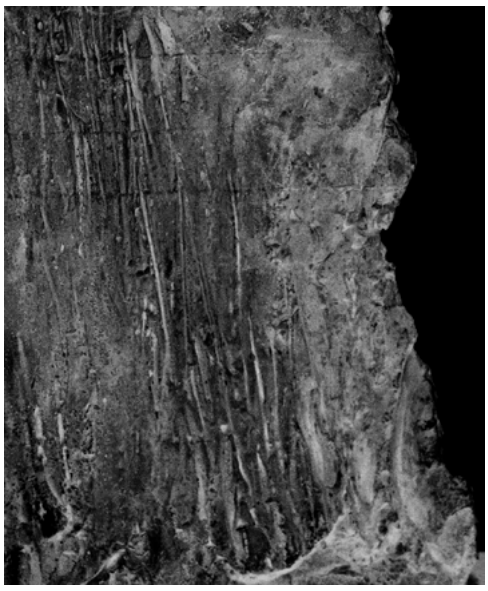
7 Rosso admired Rembrandt's work intensely (see Mola 2007 pp. 19–20).

Above: ep. b; ep. e.

The contrast/reversal is apparent, if not very distinct. The lack of clarity is due in part to the unevenness of the removal of plaster from the bronze, it obscuring features which, in the Edinburgh work, the varnish articulates. For instance, at the very bottom-centre of the Edinburgh there is a smiling undercut pushed back by shadow and varnish; in the bronze on the left, this area is covered in plaster, resulting in both a tonal reversal and a loss of definition in its reproduction of the mould's form. Also, the bronze has vastly more casting aberrations – small fissures, slight crazing of the gelatine, the seam of a repaired crack running horizontally through its centre, the founding void in the lower-left – which obscure the similarity of forms. It is easier to see their similarities in black and white:



We should remember that Rosso's awareness of the work's potential future in photographic prints was an awareness of their black and white existence. Also, their futures in photographs highlight their intermediary existence as negatives – inverting the tonality of the Edinburgh plaster and contrasting it with a black and white print of the Venice work brings them closer together:



The white verticals of the plaster caught in the bronze are replicated in negative by the varnish nestling in the plaster, the shadow of the undercut in the plaster is brought to the front akin to the plaster filling/obscuring the undercut in the bronze, etc. *Rosso brings into sculptural life an image he would have experienced in producing photographs*. In this regard one should recall that Rosso's prints were typically contact-printed from large glass-plate negatives – that is, negative and positive were the same size. This is really rather a unique, uncommented-upon feature of Rosso's casting. Not only does he vary tonality and hue, making a dark bronze and a light plaster, but he uses reproductive processes to produce objects with precisely *reversed* tonalities. That is, using only sculptural processes Rosso made negatives. This not only emphasises each object's relatedness to other sculptures, but also the relationship of one reproductive process to another; conditions raised by photography became a part of how one sculpture of *Ecce Puer* found new life in another.

Although also varnished plaster, the Milan *Ecce Puer* (ep. a) feels closer in spirit to the Piacenza wax (ep. c) than the Edinburgh plaster (ep. d). This is primarily an obvious result of similar colouring. However, the Piacenza work, although wax over plaster, resembles varnished plaster much more directly than it does typical (indeed, many of Rosso's earlier) wax over plaster works. This is neatly demonstrated in the work's installation at Galleria d'Arte Moderna Ricci Oddi, in which the sculpture faces a wax over plaster bust (fig. 10) by exact-contemporary Domenico Trentacoste (1859–1933).

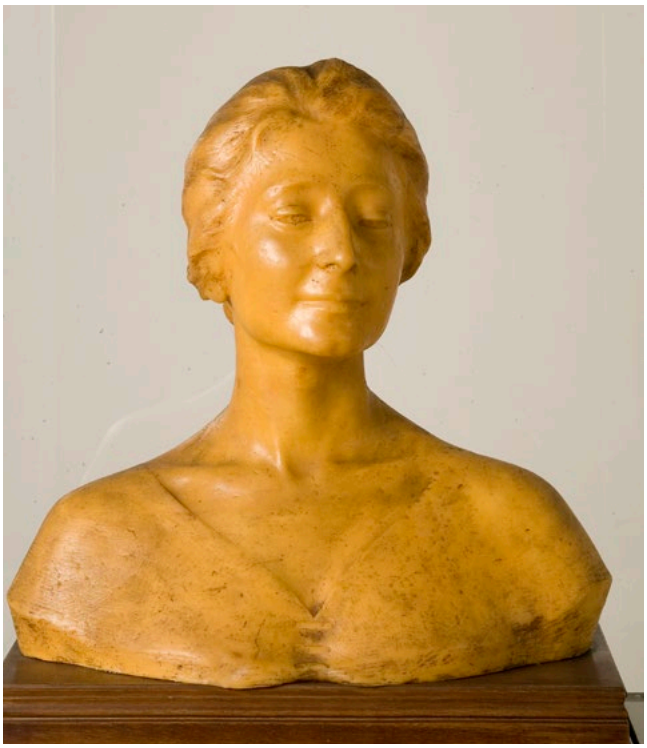
This spread: all pairs, left, ep. b; right, ep. d.

Trentacoste uses a visually impenetrable layer of wax, in which the translucency of the medium illuminates the wax with a depthless/unfathomable inner light, a little like marble. In contrast, Rosso uses an uneven and typically very thin layer of wax brushed onto the inside of the mould, through which the plaster lining is clearly visible. As the wax tends to bed into the *mould*'s nooks and crannies more than the raised surfaces, the areas of the final sculpture which are in relief have a thicker coating of wax than either the grooves or plains. In the Rosso wax, although the outer surface is smooth, there is unevenness of colour and tone; a sweeping brushstroke of thicker wax which gives a central passage a deeper colour, whereas, elsewhere, the white of the plaster nearly shows through uncoated. Although in photographic reproduction this registers almost entirely as a tonal contrast, in the work the wax's translucency emphasises a contrast of opaque surface and literal depth into the work. The work inhabits a strange territory between the Milan varnished plaster (left) and what one might expect of a conventionally cast, uniform thickness wax like the Trentacoste. Where it differs markedly from the Milan plaster is in sheen and tonal contrast. So much of all the *Ecce Puers*' mysteries lie in the pictorial nature of the image which the surface's subtle relief conjures. In the Piacenza sculpture the wax only just fills these raised, defining volumes, leaving a smooth interior for the plaster to fill. Due to the translucency of the wax, rather than casting distinct shadows the wax relief transmits light, reducing the play of light and shade on the surface. The result is that from a distance the work has a flatness and a deadness, something anaemic: of all the *Ecce Puers* this one is very hard to look at for an extended time – in diffused lighting it appears wan, ill or diseased.

The relationship between the Venice and Edinburgh works – one a tonal negative of the other – hinted at the process of making photographs. Likewise, in the Piacenza work the facial features struggle to emerge from the wax in a manner which recalls developing an under-exposed print, or developing in depleted solution – the image trapped in latency. Indeed, in the varied contrast and opposing sharpness the pairing of the Milan plaster and Piacenza wax anticipated (or, rather, is anticipated by) a pairing of photographs of the Milan plaster, which will be discussed at length in the following subchapter on photography.

Later chapters will focus on other relationships between the individual sculptures: the chapter on phenomenology will examine the role of colour in imbuing works with a specific atmosphere; the chapter on Modernism will address the different temporal addresses the works establish. The relevance of the above is to establish, firstly, that each of the sculptures of *Ecce Puer* achieves something specific to itself, without replication or redundancy across the body of works. This is an assertion by no means exclusive to this study. Secondly, it establishes that these unique instances establish between each other *specific* dialogues and material connections intrinsically bound to – if often subverting

Facing: top, a; right, c; bottom left, fig. 10.



the conventional use of – their mediums, and that these can only emerge, unconceived, through direct engagement with materials. This suggestion (a fortiori its dedicated exposition) of *specific* dialogues is original to this study, and a major concern of the following chapters will be to consider how this was possible. A third consideration highlighted by the above is the influence of photography on Rosso's sculpture. As with so much of Rosso's work, the influence is reciprocal and complex.

The photographic background of *Ecce Puer*

The scale of *Ecce Puer* is highly unusual amongst Rosso's oeuvre, being approximately double life-size, when with little variation his previous work had been life size or thereabouts (with those of young children, most especially *Bambina che ride*, often appearing slightly smaller than their subject's presumed age might suggest).[8] The most obvious reason for this change of scale is suggested by Rosso's activities of the previous years; that is, his increased engagement with photography. From this stem two distinct but naturally connected theses. Firstly, through the facility which photography had offered in enlarging or reducing the size of representations, Rosso had become curious about the psychological or aesthetic alteration which changes of scale effected, and desired to explore these in sculptural form. For Rosso it was paramount that the spontaneity of modelling in clay was faithfully preserved in the subsequent casts – that they be direct indices of his interaction with materials. As such, the idea of pointing, or, to put it more accurately, pantography, to enlarge a model mechanically, which had been perfected in the nineteenth century (and was a staple of Rodin's studio), would have been anathema to Rosso. Secondly, there is the possibility, to which I do not subscribe, that by this point Rosso had become more interested in his sculptures as, in effect, props or models made specifically to be recorded photographically. This is suggested by Giovanni Lista and by Gloria Moure, who, citing Lista, claims 'Rosso conceded autonomy to the photographic medium. There can be no doubt that this was the only medium in which Rosso achieved the vital effect he sought' (1996 p. 47). If photographs were the intended outcome of *Ecce Puer* it is hard to know why this would have drawn Rosso to double the model's size. Possibly he simply felt a desire to make it that large for personal variation or to force a different relationship between maker and material. In a photograph the primary effect the larger object would achieve would be a relative smoothing of the surface; the same constructive gesture or mark as used for the life-sized works appearing half the size in the same-sized reproduction

8 Barr also understands *Madame Noblet* and *Madame X* to be double life size, although the latter is such a peculiar object that questions of relative scale seem irrelevant (1963 p. 78).

of the larger work.[9] That this scaling-up or scaling-down of mark which photography offered isn't an irrelevant consideration will become clear in the following section, but whether it was the artist's consciously intended outcome is another matter.

The effect of Rosso's engagement with photography in the years of the new century leading to *Ecce Puer* can be gauged by close attention to *Ecce Puer*'s modelling; specifically, to aspects of the modelling which echo traits discernable in the photographs Rosso is known to have worked upon around this time. One of the most distinctive qualities of *Ecce Puer* is achieved by the aggressive and unprecedented knife striations running vertically down the proper-left of the sculpture's head, neck and upper torso.[10] The importance of these marks will be reconsidered later in this chapter, also in light of photography. The concern now is with their origin; with why they entered into Rosso's sculptural vocabulary, for they are perhaps the most overtly novel feature of this, Rosso's final sculpture.

The vast majority of Rosso's busts are characterised by the rounded furrows and mounds formed by modelling with the fingers. In some works a sheer slab of a surface is formed by the side of knife or trowel (*Bambino alle Cucine Economiche* (1892–3) offers a fine counterpoint of both), and in other works one finds occasionally the softened striations of a modelling tool. Compared with earlier works the long gouges of *Ecce Puer* offer a very different relationship between surface and applied mark: incising rather than pressing or building. Not that these verticals are homogenous in their application. Those on the cheek are softened; made using the smooth end of a modelling tool they form grooves rather than gashes. Yet, for the greater part, the vertical marks do not reconfigure the contours of a surface, but interrupt the surface, forming both slits into the clay and a pronounced burr protruding from the plane of the sculpture.

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9 Another possible reason for increasing the size of the head so greatly relates to Rosso's hostility to 'touch', as repeated throughout his writings, e.g. 'I have always fought against everything which is pro the touch of the hand' (p. 185). This thesis will be elaborated later in relation to phenomenology. For the moment, suffice it to say that if one considers all Rosso's sculptures prior to *Ecce Puer* of the head, neck and upper-shoulders of a child (*Bambino ebreo* (1892–3); *Bambina che ride* (1889–90); *Bambino al sole* (1892); *Bambino malato* (1895)), the possibility of holding them, of them nestling in the hand, is one evoked in the experience of beholding the works, whereas, confronting a sculpture of *Ecce Puer* offers a very different experience, achieved, in part, through its increased size.

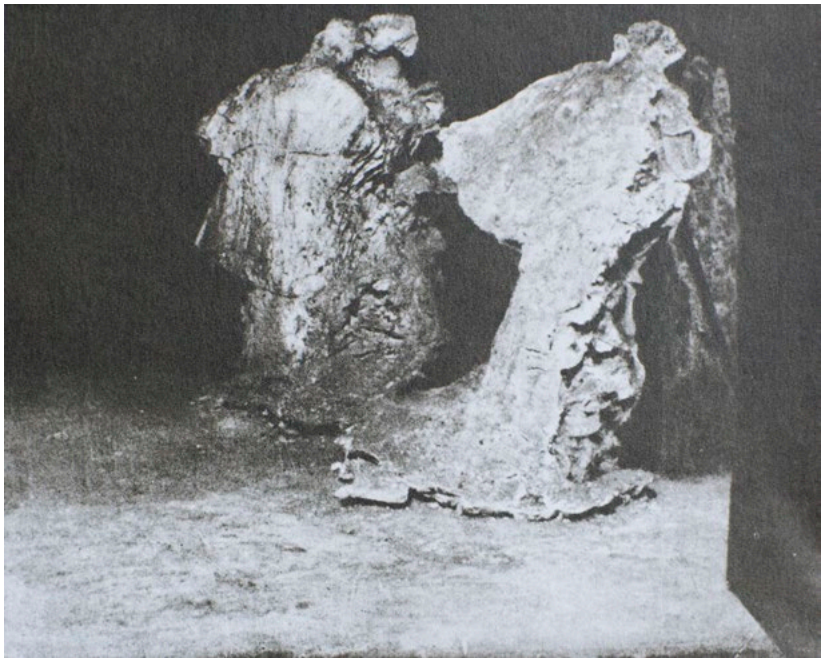
10 Hints of precedent for these marks are found in 1895's *Yvette Guilbert*, illustrated in the introduction, in which aggressive vertical grooves are evident in the subject's proper-left neck. However, these lack the scope and compositional centrality of those in *Ecce Puer*, and the more apparent marks register as artefacts from the casting process (from demoulding), rather than the unmistakably present furrows of *Ecce Puer*. A more dramatic example of gouges to the proper-left of a sculpture is evident in the plaster *Grande rieuse* in the Hanoke Open-Air Museum (Tokyo); again, these result from the casting, not the modelling, and date from approximately a decade after *Ecce Puer*'s modelling.

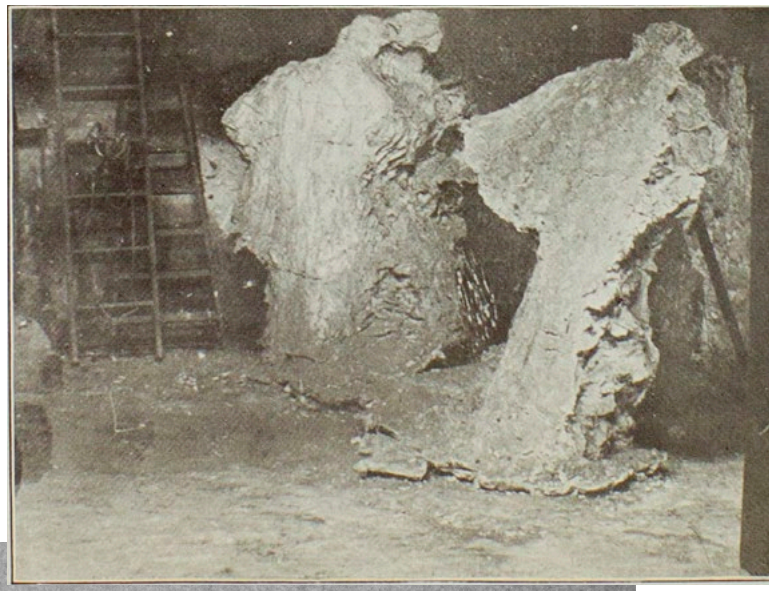
Although the scope of *Ecce Puer*'s gouges make them unique amongst Rosso's work, their visual impression had been predicted in photography. This is most especially exemplified in those photographs which took as their subject Rosso's major full-size, full-figure plaster sculptures (*Impression d'omnibus*, (1884), *Paris la nuit* (1895), *Dr Fles* (1900)). None of these survived in sculptural form and, possibly owing to this, they were subjected to extensive photographic exploration, especially *Impression d'omnibus*, out of which dozens of unique prints arose from a single surviving photograph of the 1880s.

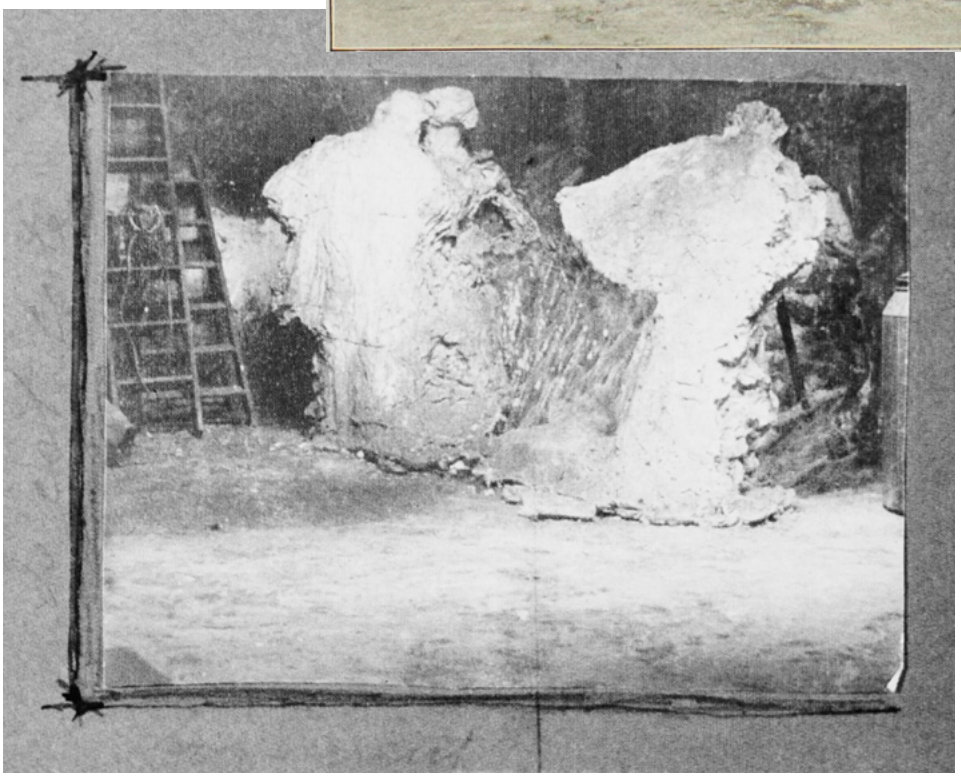
Scrutinising *Dr Fles* as it finds life in Claris's 1902 study (fig. 11, also reproduced in Soffici 1909), it is evident that Rosso has used the raking light from the right-hand illumination to emphasise the depth and vigour of the finger marks which form the sculpture's proper-left flank (and, indeed, offer a degree of uniformity across the work – note the illuminated proper-right left lower leg). That these details fascinated Rosso is evident in a photograph in which he gives them exculsive priority (fig. 12). The plaster sculpture having been destroyed, it is impossible to judge exactly what the surface's appearance would have been; however, judging by the size of the work and the marks' fairly evident trace of the fingers, it seems reasonable to turn to the greater part of *Madame Noblet* as an example. However, in the appearance of the work in the photographic print, especially the print's right-hand side, the nearest parallel would be *Ecce Puer* – the marks of the hand on the large scale condensing through the camera's lens into something sharper, more incisive.

The photographic translation of hand-mark to sharp, aggressive cut is further evident in Rosso's evolving understanding of *Paris la nuit*. Viewing an untouched photograph of it, one notices how its lighting draws out certain grooves, which now function as cuts (fig. 13). Perhaps most prominently this is evident as a series of abrupt diagonals on the right shoulder of the front figure of the left-hand pair. If one turns to the publication which accompanied Rosso's 1906 show in London, one finds a photograph of *Paris la nuit*, here seen from a subtly different angle, in which these incisions in the plaster (which, again, in the plaster would most probably not register as starkly, certainly not in most lighting conditions), are mimicked by Rosso as an extension of that figure's right-hand side (fig. 14). To achieve this effect, Rosso worked directly into a photographic print with a blade, scoring the paper to emulate the starkly lit contours of the plaster. This print was rephotographed and reproducing in photomechanical form. Rosso's engagement with the extension of *Paris la nuit*'s sculptural form through manipulating photographic prints was taken further in another print, not reproduced during Rosso's lifetime (fig. 15), in which the entire internal negative-space of the sculpture is blocked-in using a combination of scoring and gouache heightening. The burrs caused by the blade's scoring of the paper form clots of matter which diverge in effect from the hand-marks of the previous sculptures, and almost perfectly anticipate the knife gouges which so typify *Ecce Puer* (fig. 16), a work which was modelled in the year of the publication of the Cremetti catalogue in which the scored paper of *Paris la nuit* first found public existence.

Facing: fig. 11. Above: top left, fig. 11 (detail); right, ep. d; bottom, fig. 12.







The implication of the above analyses is that Rosso's turn to photography opened new avenues to his sculpture. Photography was not only a means of dissemination, nor simply a tool in which new ideas for altering sculptural form could quickly and cheaply be tried. The effects of photography on Rosso's sculptural practice are more submerged and run much more deeply. Although visual elements of Rosso's photographs anticipate and eventually migrate into the modelling of his last sculpture (and, we shall see, also into subsequent casts), there is little reason to believe that this was something of which the artist was aware, even retrospectively. Rather, that which Rosso had come to know via photographic experimentation became familiar, became habit, became a part of his approach to making sense of the world in a visual way – much as one might pick up turns of phrase without realising it. This prompted real change in his approach to sculpture: although not intentionally, photography became a subject of sculpture, if in an abstracted, fragmented way. Yet, of course, this abstraction and fragmentation were qualities suggested and engendered by photography itself. It is this complex entwining, this mutual inflection of materials and processes, which Rosso implicitly argues for when he writes, late in life, of the importance of 'working with materials' to go beyond the sculptures of those who can delegate their production to *praticiens*. It is also that which allowed Rosso's project to go beyond what he thought he knew, beyond his stated convictions and beliefs. Not least, it is this tense dialogue between mediums which makes the sum of Rosso's work so elusive.

Facing: top, fig. 13; middle, fig. 14; bottom, fig. 15.
Above: left, fig. 15 (detail); right, fig. 16.

The photographs

Rosso retained the glass-plate negatives from which prints were produced, which are now held in the Rosso archive in Barzio. In Francesca Bacci's catalogue, negatives of *Ecce Puer* total twenty, making it the most photographed of all Rosso's works.[11] Eleven of these are photographs of sculptural instances, nine are photographs of photographic prints. Rosso worked intensively on the prints, cropping them irregularly, scratching them, painting out sections, etc., and the twenty negatives in no way suggest how many discrete elements the photographic corpus might contain.

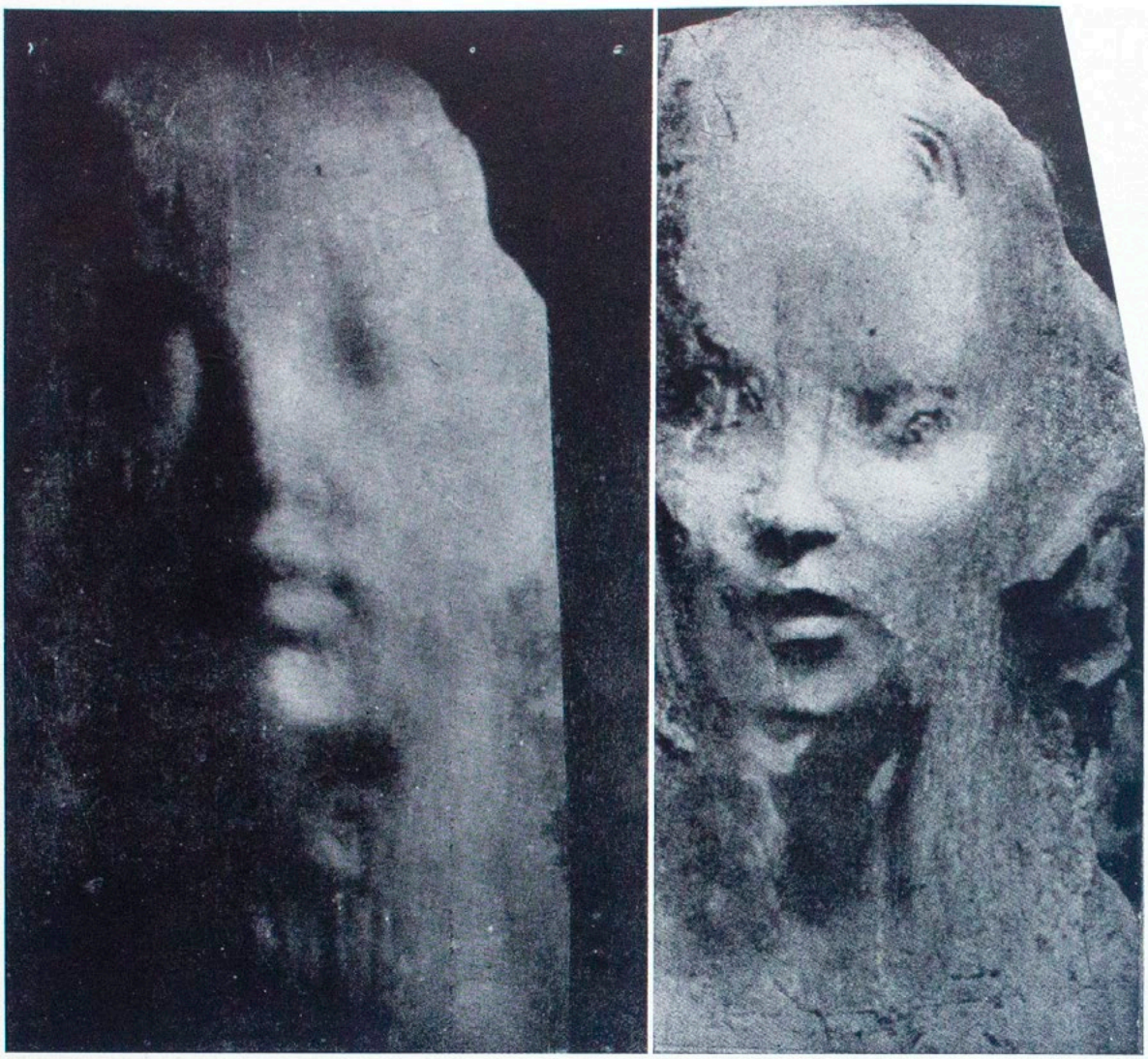
Ecce Puer is one of the most photographed of Rosso's sculptures, yet the artist's many prints of this work offer only a limited range of viewpoints. These typically emphasise a directness and facingness, although a number of negatives display the work from a little below, or turned to show more of the proper-left cheek. A limited range of positions might be expected, given that in Rosso's first published essay (1902) he outlined his sculptural project as a direct response to Charles Baudelaire's denigration of sculpture in his 'Salon of 1846'. In contrast to sculpture, Baudelaire elevates paintings, arguing: 'Painting has only one point of view; painting is exclusive and despotic, and, in consequence, the painter's message is much more forceful' (1981 p. 98). Rosso claimed 'my work must be looked at as if it was [*sic*] a painting'. It is for this reason that Giovanni Lista can argue for the primacy of the photograph, and Gloria Moure can assert that 'Rosso conceded autonomy to the photographic medium. There can be no doubt that this was the only medium in which Rosso achieved the vital effect he sought' (1996 p. 47).

However, the limited range of points-of-view in Rosso's photographs of *Ecce Puer* achieves something else, something almost directly at odds with Baudelaire's singular, 'exclusive and despotic' image: variation and openness. Although more richly nuanced across all the photographs, this is most starkly evident in Rosso's pairing of images of the Milan plaster (fig. 17).[12] The photographic pairing highlights the model's pronounced ambiguity and androgyny: in suggesting age and sex both images are ambiguous in themselves; together they present an antagonism. The left-hand image appears soft and full-in-cheek, something boyish in the *sfumato* modelling of the corners of the lips. The subject appears to be moving forwards and upwards, accented by both the camera-angle – looking upwards at the face – and the image's non-orthogonal cropping. Conversely, the right-hand image presents defined

11 In light of the disparity between Bacci's and Mola's cataloguing (noted in the previous chapter), this number is unreliable but suggestive.

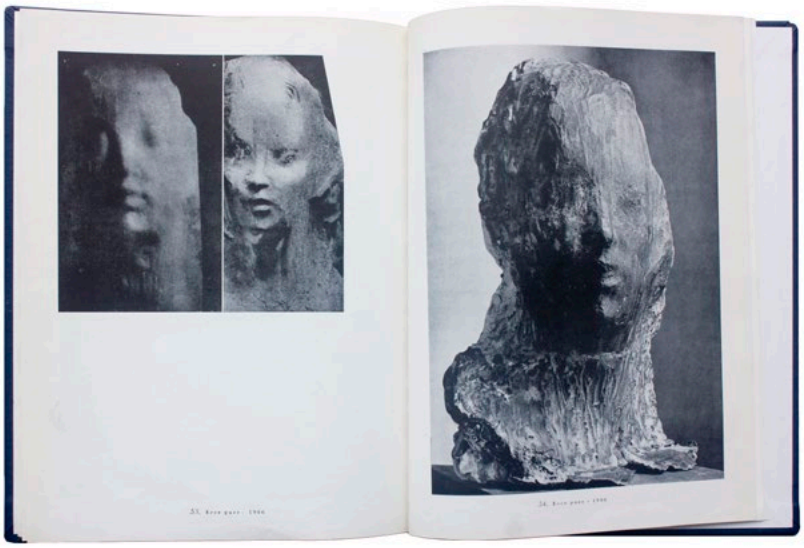
12 Reproduced in Borghi 1950 p. 53 (fig. 18). The facing page depicts the Venice bronze. This pairing is widely reproduced, also appearing in Moure ed. 1996 p. 258; and Becker 1999 p. 165.

Facing: fig. 17.



cheekbones, a slightly pinched face, angular nose and hard lips. Androgyny is perhaps to be expected in the fleeting image of a four-year-old child, and is not unprecedented in Rosso's late sculptures of adult subjects, i.e. *Ritratto di Madame Noblet* (1897). *Ecce Puer* is different from *Madame Noblet* in that the androgyny is in parallel with extreme uncertainty about the subject's age.

Contrary to Rosso's written assertions and the vast majority of scholarship drawing from it, the coupling of photographs of the same sculpture demonstrates not the camera's ability to direct one to a single, defined understanding of the work, 'a fixed vantage point' (Messinger 1991 p. 63), but the reverse. They demonstrate that the one object can have many lives and may suggest different generations; that each instance can distance itself from its source, yet retain an ineliminable connection.[13]



13 Rosso's photographs have received great attention in recent decades. The importance of photomechanical reproductions of his work has received far less direct attention, typically being ignored or subsumed into the broader category of the photographic (Mola does devote a brief section to the photomechanically produced prints (2006 pp. 104–15)). There are grounds for this, not least that the artist indiscriminately worked onto and into the surfaces of photographic prints and photomechanical-halftone reproductions – for instance, beautiful examples of both were presented alongside one another without distinction in the recent presentation of Rosso's work at the Center for Italian Modern Art, New York (2014–15). Yet the two technologies cannot be wholly merged in how they are considered. As they will be the dominant theme of chapters 4 and 5 their importance as vastly extended parts of *Ecce Puer* will not be addressed in this chapter.

Above: fig. 18.

The titles

The varied elements which constitute *Ecce Puer* are connected by an indexical thread making them all descendants, at various removes, of the same clay model. It is from their common title that they derive their clearest conceptual unity as *Ecce Puer*. Hecker notes that for Rosso titles: 'took on a measure of conceptual arbitrariness with respect to the subject. Rosso seemed to view the series as a single work, and each version within it as a creative conjugation that remained tied to its root subject via its basic form' (2010 p. 733). Although titles were subject to alteration over the course of a work's development,[14] they were typically marked by a *potential* literalness to subject: i.e. *La portinaia* is a depiction of a concierge, a fact the title conveys; *Carne altrui* represents a prostitute, the title again giving specificity to the depicted female head. Another source of confusion in the titles arose from their languages; as an Italian working in Paris the language of Rosso's titles was subject to fluctuation. On these points *Ecce Puer* is very different. The title is Latin (suggestively the root/origin both of his native and adopted languages), which Rosso had only once used previously, in *Aetas Aurea*. Like *Aetas Aurea*, *Ecce Puer* moves away from designation to complex suggestion. However, before exploring *Ecce Puer*, it is necessary to consider the history of the work's title before it arrived at the name it has borne for over a century.

The earliest mention of the work is found in the catalogue of 1906's Salon d'Automne, where a wax sculpture is registered as *Impression d'enfant (portrait d' Émile Mond)*, a misattribution of the subject to the father, not the son (Salon d'Automne 1906 p. 147). By the end of 1906, *The Daily Chronicle* in London correctly titled the work *Portrait de l'enfant Alfred Mond* (2007 p. 124). Given the complexity of the Mond family's couplings, the mistake is understandable and to read anything into it, beyond it being an error subsequently corrected, is perhaps a step too far.[15] However, given the nature of Rosso's project it is perhaps appropriate to explore the porosity between generations which this play of titles raises. There is in Rosso's work something incestuous; his is a practice predicated on inbreeding. A sculpture forms overlapping connections with other sculptures of its generation, their qualities bleeding into one another. Photographs bring out contrasting qualities of the work; they divide it into psychologically distant images which yet speak to one another as kin. This points to something deeper than could be achieved in the single object – to a mystery in Being through the interweaving of shared incidentals and family traits which make one dwell on (and in) the work, both

14 I.e. Hecker notes elsewhere that *Bambino ebreo* was initially 'titled generically *Impression d'enfant or Head of a child*. Only in 1910 did the work acquire the title *Bambino ebreo*, but in 1926, very late in his life, Rosso again changed the title to the name of his own patron saint *San Luigi*, for an exhibition of religious art in Venice' (1999 pp. 3–4).

15 On the web of marriages characterising the Mond/Schweich family, see Cohen 1956.

the single sculptural element and the corpus. It is territory most beautifully traversed by Robert Musil in *The Man Without Qualities* – himself attempting through art to go beyond the limitations he found in early phenomenology:

> 'You know that myth Plato tells, following some ancient source, that the gods divided the original human being into two halves, male and female?' She had propped herself up on one elbow and unexpectedly blushed, feeling awkward at having asked Ulrich if he knew so familiar a story; then she resolutely charged ahead: 'Now those two pathetic halves do all kinds of silly things to come together again. It's in all the schoolbooks for older children; unfortunately, they never tell you why it doesn't work!'
>
> 'I can tell you that,' Ulrich broke in, glad to see how well she had understood him. 'Nobody knows which of so many halves running around in the world is his missing half. He grabs one that seems to be his, vainly trying to become one with her, until the futility of it becomes hopelessly clear. If a child results, both halves believe for a few youthful years that they've at least become one in the child. But the child is merely a third half, which soon shows signs of trying to get as far away from the other two as it possibly can and look for a fourth half. In this way human beings keep 'halving' themselves physiologically, while the ideal of oneness remains as far away as the moon outside the bedroom window.'
>
> 'You'd think that siblings might have succeeded halfway already!' Agathe interjected in a voice that had become husky.
>
> 'Twins, possibly.'
>
> 'Aren't we twins?'
>
> 'Certainly!' Ulrich suddenly became evasive. 'Twins are rare; twins of different gender especially so. But when, into the bargain, they differ in age and have hardly known each other for the longest time, it's quite a phenomenon – one really worthy of us!' he declared, struggling to get back into a shallower cheeriness.
>
> 'But we met as twins!' Agathe challenged him, ignoring his tone.
>
> 'Because we unwittingly dressed alike?'
>
> 'Maybe. And in all sorts of ways! You may say it was chance; but what is chance? I think it's fate or destiny or providence, or whatever you want to call it. Haven't you ever thought it was by chance that you were born as yourself? Our being brother and sister doubles that chance!' That was how Agathe put it, and Ulrich submitted to this wisdom.

> 'So we declare ourselves to be twins,' he agreed. 'Symmetrical creatures of a whim of nature, henceforth we shall be the same age, the same height, with the same hair, walking the highways and byways of the world in identical striped clothes with the same bow tied under our chins. *But I warn you that people will tum around and look after us, half touched and half scornful, as always happens when something reminds them of the mysteries of their own beginnings.*' (my emphasis, 1997 pp. 980–1)

If I have, perhaps unconvincingly, focused on the initial mis-titling's dark-side, *Ecce Puer*, which Mola claims Rosso used in letters from 1909 (2007 p. 124), and which the work is first recorded exhibited under in 1910 (Hecker 1997 p. 149), has been understood as expressing the work's radiant innocence, the artist apparently referring to the work as '*une vision de purité*' – 'a definition', claims Luciano Caramel, 'completely in harmony with the title and the face's otherworldly absorption' (1994 p. 36). Caramel asserts – citing no evidence – that the title is a direct reference to Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*. The conclusions drawn from this are brief and questionable: 'the title (a reference to Nietzsche), the larger than life-size dimensions, the fading-out of the image … attest to the determination to give form to an idea, to an interior meditation, a moral aspiration' (1988 p. 15; repeated almost verbatim 1994 p. 36). For Rosso to adopt and adapt a title from Nietzsche isn't impossible.[16] However, given that *Ecce Homo: How to Become What you Are* places signal importance on overcoming as growth from *impurity* – opening the book at random, the first phrase which caught my eye, grabbed by the italics: '*Sickness* was what restored me to reason' (2005 p. 89) – if *Ecce Puer* points to Nietzsche, it is not as a simple nod to him for philosophical endorsement of an 'image of purity'. Indeed, the very opening line of 'Why I am so wise', the first chapter of *Ecce Homo*, offers a connection between Nietzsche and the 'darker' side of Rosso propounded above, lending weight to the possible generational significance of the work's earlier

16 Although there is no conclusive evidence to assume the Nietzschean influence, Nietzsche's sway on the Parisian artistic scene of 1890s and onwards was immense (see Forth 1993). Looking to Rosso's earlier years the presence of Nietzsche's influence is suggested via Wagner; the *Scapigliatura*, the Lombardy affiliation of poets, artists and political thinkers with whom Rosso was early associated, were 'among the earliest in Italy to revere Wagner, they based their goal of creating a synaesthetic experience in art … on his concept of the Gesamtkunstwerk' (Hargrove 1996 p. 106). Of course, the Nietzsche of *Ecce Homo* is greatly removed from the Wagner acolyte of the early *The Birth of Tragedy*, and Rosso and late Nietzsche share a view of becoming remote from Wagner's Schopenhauerian world, yet the same ferment is shared. A third consideration is Rosso's friendship with Giovanni Papini (1881–1956), once loosely associated with Futurism, whom Rosso mentions visiting on friendly terms in 1923 (p. 181), and who authored a monograph on Rosso in 1940. I can't ascertain when their friendship began; it could well be later than *Ecce Puer*'s titling. However, in 1907 (the same year as the title *Ecce Puer* was first known to have been used) Papini published *Il crepuscolo dei filosofi* (*The Twilight of the Philosophers*) – also an adapted Nietzsche title.

mis-titling: 'The happiness of my existence, perhaps its uniqueness, lies in its fatefulness; to give it the form of a riddle: *as my father I am already dead and as my mother I am still alive and growing old*' (2005 p. 74–5).

If one takes *Ecce Puer* as a reference to Nietzsche it is above all suggestive of the position *Ecce Puer* occupied in Rosso's understanding of his oeuvre. As *Ecce Puer* for Rosso, *Ecce Homo* is an attempt to frame and re-frame the body of Nietzsche's work, imposing a continuity across a fractured oeuvre, and a hierarchy within it, i.e.: 'My Zarathustra has a special place for me in my writings. With it, I have given humanity the greatest gift it has ever received' (2005 p. 72).

Like *Ecce Puer*, *Ecce Homo* is a study of genesis, ontogenetic and phylogenetic. Also of genius (appropriately from Latin *gignere* – to beget). Nietzsche offers a radically banal grounding of genius: 'I will be asked why I have been talking about these petty matters that people usually think are not worth worrying about … Answer: these petty concerns – nutrition, climate, recuperation, the whole casuistry of selfishness – are far more important than all the concepts people have considered important so far' (2005 p. 98). One's abilities emerge from engagement with the stuff of life, from its materials, not from the abstract or speculative. Phylogenetically *Ecce Homo* radiates the importance of family, of kin: 'There is another respect in which I am just my father once again, and, as it were, a continuation of his life after his all-too-early death' (p. 80), and: 'But I will admit that my greatest objection to 'eternal return,' my truly *abysmal* thought, is always my mother and sister. – But I am a huge atavism, even as a Pole. You would need to go back centuries to find instincts as pure as mine' (p. 78).

This sentiment shares with *Ecce Puer* a timelessness.[17] Ages, epochs, are so strongly a part of *Ecce Puer*. The embryonic, Piacenza wax can casually be referred to as 'alien' – something distant, from the future looking backwards.[18] Conversely the Venice bronze is fossilised, something terrifyingly old yet newly discovered. *Ecce Puer* is both a 'huge atavism' *and* an artwork pointing resolutely towards the future. Always part of a lineage yet – nutrition and climate/clay and bronze – always a product of the materials which forge one in the moment, which allow this latency to appear in new repleteness. Nietzsche was writing against generations of German thought steeped in metaphysics and exalted dialectics; Rosso's explicit engagement in casting his own sculptures was similarly working against nineteenth-century sculpture's privileging of conception at the expense of making.

17 Nietzsche and Rosso were masters of a timelessness which Nietzsche articulated so succinctly in 'The Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life': 'For I do not know what meaning classical studies could have for our time if they were not untimely – that is to say, acting counter to our time and thereby acting on our time and, let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come' (1997 p. 60).

18 For Paola Mola: '*Ecce Puer* is the Image [*sic*] that bursts in one more time, its bearing a little alien, with an unnaturally curved forehead, a pointed chin' (2007 p. 120).

Innocence and purity are central to *Ecce Homo*. The title refers to chapter 19 of the Vulgate rendering of St. John's Gospel; Pilate saithing unto the mob 'Behold the Man!' The Vulgate's '*Ecce Homo!*' contains within it an ambiguity of seer and seen. That is, although in context it is a demand to 'view/behold the man', out of context it can equally means 'man, behold' – an injunction that the man behold something or someone. Within the Gospel its meaning is clear: 'And *Pilate* saith unto them, Behold the man!' But it is hard to imagine that a classicist of Nietzsche's standing, and an inquisitor of his resolve, would not have been interested in this ambiguity. Indeed, this ambiguity of '*ecce homo!*' is one implicitly explored in *Ecce Homo*. Firstly, Nietzsche is writing to correct how he is perceived; indeed, asking that people – not necessarily those alive today, but those to come – behold him at all. The preface opens with: 'It seems imperative for me to say *who I am*. People should really know this: since I have not left myself "without testimony". But the discrepancy between the greatness of my task and the *smallness* of my contemporaries is apparent in the fact that people have not listened or even looked at me' (2005 p. 71). Secondly, he is writing to give resolution to his own becoming. Becoming what one is isn't stable; revision and autobiography were consistent ways in which Nietzsche grew. As Rudiger Safranski notes, 'During his highschool and college years, between 1858 to 1868 [i.e. ages 14 to 24], he penned no fewer than nine autobiographical sketches, each following the general theme of "How I became what I am"' (2002 p. 25). In a similar vein we can read Rosso's entire practice after 1900 as a re-fashioning of his memoir: as the introduction noted, even one of his very earliest works, *Birichino* (1882), was returned to on at least eight occasions until the close of his life.

I have dwelt upon this complex imbrication of seer and seen in *Ecce Homo!*, *Ecce Homo* and *Ecce Puer* because it illuminates Rosso's oeuvre and the complexity of *Ecce Puer*'s place within it: as both an exemplar of the themes of earlier work and as a critical glance cast back, gathering Rosso's oeuvre into itself. An elemental reciprocity of seer and seen is also fundamental in Maurice Merleau-Ponty's late ontology, as expressed in *The Visible and the Invisible*; the connection of this work to Rosso has been noted by Harry Cooper and – drawing from him – Sharon Hecker. It is an important connection to which we shall return.

What is *Ecce Puer*?

The first half of this chapter outlined the elements which constitute the 'work' *Ecce Puer*. It is necessary to consider how these parts relate, and how best to designate these relations. This section begins by assessing the appropriateness of terms typically used to express the interaction of parts in *Ecce Puer*. The inadequacy of pre-existing categories prompts a move to considering how *Ecce Puer* relates to various ontologies of the artwork. It concludes by suggesting the coinage of a term, for use in the subsequent study, which more adequately expresses the functioning of *Ecce Puer*.

Multiple

Rosso produced sculptures from gelatine moulds and photographic prints from glass-plate negatives. Both these techniques have as their basic premiss the production of multiple near-identical artefacts. If Rosso had cast nine almost identical sculptures, *Ecce Puer* would sit happily within a centuries-old tradition of producing multiple works from a single model. This would position *Ecce Puer* as a single work exemplified by finite instances which were not intended to be appreciated for their individual uniqueness – never instances which were explicitly intended to be viewed as different from one another, even if connoisseurs might compare the relative quality of casts, etc. Rodin's sculptures begin to strain the boundary of 'multiple' through his experimentation with a lack of conventional 'finish' in the post-cast manipulation of the bronzes – his exploration of the nuances the production processes imparted to each individual work. Rosso, through the casting of different materials from the same mould from the 1890s onwards, produced startlingly different pieces.

The term 'multiple' can apply to just this, to employing different materials or finishes to the same form. The use of materials in *Ecce Puer* differs from this. The pieces assert themselves not just as nuanced variations but as requiring distance from one another. The analysis above made clear that each

iteration is aware of its relation to other works (which is not to say that the artist was necessarily aware of the relationships, a point central to the later chapter on reproduction), yet draws away from identifying with them – plaster emulates bronze, bronze becomes plaster, plaster reverses the effects of varnish, etc.

Single works

Derek Pullen notes that 'Rosso did not edition his waxes or bronzes, apparently regarding each work as complete in itself and unique' (Pullen 1994 p. 62). Yet Rosso never exhibited more than one element of a work in an exhibition, nor illustrated more than one in a publication, suggesting that the *Ecce Puer* in Milan and that in Venice are not separate works in the same way as are, say, the Venice *Ecce Puer* and the Musée d'Orsay *Aetas Aurea*. Still less did Rosso make an explicit practice of orchestrating relationships between elements of works within one setting. As such, the right of each work to have a life of its own, unsupported by its kin, must be highlighted. That this is impossible when viewing an individual piece if one has seen other pieces is also true. This is something of which Rosso was aware and which was clearly a practical concern, underlying his establishment of a hierarchy of works through recasting, and in the manner in which they were recast: each is different, each adds something to our understanding of the 'work'.

Series

'Series' is the most commonly used term for the relationship of element to whole in Rosso's works, especially in recent scholarship. Although not analysing the relationships obtaining between pieces in any depth, Paola Mola titles a 2007 essay 'The Work and the Series'. It is also the term which Sharon Hecker adopts. Hecker is well aware that there is something inappropriate in 'series'; even whilst employing the term she notes that 'Rosso seemed to view the series as a single work' (2010 p. 733). However, the implications of this acknowledgement – that the artist viewed the many instances of a 'work' as a single work – isn't pursued fully.

Before addressing Rosso's understanding of the nature of the 'work', it is right to consider why the designation 'series' remains current in critical writing on Rosso, how Rosso engaged with it, and where it misses the mark.

Within discussions of art the term is broadly used and hard to define, but through comparing Rosso's endeavour with canonical examples something of their differences emerges. The *Oxford English Dictionary* clarifies the etymology of the term: 'classical Latin *seriēs* row, continuous line, succession,

sequence, *line of ancestors or descendants*' (my emphasis) – something sequential, linear, an underlying narrative. Rodin's colossal output include several groups of objects which could be termed 'series', although they often weren't exhibited as such during his lifetime. Leo Steinberg recalls 'the exhilaration upon first catching sight, atop a tall vitrine, of a forest of Clemenceau busts – not spare casts, but all different, thirty-four of them – one serial portrait, continuous as Monet's *Rouen Cathedral* or *Water Lilies*' (1972 p. 324). Clearly, this would align Rodin more with how early interpreters viewed Rosso, under the misguided belief that he modelled his waxes – i.e. that all were different, without a shared indexical connection. Steinberg's later comments signal the difference between *Ecce Puer* and Rodin's approach to sculpture: Rodin's 'have to be seen in their successive recurrences, the same figures again and again, with new roles, new titles, new patinas, a new limb or two, and always a new orientation' (1972 pp. 339–41). Although there may appear to be superficial parallels between projects, the need of ('have to be seen') 'new roles, new titles', etc., makes Rodin stand remote from the questions which *Ecce Puer* poses (this will be discussed at length in the chapter on reproduction).

Though more remote in appearance, perhaps closer to *Ecce Puer* in sympathy are Monet's thirty or more paintings of Rouen Cathedral. To some extent Monet's series shares with Rosso's works the breakdown of obvious linearity or sequence; Monet's canvases aren't numbered or in a specific order, they aren't directed at a pre-destined terminus. Despite being paradigmatic exemplars, given the lack of 'continuous line' or 'succession' one is almost tempted to question whether, etymologically, Monet's paintings are accurately deemed a series at all. However, compared with *Ecce Puer* they less problematically form a series. This is because across them there is a temporal discreteness and specificity which – although not fully exemplifying seriality – sets them at a remove from Rosso's work. That is, the series *Rouen Cathedral* presents multiple instances of one object, yet re-asserts each instance's temporal discreteness by emphasising the specificity of the instant it depicts. They are documents of a fleeting moment arrested, which suggests temporal progression, albeit without defining a specific sequence across the body of works. This discreteness is emphasised through the works' titling, which unifies them as a group whilst distinguishing each as separate. For instance, two very similarly composed works of similar hue at the Musée d'Orsay are divided thus: *La Cathédrale de Rouen. Le portail et la tour Saint-Romain, plein soleil; harmonie bleue et or* and *La Cathédrale de Rouen. Le portail, soleil matinal; harmonie bleue*. The linearity of a series may not be essential to understanding Monet's *Rouen Cathedrals* but it is not something which they deny or make problematic.

Like *Rouen Cathedral*, the pieces of *Ecce Puer* also demand attention individually whilst meaning something different when conceived – as Rosso in some way saw them – as a whole. However, unlike Monet's, they play a

very complicated game with their temporal discreteness. Each piece does have its time, and in some measure it asserts its time relative to other parts of the work. Through their problematic questioning of generations, which stems from their material questioning of their generation, the instances of *Ecce Puer* clearly engage with what a series might be, yet fall outside the term's limits. That is, to return to the discussion prompted by *Ecce Puer*'s title, each sculpture forms connections with sculptures in the work suggestive of family relations: put very tritely, the atavistic Venetian bronze, bridging millennia, is some distant ancestor of the sci-fi wax-on-plaster in Piacenza. But also, chronologically reversed, the pieces of *Ecce Puer* construct a single life: the wax-on-plaster sculpture, visually as though emerging from developing solution, is embryonic; it stretches forwards a lifetime to Venice's bronze. This is made more complicated still in that Rosso presents, through photography, one sculptural instance having within the 'work' its agèd reiteration. There is an uncanniness in this which is drawn out by Marcel Proust in *Time Regained*, the final volume of *In Search of Lost Time*. Marcel, himself now aging, enters a party of acquaintances long unseen. He muses:

> I did not understand why I failed to recognise the master of the house and his guests, why they all appeared to have 'made a head', generally powdered, which completely changed them. The Prince, receiving his guests, still preserved that air of a jolly king of the fairies he suggested to my mind the first time I saw him, but now, having apparently submitted to the disguise he had imposed upon his guests, he had tricked himself out in a white beard and dragged his feet heavily along as though they were soled with lead. *He seemed to be representing one of the ages of man*. His moustache was whitened as though the hoar-frost in Tom Thumb's forest clung to it. It seemed to inconvenience his stiffened mouth and once he had produced his effect, he ought to have taken it off. *To tell the truth, I only recognised him by reasoning out his identity with himself from certain familiar features*. I could not imagine what that little Lezensac had put on his face, but while others had grown white, some as to half of their beard, some only as their moustaches, he had found means, without the help of dye to cover his face with wrinkles and his eyebrow with bristling hairs; moreover, all this suited him ill, *his countenance seemed to have hardened and bronzed* and he wore an appearance of solemnity that aged him so much that he could no longer be taken for a young man. (my emphases, 1941 p. 278)

When acquainted with the 'work' *Ecce Puer*, viewing a single instance conjures a panorama of memories. Developing from Rosso's work-internal, technical experimentation with the physical materials of his art, the experience of the work opens onto a very human realm; the exploration of the passage of time, not as something linear, as suggested by series, but – through the complication of the logic of serialism – to a complex interaction, in perception, of memory, impression and projection: the heart of Proust's world and of phenomenological explorations of perception. This will be discussed in the following chapter.

Oeuvre

The family of objects united by the title *Ecce Puer* do, in a sense, form a coherent body or oeuvre. However, the term refers invariably to the full corpus of an artist's work – 'The works produced by an artist, composer, or writer, regarded collectively' (OED). Paola Mola suggests that 'Rosso worked far into the new century on an "*oeuvre* of the *oeuvre*," through a series of variations and repetitions that find parallels in the production of Brancusi, Morandi and Rodin' (2007 p. 14). It is hard to conceive a hierarchy or tiering of oeuvres. However, the introduction stressed the vital significance which the notion of oeuvre gained for artists in the second half of the nineteenth century and should be considered in relation to *Ecce Puer* even if it is implicit that the term isn't appropriate. Such consideration allows development of the difference between Rodin's and Rosso's uses of reproductive processes, hinted at in the introduction.

Rodin's oeuvre is marked by a comprehensive porosity between works. Sculpturally, one can trace this porosity in three distinct ways. Firstly, take for example Rodin's *Assemblages*, bringing together previously separate works; most strikingly *Assemblage: Mask of Camille Claudel and Left Hand of Pierre de Wissant* (1895). In this startling work Rodin fuses the cast mask of his student, muse and lover with the colossal left hand of one of the *Burghers of Calais*. Secondly, in Rodin's *Torso* (1887, which Rosso chose in exchange for one of his sculptures during their friendship, and later exhibited alongside his own works for comparison) is evident a new work developing directly from an earlier one; through re-casting, the *Torso* is derived directly (although mutilated and amputated) from his earlier *St. John*. Thirdly, in Rodin's incomplete (inconclusible?) 'masterpiece' *The Gates of Hell* (1880–1917) we have a convoluted matrix which generated *The Kiss*, *The Thinker*, *Eve*, *The Prodigal Son*, etc., and, even more confusingly, *The Three Fauns* – an assemblage of three identical casts. The drawing-together of previously discrete works in the first example, and the extraction and mechanical scaling-up of new works in the third, are utterly remote from Rosso's oeuvre and would collapse the internal

functioning between the elements which is, as the above discussion of series emphasised, so important to *Ecce Puer*'s effect. The production of discrete works from the same initial model in the second example is also not something strictly undertaken by Rosso, but is to some extent present in Rosso's oeuvre, in works such as *Bambino al seno* and *Rieuse*. In these works the cropping or mutilation of sculptural compositions – presenting the torso without the head in a 1910–14 bronze of the former; the mask without shoulders and neck in the post-1914 wax of the latter – is so extreme that it is experienced as though the pieces try and wrest apart, denying relation, rather than resonating together. Subsequent discussion of Rodin's use of photography will chart this conceptual and formal porosity of Rodin's 'open-oeuvre' beyond casting.

Philosophical considerations of multi-part artworks

In asking how best to understand the relationship of parts in *Ecce Puer* (that is, in asking what *Ecce Puer* is and does) one is effectively questioning its ontology. As such, brief consideration of philosophical enquiries into the ontology of artworks is warranted. The aim of these brief considerations is primarily to introduce material which will guide discussion in subsequent chapters, rather than aiming to give even a skeleton summary of questions pertaining to the ontology of the work of art; its boundaries and the construction of its identity.

The comments of Mola and Hecker which concluded the introduction made it clear that *Ecce Puer* is readily discussed between two levels; that of the specific instance or element, and that of the sum of those elements, the generic *Ecce Puer*. As such, it falls outside traditional designation of an artwork. However, operating over two levels of specific and general is in no way exclusive to *Ecce Puer*. The condition typifies the relation evident in Richard Wollheim's distinction between 'types' and 'tokens', which he draws from C. S. Peirce. It is as well to quote Peirce's formulation, as it highlights the similarity between his thinking of language and the complexity of *Ecce Puer*:

> There will ordinarily be about twenty the's on a page, and of course they count as twenty words. In another sense of the word 'word,' however, there is but one word 'the' in the English language; and it is impossible that this word should lie visibly on a page or be heard in any voice, for the reason that it is not a Single thing or Single event. It does not exist; it only determines things that do exist. Such a definitely significant Form, I propose to term a Type. A Single event which happens once and whose identity is limited to that one happening or a Single object or thing which is in some single place at any one instant of time, such event or

> thing being significant only as occurring just when and where it does, such as this or that word on a single line of a single page of a single copy of a book, I will venture to call a Token.[19] (Peirce 2008 vol. IV p. 537)

The distinction of type and token plays an important role in Wollheim's 'Art and its Objects' (1968).[20] He notes that 'With types we find the relationship between the generic entity and its elements at its most intimate: for not merely is the type present in all its tokens like the universal in all its instances, but *for much of the time we think and talk of the type as though it were itself a kind of token*, though a peculiarly important or pre-eminent one' (my emphasis, 1980 p. 76). Wollheim raises this distinction as a means of 'determining the criteria of identity and individuation appropriate to, say, a piece of music or a novel … *Ulysses* and *Der Rosenkavalier* are types, my copy of *Ulysses* and tonight's performance of *Rosenkavalier* are tokens of those types' (pp. 74–5). As these examples suggest, within Wollheim's thinking the type/token distinction arises when 'certain works of art are not physical *objects*'; and it is understood that in these cases 'it is the type that is the work of art' (pp. 74, 81).[21]

Certainly tokens of *Rosenkavalier* could have complex inter-token interactions and could, like *Ecce Puer*, be understood as establishing antagonistic relations amongst themselves: considering recordings one could see Bernstein responding to Karajan, and Karajan subsequently responding to his earlier performance, and to Bernstein, etc. But would one ever claim, as Mola, Hecker and others do of Rosso, that these 'tokens' form a discrete 'series' rather than a range of interpretations?

The relationship of type and token may not perfectly express *Ecce Puer*'s two-level identity of 'work', but its proximity is certainly suggestive. It also raises the relationship between music and *Ecce Puer*, which will be returned to in chapters 3 and 6. Although dealing with similar questions to those raised by Rosso's works, by locating the 'work of art' in the 'type' (though necessarily known through its 'sign', the token), Wollheim's type/token distinction doesn't encompass how *Ecce Puer* is perceived and discussed. Throughout this study, most particularly in relation to the work's titling, but also the

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19 In relation to Rosso (especially his use of colour, which will be an important concern in the following chapter), it is as well to note that Peirce's distinction of Type and Token is accompanied by a third term, Tone: 'An indefinite significant character such as a tone of voice can neither be called a Type nor a Token. I propose to call such a Sign a Tone' (2008 vol. IV p. 537).

20 Wollheim's ontology of art, although influential, has never been widely accepted. For Joseph Margolis, Wollheim's effective division of arts into two categories is untenable because 'every work of art is a token-of-a-type; there are no tokens or types *tout court*' (in Lamarque and Olsen eds. 2004 p. 76).

21 More pertinently for this study, for Wollheim 'physical objects', such as prints, can also exemplify type/token relations (1980 pp. 80, 82).

relationships obtaining between iterations, the idea of relations and familial ties (reproduction, generation, incest) have been prominent in discussing how the elements of *Ecce Puer* interact. This prompts consideration of 'family resemblances' as Wittgenstein uses the term in his *Philosophical Investigations*. We have seen that for Wollheim the 'type' is 'present in all its tokens'. For Wittgenstein, 'family resemblances' allow precisely the opposite understanding of the relation of genera to elements: that is, it demonstrates how one sees a connection between phenomena when 'phenomena have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all, – but they are all *related* to one another in many different ways' (1958 §. 65). 'Family resemblances' are exemplified by the myriad disparate types of 'games' – card games, chess, tennis, noughts and crosses, ring-a-ring-a-roses, the Olympics, etc. As another example Wittgenstein offers thread: 'we extend our concept of number as in spinning a thread we twist fibre on fibre. And the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres' (§. 67). Wittgenstein continues: 'I can think of no better expression to characterise these similarities than "family resemblances"; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way. – And I shall say: "games" form a family' (§. 67).

The term serves Wittgenstein's need to establish that *essential* characteristics aren't necessary to form a coherent group (in his application, principally language). However, Wittgenstein's use of 'family' conflates resemblance and the causal/genetic bond assumed by 'family' – that is, the acknowledgement that, beyond resemblance, an awareness of family ties heightens one's perception of resemblances. This is a point Hans Sluga develops and I shall quote his example at some length because it rehearses a sentiment of C. S. Lewis's, which will be of central importance in the chapter on reproduction (and which was the germ of this entire project):

> When I am friends with Loren and then come to know his brother Laurence, my knowledge of Loren's person and character may help me to see things in Laurence which would not be visible to me, if I did not know them as brothers. My knowledge of their kinship gives rise to my recognition of their resemblance just as, in other cases, the recognition of resemblance can generate knowledge of a kinship. Or, to put it more generally, the recognition of a causal link of some sort or other between an A and a B can serve as means for bringing out similarities between them just as, reversely, the recognition of similarities between an A and a B can serve as a clue to their causal relations. (2006 pp. 9–10)

There is a causal link running through *Ecce Puer*; the individual elements are all indexically derived (through mould or lens) from the same clay model. It is this connection which determines that each element is given the same name, a name which runs like a thread connecting each piece. In the vast majority of cases (and across the sculptures probably all cases) resemblance would guarantee a connection, a family relationship. However, considering the photographic pairing discussed above, if one were not aware that they were both photographs of the same object, it would be easy to see them as unrelated. If one knew a sculptural instance, had seen it in the correct light, one would be able to connect the photographs – in a way analogous to the overlapping of fibres in a thread – through extension from a mediating element.

For Wittgenstein's examples to illuminate 'family resemblance' as fully as the term suggests (and as Sluga demonstrates) – that is, the connection of potentially disparate phenomena via an overlapping third party *and* that established by causal kinship – we can again, perhaps, turn to thread:

> We understand that the English navy has a certain arrangement by which every rope of the royal fleet, from the stoutest to the finest, is spun in such a fashion that a red thread runs though it which cannot be extracted without unravelling the whole rope, so that even the smallest piece of rope can be recognized as belonging to the Crown. (Goethe 1971 p. 163)

The red thread is like the unavoidable connection of *Ecce Puer*'s elements, which result from the indexicality of their facture. The 'family resemblances' linking instances of *Ecce Puer* do have an underlying bond and unity qualitatively different than an accumulated power of association, as in Wittgenstein's example of thread. Yet the quotation also suggests another understanding of the connections between elements in *Ecce Puer*, which will come to play a defining role in chapter 5's discussion of working with materials. The quotation comes, appropriately, from Goethe's *Elective Affinities* (or, more suggestive than literal, *Kindred by Choice* in the H. M. Waidson translation (1960)). This connection is appropriate not because the relationships between the novel's characters are of genetic kinship (they aren't), but because *Elective Affinities* centres around relationships being established, then reconfigured through the addition of new elements to the group.[22] The work stems from applying to human interactions (those of Eduard, Charlotte, the Captain and Ottilie) the logic of the eponymous chemical reaction as explicated by the Captain: 'Imagine an A intimately united

22 Like *Ecce Puer* the novel is also engaged with naming and repetition: the two male lead-characters, the Captain and Eduard, are both named Otto: 'as children we both bore that fine, laconic name; but when we were at school together and confusion arose, I gladly resigned it to him' (1971 p. 38), and Eduard and Charlotte's son is also so named.

with a B, so that no force is able to sunder them; imagine a C likewise related to a D; now bring the two couples into contact: A will throw itself at D, C at B, without our being able to say which first deserted its partner, which first embraced the other's partner' (Goethe 1971 p. 56). Yet although the novel develops from the premiss of applying natural sciences to human relations, the red thread refers to something very different, which stands outside A and B's 'experiment' of introducing C and D:

> a red thread runs though it which cannot be extracted without unravelling the whole rope, so that even the smallest piece of rope can be recognized as belonging to the Crown. Similarly, there runs through Ottilie's journal a thread of affection and inclination that binds everything together and characterizes the whole. It is this thread which turns into the peculiar property of the writer these observations, thoughts, aphorisms copied down, and whatever else is there, and makes them significant for her. (Goethe 1971 pp. 164–5)

As will be discussed in chapter 5, it is this thread of affection – love – which connects the discrete elements of *Ecce Puer*, connecting them in a way which makes them *significant* for Rosso. This runs through the heart of Rosso's use of materials and prompts the specificity of each instance. It is also, in part, this which makes formalising their relationship problematic: the nature of the connection isn't conceptually knowable, but develops from something more akin to friendship and affection than overlapping criteria.

The complex work

Ecce Puer raises the desire for a new definition, a new boundary framing the type of 'work' it constitutes. Presumably boundaries defining what constitutes a work can never be precise; the opening movements of Classical symphonies may paradigmatically employ sonata form, yet the paradigmatic Classical symphonies are seldom those which most strictly exemplify it: the works' merits so often stem from straining, thus articulating, the *boundaries* of the form. That is, boundaries can be useful, meaningful: 'when one draws a boundary it may be for various kinds of reason. If I surround an area with a fence or line or otherwise, the purpose may be to prevent someone from getting in or out; but it may also be supposed to be part of a game and the players be supposed, say, to jump over the boundary' (Wittgenstein 1958 §. 499).

The need to redefine 'work' in relation to *Ecce Puer* results from how it is discussed in criticism and scholarship. The appellation 'work' is applied

indiscriminately to two different entities; both to the sculptures individually and to the sum of elements united under a title – the species or abstraction *Ecce Puer*. Yet, unlike traditional cast sculptures, the individual sculptures of *Ecce Puer* won't permit being subsumed into one another. They assert their singularity whilst and through engaging with each other. They jostle each other; caress each other. They establish a necessary separation in order that their inquiry into process, inflection and generation can thrive across one another. The sculptures draw their boundaries that their transgressions of materials, their improbable surfaces, become resonant and meaningful, albeit with a potentially unexpected meaning: 'When I say the orders "Bring me milk" and "Bring me sugar" make sense, but not the combination "Milk me sugar", that does not mean the utterance of this combination of words has no effect. And if the effect is that someone stares at me and gapes, I don't on that account call it the order to stare and gape, even if that was precisely the effect that I wanted to produce' (Wittgenstein 1958 §. 498). Similarly, Rosso raises the issue of the 'work' through improbable use of materials; not jettisoning materials or processes which bear the weight of tradition, but redirecting this weight through unexpected unions. Yet, at the same time, each work *identifies* with the others, and not simply as something related by kinship, but as the same thing at a different stage of its existence. This shared identity across objects is continually evident in how the work is discussed.

I believe that the most helpful classification of *Ecce Puer* is as a 'complex work'. Sadly, the meaning of the term is not self-evident and, given common usage, it could arguably be applied to any artwork: all works have a complexity, as, for that matter, does any perception, any relation of seer and seen, of subject and object. However, the union of 'complex' and 'work' is offered to designate something specific. Firstly, 'complex': the Latin origin gives us, literally, '*com-* together + *plectĕre*, *plex-* to plait, twine.' A weaving-together of works isn't altogether remote from the notion of series, although weaving is different from the concatenation implicit in seriality. Secondly, 'work': as a 'work,' *Ecce Puer* consists of a number of discrete elements which, in themselves, urge the need for their individual appreciation as works entirely on their own merit. It is also a single 'work', as Rosso conceived it and as the term is used in this paper. That is, there are two distinct forms of work, two orders, tiered, one subordinate to the other. The *OED* outlines an adjectival form of 'complexity' as: 'Consisting of parts or elements not simply co-ordinated, but some of them involved in various degrees of subordination; complicated, involved, intricate; not easily analysed or disentangled'. This expresses the inter-relation – both co-ordinate and subordinate – of the two senses of work present in *Ecce Puer*. In this way a 'complex work' designates something very different from a series. Rather than allowing singling out into a succession of instances, each work stands, in some respect, both apart from all others and as a *medium* bearing the others.

3. Phenomenology

Interpreting Rosso

Ecce Puer is unique within Rosso's oeuvre in being modelled during the period in which he was expanding the notion of practice. This led to extending the lives of his sculptures through means other than the sculptural reproduction he had pursued since the 1880s and more comprehensively from 1895. One of the most obvious means of achieving this was through the increasingly sophisticated use of photographic reproduction in the popular press, which will be the focus of the following chapter. Coincident with this extension of practice through photography are Rosso's first published essays, interviews and aphorisms in newspapers and journals. As such, although they do not exist alongside those elements discussed in the previous chapter as intrinsic parts of *Ecce Puer*, Rosso's writings are bound to this work more closely than to any other. More generally, Rosso's writings are an invaluable resource for assessing both how he wanted his works to be viewed, and his aesthetic theories at the time the work was conceived/begun. Within the framework of this dissertation they are also instructive in how they *don't* engage with the issues of the complex work: how Rosso's practice suggests a richness of philosophical engagement which acquires greater sophistication through his writings, yet which extends well beyond their compass.

The main objectives of this chapter are threefold: to understand something of how Rosso theorises his work; to elaborate the relationship of his contemporaneous writings to *Ecce Puer*, developing understanding of the relationship of writing to making within an artistic practice; and to consider how Rosso's work has been theorised in recent scholarship.

A handful of studies attempt to locate Rosso's practice in relation to broader cultural questions, rather than limiting discussion to Rosso's relationship to Rodin, the originality of Rosso's approach to photography, his innovative use of wax, his presumed neglect in histories of Modernism, generic biographical-artistic chronologies, how 'Italian' an artist he was, etc. These

studies fall loosely into two camps: firstly, Rosso in relation to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century science, coupled with Bergsonism.[1] Secondly, studies by Harry Cooper and Sharon Hecker have briefly engaged with Rosso's works in relation to phenomenology, specifically the late thought of Maurice Merleau-Ponty.[2]

Harry Cooper and Sharon Hecker both offer Merleau-Pontian readings of Rosso's *sculptures*. The relationship between phenomenology and Rosso's *writings* remains unexplored. This chapter argues that it is via Rosso's writings that phenomenology can best guide study of Rosso's practice. Phenomenology provides a necessary key to understand some of Rosso's more enigmatic comments, comments which have been repeated in critical discourse on the artist without due consideration, and which have come to frame how his sculptures and practice are perceived: to clarify Rosso's writings is to illuminate his sculpture anew. It is also, perhaps more importantly, to highlight with greater acuity where lie the disparities between his artworks and his published writings. Not least, it is an opportunity to view the writings in new light, as fascinating documents in themselves, which bear instructive comparison with

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1 I.e. Jole de Sanna (1985) focuses upon Rosso's ideas of 'open space' in relation to Einstein's theories of special and general relativity. Becker's study of Rosso, Rodin and Carrière devotes two chapters to 'Anti-Positivism' and 'The Principles of Opticality', asking 'Why did *misty* imagery suffuse the work of Carrière, Rodin and Rosso in this period [1884–1906]? At the end of the last century, these artists were not the only creative people working in France to investigate molten form, movement, time, and space. Developments in philosophy, science, and mathematics all focused on these nebulous or abstract phenomena. From Hermann von Helmholtz's investigations of visual perceptions in the field of optics, to Henri Poincaré's harnessing of time in the "new" fourth dimension, the zones of space and of time were repeatedly under question' (1998 p. 164).

2 The final four pages of Cooper's 'Ecce Rosso!' are devoted to Merleau-Ponty, to whom he is led by consideration of *Ecce Puer*'s curtaining/veiling. In Cooper's reading Rosso's use of veiling explores in sculpture something akin to the complex reciprocity of seer and seen, touching and touched, visible and invisible, which Merleau-Ponty designates 'flesh'. Cooper asks: 'How does it happen that my look, enveloping them [things in the world], does not hide them, and, finally, that, veiling them, it unveils them?' (2003 p. 17). In Cooper's reading, Merleau-Ponty's 'As soon as we see other seers … we are for ourself fully visible; the lacuna where our eyes, our back, lie filled, filled still by the visible' – an incredibly rich comment and apposite in considering Rosso – segues rather directly into discussion of the reverses of Rosso's sculptures: 'these backs are where Rosso's absorptive desires and the self-figural impulses of his medium issued, or, to put it another way … where his quest for a common flesh ended … The backs are the unconscious endpoint of Rosso's reflection on what it is to interact with another body, to see it and make it, and Merleau-Ponty is the philosopher of that reflection' (2003 p. 21).

Sharon Hecker's 'Icarus Fell Here' (2008b), a catalogue essay for a commercial exhibition of four Rosso sculptures, explicitly draws on Cooper's essay, using Merleau-Ponty's concept of 'flesh' as the guiding motif of her discussion. From Cooper's account of *Aetas Aurea* Hecker develops a narrow interpretation of 'flesh', seemingly limiting its understanding to something corporeal (which does accord with one of Merleau-Ponty's uses of the term); the restricted interpretation not accounting for Merleau-Ponty's positing of flesh as ineffably elemental, i.e., writing of language: 'it is as though the visibility that animates the sensible world were to emigrate, not outside of everybody, but into another, less heavy, more transparent body, as if it were to change flesh, abandoning the flesh of the body for that of language' (1968 p. 153).

later philosophical thought; something too easily overlooked in writings which are laced with idiomatic prose and dogmatic repetition.

The only suggestion of a link between Rosso's *writings* and phenomenology is offered by Francesca Bacci. She notes: 'it is evident that by 1907 … Rosso had elaborated his ideas in a more philosophical form and described visual experience as a phenomenologist would' (2004 p. 101). However, Bacci fails to grasp, or chooses to ignore, phenomenology. She suggests that Rosso's written explication of his 'artistic theory owes its basic concepts to popularized notions of optics and photography, summarized in the common belief that the human eye functions like a camera' (2004 p. 90). A phenomenologically grounded theory of vision – that is, one grounded in *intentionality* – could not be modelled on late nineteenth-century optical theory. In attempting to assert the importance, the formative impact of photography on Rosso's thought (her study is devoted to Rosso's photographs), Bacci loses sight of the richness of Rosso's 'works' and writings.

Although Merleau-Ponty's late philosophy will have greatest prominence in this study it will be augmented by considering Husserl's work. In part this is because Husserl's thought stands ever-behind Merleau-Ponty's and the latter's allusiveness is clearer when his explicit reference points are known. Although no scholarship connects Rosso and Husserl,[3] they were almost exact contemporaries who were motivated by the same concerns, which they approached in mutually illuminating ways.[4]

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3 The closest connection drawn between Husserl and Rosso is offered in Rosalind Krauss's *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, in which – although never comparing *Rosso* with Husserl – Krauss invokes Husserl in her discussion of Rodin: 'the picture of meaning being synchronous with experience, rather than necessarily prior to it, is one that was developed by Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), a philosopher working at the time of Rodin's mature career' (1977c p. 28). Krauss follows this with a somewhat confusing paragraph on Husserl's late understanding of inter-subjectivity and the life-world, taken, it seems, exclusively from *Formal and Transcendental Logic* (1929; a work often understood as distinct from anything Husserl published during Rodin's lifetime (1840–1917)), stressing that Rodin's 'sculptures manifest a notion of the self which [Husserl's] philosophy had begun to explore. They are about a lack of premeditation, a lack of foreknowledge, that leaves one intellectually and emotionally dependent on the gestures and movements of figures as they externalize themselves' (1977c p. 28).

4 Although Rosso and Husserl were born only one year apart (1858 and 1859 respectively), they belonged to entirely remote milieux and there is no reason to believe either paid attention to the work of the other – Husserl may have been the leading German philosopher by the 1910s, but one could hardly imagine him becoming an extra-philosophical cult figure like Nietzsche.

Formally, one could argue, Rosso and Husserl share some common ground. It is suggestive rather than convincing but, although commentators on Husserl's oeuvre are divided on how one understand it, one strongly argued view, as held by David Woodruff Smith, runs: the *Logical Investigations* of 1900–1 established a broad framework for understanding the world; from this, 'Husserl was constantly expanding his overall system of philosophy. The shifts observed in Husserl's writings were not radical (nearly schizoid) turns of mind … in diverse explorations, Husserl moved back and forth across different levels and domains of theory in addressing different parts of the world of consciousness, nature, and culture' (2007 p. 35) – working across diverse mediums, recycling, returning to past ideas in new forms in order to cast a different light on experience.

Describing wonder

There is a tendency to apply the term 'phenomenology' very loosely. This is understandable given the vast range of areas which have been influenced by phenomenology, coupled with the fact the term had a use, both philosophical and non-specialist, stretching back well beyond its emergence as a defined approach to thought. Indeed, phenomenological philosophy's emphasis on thought as a living process, and its ever-requestioning of origins, precludes its stable definition. Nevertheless, consistent strands or themes emerge. Merleau-Ponty begins *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), his early magnum opus, by asking: 'What is phenomenology? It may be strange that this question has still to be asked half a century after the first works of Husserl. The fact remains that it has by no means been answered … let us, therefore, try systematically to bring together the celebrated phenomenological themes as they have grown spontaneously together in life' (2002 pp. vii–viii). Merleau-Ponty begins this by stating: 'It is a matter of describing, not explaining or analysing' (2002 p. ix). This is consistent throughout Husserl and Merleau-Ponty; phenomenology is to develop from description of the world, not through subjecting it to objectifying analysis. We also find this as a central tenet of Rosso's thought. In his 1907 article 'The Impressionism in Sculpture' he writes 'we have before us a colour perspective wholly different from the other traditional and material perspective; and I claim that we need not and we should not follow the method of the catalogued celebrities who have measured, are still measuring, the first plan and second plan, and follow the material facts of form' (pp. 140–1). Evidently 'material facts' are allied with measuring, with an analytic tendency, breaking down a whole into parts which function outside a work's 'grand unity' (p. 141). In 1923 Rosso dubs this analytic tendency 'material comprehension': 'There have always been people who have seen with a material comprehension, limited, to whom we owe the greatest disasters' (p. 180) –

> 'And Rupert – ' she lifted her face to the sky in a muse – 'he *can* only tear things to pieces. He really *is* like a boy who must pull everything to pieces to see how it is made. And I can't think it is right – it does seem so irreverent, as you say'
>
> 'Like tearing open a bud to see what the flower will be like,' said Ursula.
>
> 'Yes. And that kills everything, doesn't it? It doesn't allow any possibility of flowering.' (Lawrence 1960 p. 133)

In this passage of D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love* (1921) there is something potently obvious; irrefutable and bluntly delicate. In decrying the 'irreverence' of the tendency towards 'material comprehension' it calls to mind Rosso's: 'but

is there anything more religious than a child who runs towards you … who you see with his bright eyes like water drops. You don't dare touch him, you don't dare embrace him, and it makes you feel what is the true natural religion' (p. 181 [1923]) – the work of art is something fragile yet pulsatingly vital.

At the heart of both Lawrence and Rosso lies wonder; allowing wonder to direct one, allowing wonder's emergence. As Rosso put it in 1907: 'The real visual truth of anything that meets our eye in nature can only strike us with full force in that short moment when the vision breaks upon us, as it were, as a surprise – that is to say, before our intellect, our knowledge of the material form of objects, have had time to come into play and to counteract and destroy that first impression' (p. 140). In the same essay Rosso elaborates:

> There is another point which has never yet been spoken of, and which nevertheless is of enormous importance; it is that at the first moment of looking spontaneously at any object in nature, we experience a displacement of tonalities, a broadening of the thing before our eyes, before our spirit – an effect that changes after the first moment. The reason is that after this first flash our eyes, our mind, take back their habits of laziness and thus destroy the first moment of real life, of the complete vision, during which we experience a transposition of values which, though materially in front, seem to be forced back, and vice versa. But although all this is sharply accentuated at the first moment, it is nonetheless true that it is still visible at any later moment. (p. 140)

Rosso grounds his art within 'the first moment of looking,' within 'surprise'. In this his project was in no way unique. Merleau-Ponty notes of the contemporary emergence of phenomenology: 'If phenomenology was a movement before becoming a doctrine or a philosophical system, this was attributable neither to accident, nor fraudulent intent. It is as painstaking as the works of Balzac, Proust, Valéry or Cézanne – *by reason of the same kind of attentiveness and wonder*, the same demand for awareness, *the same will to seize the meaning of the world or of history as that meaning comes into being*' (my emphasis, 2002 p. xxiv). Similarly, in his essay 'The Problem of the Philosophy of Edmund Husserl', Eugen Fink, one of Husserl's several distinguished assistants, urges that one understand Husserl's philosophy originating in 'an "experience" that man has of himself and the existent. The origin of philosophical problems is *wonder*. Astonishment descends upon man; it is essentially something that *befalls* him' (1981 p. 23).[5] It is this moment,

5 Clearly this isn't an insight originating in Husserl; rather, it can be understood as the foundation of Western philosophy. For Plato, in *Theataetus*, 'This sense of wonder is the mark of the philosopher. Philosophy indeed has no other origin' (1997 p. 173).

this unprecedented intertwining of viewer and existent which is the subject of *Ecce Puer* – the mutual astonishment of Rosso and Alfred William. We shall later explore how this wonderment is prolonged beyond the work's ostensible subject-matter.

Fink continues: 'The fundamental structure of astonishment is indicated by the Greek word *Ekplexis*. Astonishment is a forcing out: it forces man out of that fundamental way of life, one of laziness and metaphysical indolence, in which he has ceased to question the existent *qua* existent' (1981 p. 24) – this resonates strikingly with Rosso's 'after this first flash our eyes, our mind, take back their habits of laziness and thus destroy the first moment of real life, of the complete vision'. The 'laziness' Rosso diagnoses is akin to what Husserl termed the 'natural attitude' which, contrary to the name's suggestion of purity, is, rather, symptomatic of the incorporation and ossification of the 'scientific attitude'. Compare Husserl's objection to the natural attitude, which develops from a question beginning in wonder, with Rosso's account – dubbed 'The First Revelation' – of the origin of his aesthetic theories, an anecdote recounted in 1923, into which he weaves several dominant themes of his thought:

> I was still young when I understood that *nothing* is material in space, because everything is space and therefore everything is relative. I did not need the philosophy of Professor Einstein. I said it before '83 … I was in Milan. I did not need to go to Paris. It happened by chance. One day I went to work at the Academy of Fine Arts. There are steps below every window. There I was, in the statue rooms … I went on looking at those things, *peculiar* things which seemed to me less than toys, made as if it was a question of putting fleeting clouds on a table. *Do you understand?* The same blank that I later experienced in the Medici Chapel. Just then, I saw a couple passing by, there, on the paving stones. As I looked I saw that the ground, which I believed to be flat so that one could walk on it, was rising up, was coming forward, was like a tone and these people stood out in contrast to this tonality. It was the shadow they left behind them that made it something enormous. I said to myself: I am right, I do not know why. I stopped and ran to another window because as they went further away the shadow appeared to dwindle and no longer has the same effect on me. At that moment, the colour tone of the shadow was more eloquent than the people. Another window and another look. I am right, I said to myself. If I go down, if I go down there, I will be able to touch these colours and to hold them in my hand, just like every one has always believed; but if I attempt to capture that shadow on the ground, it will be impossible; yet it is a tone that exists like

> any other, guided by my emotion, which is what gives me all these colours; and I cannot hold them in my hand either, therefore I touch it and yet I do not touch it. All the others have always seen by touching. They have never respected light and colour – fine so long as you make things for blind people. (p. 179)

This paragraph contains several related themes which recur throughout Rosso's writings and to which we shall return: the importance of shadow and colour over determined forms; the hostility to 'touch'; the claim that 'nothing is material in space'. This latter is the most quoted of Rosso's many maxims, and perhaps the one which has caused the most confusion in his interpretation. As such it occupies a vital place in understanding Rosso's thought.

'Rien n'est materiel dans l'espace': forgetting matter

In *Modern Art*,[6] Julius Meier-Graefe uses Rosso's 'Rien n'est materiel dans l'espace' as the epigraph of the chapter 'Impressionism in Sculpture' (1908 p. 30). The comment is from Rosso's first published essay, 'Impressionism in Sculpture' (1902), which opens: 'It should be in space … this is how I have always conceived a work of art if it has a reason for being … one does not move around a statue or around a picture, because one does not move around a form in order to conceive the impression. Nothing is material in space' (pp. 129–131). In the same essay Rosso is explicit that this position offers a direct response to Charles Baudelaire's 'Salon of 1846'. The importance of Baudelaire's thought for Rosso will be returned to on several occasions. It is attested to by the fact that in Rosso's writings he doesn't engage with any other thinker outside his own era. Although commentary on Baudelaire and Rosso tends to focus on the 1846 Salon's chapter 'Why Sculpture is a Bore', Rosso responds more directly to sections from Baudelaire's earlier 'What is Romanticism'.[7] Speaking of painting, Baudelaire writes: 'The south is brutal and positive like a sculptor in his most delicate compositions … Raphael, pure though he be, remains for all that a materialist, always seeking to express solid mass' (1981 p. 53). Rosso suggests: 'was he [Baudelaire] not probably right in treating sculpture as a minor art, since he saw sculptors materialising a being in space … What is important for me in art is to forget matter' (p. 130).

Although affording the maxim 'nothing is material in space' significance through its place at the chapter's head, Meier-Graefe is duly circumspect in attributing to it meaning, noting later that 'it is hard to understand how such

6 Originally published as *Entwicklungsgeschichte der modernen Kunst* in 1904.

7 I.e. Becker: 'In his Salon of 1846 the poet wrote a diatribe called "Why Sculpture is Boring." This piece provoked sculptural responses from Rosso and Rodin' (1998 p. 114).

things could be formulated and printed without contradiction' (1908 p. 34). The 1906 catalogue of Rosso's exhibition at Cremetti uses the quotation as an epigraph, devoting to it an entire page. As Sharon Hecker has asserted, after Meier-Graefe subsequent commentators have been less reluctant to put to use such an enigmatic comment: 'Nearly all posthumous studies on the artist use this sentence as an emblem, to suggest a neat verbal encapsulation of his enterprise and a perfect "fit" between Rosso's theory and practice. The five-word phrase is always understood as Rosso's straightforward dematerialisation of three dimensional form' (1999 p. 269).[8]

Hecker stresses a near-inversion of this typical reading. She suggests that Rosso's work is more accurately understood as a materialisation of space, of making *nothing* material: '*nothing* is material in space'. 'The prevailing theory is that Rosso denied the spaces around his sculptures that would normally be left as voids by filling them with matter, so as to create a perceptible continuity between the object and its environment. But I would say the opposite: in his sculptures from 1884 onwards, Rosso damned up holes in the objects with bits of matter in order to give space material form in his works' (1999 p. 272). Although the issues surrounding the phrase clearly develop from Rosso's writings, Hecker's argument draws from Rosso's sculptures and photographs. To understand the true complexity of this phrase it is necessary to consider its complication within his writings.

In an essay of 1926, which discusses the 'shock' of an intense image which 'disorients' the 'dominant tonalities already instilled in you', one finds: 'this undeniable evidence of non separation, of space, of "air, life," only demonstrated – I repeat – by an unlimited perspective of emotion, will become even harder to deny once your breathless shock is understood … the intensity and unity of such impressive opposition … will make you say: "*The air is so thick, you can even bite it!*"' (my emphasis, p. 152). Furthermore, this thickening of air, of space, is something Rosso raised in 1923's interview with Ambrosini: 'you cannot divide or stop air, everything is unity, one terrain is nothing more than the consequence of another terrain, and everything forms part of a whole. And in the same way as one cannot divide a coloration, one cannot divide a piece of clay. It is like air, everything is air. If you look closely at the water in the bath, it forms a whole. It is composed of lots of elements, and the little boy in his bath does this with his hand to break it. While there are so many elements inside, none is separable from the other' (p. 180).

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8 For instance, Margaret Scolari Barr notes that Etha Fles, Rosso's great patroness, recalled that Rosso 'assured us that there is nothing material in space, so that, were he to pursue his hypothesis, his creations would dissolve into steam' (Barr 1962 p. 238). This position gains weight from Rosso's pithy 'We do not exist! We are only plays of light in space. *More air, more light, more space*' (p. 193) and by his frequent repudiation of 'matter' and material, i.e. 1919's more nuanced 'You cannot go around it' reiterates: 'The material does not exist. By making something, one makes the observer forget the material. Nothing is material in space' (p. 171).

For Rosso, if everything is air, it is an air which forces an acknowledgement that it is not a vacuum – it is something real, something with body: 'it is like clay'. Rosso's equation of air with both water and clay is telling in its elementality: fire was the literal background of Rosso's technical procedures (his furnace), the metaphor of life which permeates his writings, and even the light in which his sculptures were viewed – Etha Fles notes that Rosso would illuminate his works by striking a match in the darkened studio (1922 p. 41).[9] Air is figured by Rosso as something opposed to transparency, yet certainly not opaque. It is the *medium* through which the world discloses itself in its 'intensity', when 'the air is so thick you can even bite it'. The elementality of Rosso's conception of 'air' aligns Rosso's aesthetics with that elaborated by Merleau-Ponty in the final work published during his lifetime, 1960's 'Eye and Mind'. In this essay Merleau-Ponty offers an account of perception which gives life to Rosso's often confused writings:

> When through the water's thickness I see the tiled bottom of the pool, I do not see it *despite* the water and the reflections; I see it through them and because of them. If there were no distortions, no ripples of sunlight, if it were without that flesh that I saw the geometry of the tiles, then I would cease to see it *as* it is and where it is – which is to say, beyond any identical, specific place. I cannot say that the water itself – the aqueous power, the syrupy and shimmering element – is *in* space; all this is not somewhere else either, but it is not in the pool. It inhabits it, is materialized there, yet it is not contained there; and if I lift my eyes toward the screen of cypresses where the web of reflections plays, I must recognize that the water visits it as well, or at least sends out to it its active, living essence. This inner animation, this radiation of the visible, is what the painter seeks beneath, the words *depth, space,* and *colour* … No longer is it a matter of speaking about space and light, but of making space and light, which are *there*, speak to us. (1993 p. 142)[10]

9 Rosso's highlighting of *air*'s elemental connection with clay and fire resonates with Aristotle's most important discussion of parts and wholes, in *Metaphysics*, which clarifies the difference between a heap and whole through a discussion of flesh, understood as a compound of fire and earth: 'the syllable is not its elements, *ba* is not the same as *b* and *a*, nor is flesh fire and earth; for when these are dissolved the wholes, i.e. the flesh and the syllable, no longer exist, but the elements of the syllable exist, and so do fire and earth' (1984 p. 1644). The question of part and whole will be returned to later in this chapter in relation to Merleau-Ponty's understanding of 'flesh' as it developed from Husserl's philosophy, which itself was inspired by Aristotle's.

10 It is telling that Merleau-Ponty, in his sustained critique of Cartesianism, writes: 'For Descartes it is self-evident that one can paint only existing things, that their existence consists in being extended, and line drawing alone makes painting possible by making possible the representation of extension. Thus painting is only an artifice that puts before our eyes a

Air in Rosso's understanding is an elemental medium which accords with Merleau-Ponty's late theorising of 'flesh' in 'Eye and Mind':[11] 'if it were without that flesh that I saw the geometry of the tiles, then I would cease to see it *as* it is and where it is – which is to say, beyond any identical, specific place'. *Air is what gives the impression its specificity*. It is not about dissolving the object into a flux of Being, but about attending – not to the presumed object – but to the *visible*: 'the inner animation … beneath, the words depth, space, and colour'. This is what Rosso articulates in the interview above, stating: 'At that moment, the colour tone of the shadow was more eloquent than the people'. Later in the same interview Rosso adds 'I do not know what I see, I feel that I experience an emotion. Look at those tones there. That shadow on the ground is more important than the shoes. So let's deal with the shadow and forget the shoes' (p. 183 [1923]). Clearly Rosso isn't talking about dematerialising the object, but about giving life to its apparition, attending to the qualities of perception which form the perceived world, and from which our understanding of objects ultimately stems. Entirely analogous with this, Merleau-Ponty writes of Cézanne's continued engagement with Mont Sainte-Victoire:

> What exactly does he ask of it? To unveil the means, visible and not otherwise, by which it makes itself mountain before our eyes. Light, lighting, shadows, reflections, colour, *all these objects of his quest are not altogether real objects*; like ghosts, they have only visual existence. In fact they exist only at the threshold of profane vision; they are not ordinarily seen. The painter's gaze asks them what they do to suddenly cause something to be and to be this thing, what they do to compose this talisman of a world, to make us see the visible. (1993 p. 128)

It is clear that Rosso's dictum 'So let's deal with the shadow and *forget* the shoes' asks not that one *deny* the material world (the objects of the natural attitude), but, as he says, asks that one 'forget it' – in Husserlian terms, Rosso asks for a bracketing or *epoché* – Gk abstaining – of the 'natural attitude' (for Merleau-Ponty, in relation to perception, 'profane vision'). Husserl's phenomenological bracketing was a concept developed around the period in which *Ecce Puer* was modelled, and it augmented the phenomenology of the *Logical Investigations*, finding fullest expression in 1913's *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: First Book: General Introduction to a*

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projection similar to the one things themselves would (and do, according to the commonsense view) inscribe in them. Painting causes us to see, without real objects, just as we see things in everyday life; and in *particular it makes us see empty space where there is none*' (my emphasis, 1993 p. 133).

11 An interesting summary of Merleau-Ponty's polysemic use of the term 'flesh' in his late writings is offered by Hass (2008 pp. 201–2).

Pure Phenomenology. That is, not denying the material world's existence (thus implicitly arguing for an Idealism), but, rather, suspending judgement on the material world, turning instead to how the world is presented through consciousness – attending to the world in the first person.[12]

Touch

> 1907: A work of sculpture is not made to be touched, but seen at such and such a distance, according to the effect intended by the artist. Our hand does not permit us to bring to consciousness the values, the tones, the colours – in a word, the life of the thing. For seizing the inner significance of a work of art, we should rely entirely on the visual impression and on all the sympathetic echoes it awakes in our memory and consciousness, and not on the touch of our fingers. (p. 141)

> 1923: But me, do I touch or do I not touch? And I said: no, I do not touch. It is an infinite, it is an emotion, it is a coloration. I do not touch. People have always believed in seeing through touching. I do not touch, I do not touch. (p. 180)

Rosso's sophisticated understanding of perception as something concerned with the way objects appear, the means through which they 'give life to the visible', has as its parallel Rosso's repeated objection to 'touch'. In itself Rosso's hostility to touch presumably originated in his experience of how his works were apprehended. 'Apprehended' is an appropriate term to underscore Rosso's suspicion of touch: a superficial grasping of the *object*, as opposed to 'seizing the inner significance of a work of art'. We have already seen how, for Julius Meier-Graefe, Rosso's 'nothing is material in space' is important yet incomprehensible.

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12 Briefly, for Husserl consciousness is necessarily 'intentional': 'intentionality' is the directedness of consciousness to the world; to attend to it is to shift from considering the object observed to considering the subject's structuring of observation – to one's consciousness of objects in the world. In this modified attitude to the world, phenomenology calls for descriptions of experience just as they are experienced, irrespective of the question of the existence of the objects represented by these meanings. As such, the content of a perceptual act – seeing a sculpture or flower – is to be considered outside the question of the sculpture or flower's veridity: the *intentional content* would be the same as that of an hallucinated sculpture or flower. The content of perceptual acts Husserl terms *noema*. Beyond their intentional content, *noema* contain the act's positing character, that is, its 'thetic' content. The manner in which the perceptual object (if any) presents (or would present) itself also includes the sensual matter – 'sense', 'hýle', or hyletic character – underlying the respective perceptual experience – the sensory experiences or 'impressions', as opposed to the perceptual experiences based upon them. The classic exemplar being Joseph Jastrow's duck-rabbit head: the perception of a duck head is founded in the same hýle as the perception of a rabbit head.

This is partly owing to the peculiarity of Rosso's articulation and, surely, partly owing to a genuinely problematic yet urgent philosophical questioning. Regarding 'touch' we find Meier-Graefe adopting a position in explicit contrast to Rosso's. In one of the most beautiful sentiments written about Rosso, Meier-Graefe offers:

> Rosso's profiles of women and children are among the noblest things of our day. They belong of right to an age when we flee from the tumult of the world to secluded rooms, and in the gentle light of evening turn for refreshment all the more eagerly to such tender things because of the coarse interests which have absorbed the day … a child's head by Rosso passes from hand to hand, and its gentleness seems rather to nestle into our emotions than to evoke them. (1908 p. 22)

The domesticity of Meier-Graefe's strikingly visual – also strikingly tactile – account of the 'passing from hand to hand' of one of Rosso's sculptures must have been anathema to the artist, at least to the artist's image he insistently developed and desired to maintain. Although inconceivable of some of Rosso's works – those portraying also the subject's torso (i.e. 1890's *Henri Rouart*; 1897's *Madame Noblet*, etc.), or two subjects (e.g. *Aetas Aurea* (1886)) – if one considers all Rosso's sculptures prior to *Ecce Puer* of the head, neck and upper-shoulders of a child (*Bambino ebreo* (1892–3); *Bambina che ride* (1889–90); *Bambino al sole* (1892); *Bambino malato* (1895)), the possibility of holding them, of them nestling in the hand, seems almost an attribute of the works. Indeed, Meier-Graefe opens his extensive and, broadly, highly complementary discussion of Rosso with a remarkable narrative of a studio visit:

> When I first visited his studio, and he saw the amazement his works aroused, he built up a little bit of art-history in the form of a singular still-life. He placed on a table a very fine bronze copy, made by himself, of the large head of Vitellius in the Vatican, beside it a wax after Michelangelo's small group of the *Madonna and Child* at Berlin, then a torso of Rodin's *John the Baptist* and finally a work of his own, the *Head of a Child*. This he could not stand up, as it had no base; he was therefore obliged to keep it in his hand. (1908 p. 21)

The image of the sculpture in the hand stayed with Meier-Graefe, clearing a path towards appreciating this most enigmatic artist's work. Meier-Graefe's magnum opus, first published in German in three volumes, was hugely influential and Rosso would have been aware of the importance it placed on

'touch' in understanding his work. He would also have realised that in Meier-Graefe's reading 'touch' is developed in tandem with an understanding of the work's domesticity – 'and in the gentle light of evening turn for refreshment'. To understand Rosso's work as in some sense domestic is perhaps a germane interpretation.[13] However, it is a response and interpretation at odds with what Rosso desired of art, from his anarchist early years to his late reflection: 'Can't we realise that the only way for every conceived work of art to resist and survive is by ripping away a dominant value from the experience effect (which is the hard-earned *fauteuil* of life) in these moments of surprise (that is, what are you, why aren't you aware of your existence)?' (p. 152 [1926])[14] Rosso desired his work to stimulate surprise, amazement – precisely what Meier-Graefe affirms as his initial reaction to the works: 'When I first visited his studio, and he saw the amazement his works aroused', yet which is so signally missing in his later relationship with them. That is, in 1904 Rosso became aware that the most widely read discussion of his work connected touch and touching with domesticity and, in a sense, taming. Not only did it connect these, it affirmed a causal connection: it was after Meier-Graefe experienced Rosso holding the head that his 'amazement' at the works transformed to 'refreshment' through them. In this light it is telling that, although his 1902 essay 'Impressionism in Sculpture' shares a great many points with 1907's 'The Impressionism in Sculpture: An Explanation', quoted above, the essay prior to *Modern Art*'s original publication contains no negative appraisal of touch, whereas the latter, we have seen, places it as a major concern, as do several subsequent writings.

It is significant that *Ecce Puer* is the only subject produced after Meier-Graefe's study. Although compositionally similar to the sculptures which would fit Meier-Graefe's description of works to 'pass from hand to hand' (*Bambino ebreo*; *Bambina che ride*; *Bambino al sole*; *Bambino malato*), due to its double life-size scale, the physical encounter with a sculptural instance of *Ecce Puer* evokes a very different relationship between object and beholder – a distancing.[15] Edinburgh's *Ecce Puer* (ep. d) is a sculpture which asks one to keep

13 Indeed, this domesticity is a hallmark of the 'private' Rosso, of the anti-monumentality which Sharon Hecker placed as the core thesis of her doctoral dissertation on Rosso (1999). Her work is compelling, but doesn't fully grapple with the conflict between Rosso's interpretive desires as articulated in his writings and her reading of the work, a point she acknowledges elsewhere: 'Thus far, no attempt has been made to understand the relationship between Rosso's intellectual and material enterprises, perhaps because of a reluctance to admit the contradictory nature of his aims' (2003 p. 37).

14 *Fauteuil*, 'armchair'. Rosso, writing in 1926, presumably responding to Matisse's 'Notes of a Painter' (1908) with its well known: 'What I dream of is an art of balance, of purity and serenity, devoid of troubling or depressing subject-matter, an art which could be for every mental worker, for the businessman as well as the man of letters, for example, a soothing, calming influence on the mind, something like a good armchair which provides relaxation from physical fatigue' (2003 p. 73).

15 It is telling that in 1923 Rosso singled-out two of these works (*Bambino malato* and *Bambina che ride*) for criticism because 'the material is too present' (p. 184).

one's distance. Not very far, four feet, perhaps, but it has a facingness which compels a physically remote relationship with it. Yet it is a relationship, not alienation. The sculpture doesn't feel monumental, like a fragment of a larger-than-life statue; it is still, quiet and compelling. But one's desire to touch it (which does return some time after the initial encounter, or at least it does if one's inclined to curiosity in that way, and left alone in a room with the work …) has a very different character: invasive and prying and alien to the work, not nurturing or protective. This is achieved (in part) through its greater size – one feels one must brace to lift it, not cradle it intuitively. Rosso's hostility to 'touch' seems as likely a reason for the change of scale in *Ecce Puer* as his engagement with photography or Caramel's vague assertion that 'the larger than life-size dimensions' in some way 'attest to the determination to give form to an idea, to an interior meditation, a moral aspiration' (1988 p. 15).

Rosso was opposed to touch because it limited – 'objectivity, negation of the air, negation of space, of emotion'. Through its shift in scale *Ecce Puer* achieves, amongst other things, a very different relation with the beholder than that of other comparable subjects. The idea of distancing is very important in relation to touch. For Rosso touch is limiting, it reduces perception to what is known by the hand, to what is 'objective': 'All the others have always seen by touching. They have never respected light and colour – fine so long as you make things for blind people.' What Rosso says of art's history, Merleau-Ponty claims of philosophy in his critique of Cartesianism:

> How crystal clear everything would be in our philosophy if only we would exorcise these spectres, make illusions or objectless perceptions out of them, brush them to one side of an unequivocal world!
>
> Descartes' *Dioptrics* is an attempt to do just that. It is the breviary of a thought that wants no longer to abide in the visible and so decides to reconstruct it according to a model-in-thought. It is worthwhile to remember this attempt and its failure. Here there is no concern to cling to vision. The problem is to know 'how it happens,' but only enough to invent, whenever the need arises, certain 'artificial organs' which correct it. We are to reason not so much upon the light we see as upon the light which, from outside, enters our eyes and regulates our vision. And for that we are to rely upon 'two or three comparisons which help us to conceive it [light]' in such a way as to explain its known properties and to deduce others. The question being so formulated, it is best to think of light as an action by contact – not unlike the action of

> things upon the blind man's cane. The blind, says Descartes, 'see with their hands.' The Cartesian model of vision is modeled after the sense of touch. (1993 pp. 130–1)

If we look back to Merleau-Ponty's discussion of the water in the pool, we see that a tradition of thought developing from Descartes wishes to know 'the geometry of the tiles' – to 'cease to see it *as* it is and where it is – which is to say, beyond any identical, specific place'. The most important point which Merleau-Ponty raises here is that this falsely conceived theory of perception, in trying to do away with shadows, 'spectres', reduced light to 'action by contact', annihilating its distance.

The ambiguity of touch: promiscuous perception

It has been suggested that the size of *Ecce Puer*, whose title may be a reference to Nietzsche, may have been determined by a desire to obviate 'touch' and maintain a distance. In light of this discussion, let us turn to Nietzsche's parable of the moon, his story of 'Immaculate Perception'.

> 'To me the dearest thing would be' – thus the seducer seduces himself – 'to love the earth as the moon loves it, and to touch its beauty only with the eyes.
>
> And to me the *immaculate* perception of all things would be that I desire nothing from things …' Oh you sentimental hypocrites, oh you lechers! Your desire lacks innocence, and therefore you slander all desiring!
>
> Indeed you do not love the earth as creators, begetters, and enjoyers of becoming!
>
> Where is innocence? Where there is a will to beget. And whoever wants to create over and above himself, he has the purest will.
>
> Where is beauty? Where I *must will* with my entire will; where I want to love and perish so that an image does not remain merely an image.
>
> Loving and perishing, these have gone together since the beginning of time. Will to love: that means being willing also for death …
>
> But that shall be your curse, you immaculate, you pure-perceiving ones, that you shall never give birth; and even if you lie broad and pregnant on the horizon! (2006 p. 96)

One way of understanding Rosso's relation to this passage is to consider 'Your desire lacks innocence, and therefore you slander all desiring!' in relation to Rosso's much echoed claim that *Ecce Puer* represents 'a vision of innocence in a banal world' – Rosso desiring to return perception to innocence, perhaps to classically disinterested aesthetics. This could clearly relate to Rosso's claimed comments to (the sometime Nietzschean) Giovanni Papini: 'I deliberately said: but is there anything more religious than a child who runs towards you … who you see with his bright eyes like water drops. You don't dare touch him, you don't dare embrace him, and it makes you feel what is the true natural religion' (p. 181 [1923]). However, considering the nature of the interaction of parts within the complex work *Ecce Puer*, and the ambiguous relationship to purity which a Nietzschean title would illuminate, one begins to doubt that in *Ecce Puer*, at any rate, Rosso's understanding of his work would be this naïve. This doubt is augmented by recalling Rosso's sophisticated theory of perception, of phenomenology, which is already present in his writings at the time of *Ecce Puer*'s modelling. As such, it is appropriate to look at the issue of touch and possession more deeply. To return to Rosso's 'First Revelation':

> If I go down there, I will be able to touch these colours and to hold them in my hand, just like every one has always believed; but if I attempt to capture that shadow on the ground, it will be impossible … therefore I touch it and yet I do not touch it. All the others have always seen by touching. They have never respected light and colour – fine so long as you make things for blind people. (p. 179 [1923])

One senses the importance of this passage, yet it is opaque and confused. The most salient points are that Rosso believed previous artists relied upon vision modelled on what Merleau-Ponty termed 'action by contact', which does not 'respect light and colour', which 'sees by touching'. Conversely, Rosso argues that his own approach to art – and by parallel his theory of perception – is one based upon affirming something palpable *in* perception, rather than through the evocation of the tactile; that is, not through empathetically evoking the touch of an object. The passage makes it clear that 'I touch it and yet I do not touch it' refers, not to the shoes, but to the *shadows*, to the *air* – 'so thick you could bite it'. This predicts a very important passage in 'Eye and Mind:'

> The painter's world is a visible world, nothing but visible: a world almost mad, because it is complete though only partial. Painting awakens and carries to its highest pitch a delirium which is vision itself, for to see is *to have at a distance*; painting extends this strange possession to all aspects of Being, which must somehow

> become visible in order to enter into the work of art. When, apropos of Italian painting, the young Berenson spoke of an evocation of tactile values, he could hardly have been more mistaken; painting evokes nothing, least of all the tactile. What it does is entirely different, almost the inverse. It gives visible existence to what profane vision believes to be invisible; thanks to it we do not need a 'muscular sense' in order to possess the voluminosity of the world. (1993 p. 127)[16]

If Nietzsche's enervated 'immaculate perception' claims 'to love the earth as the moon loves it, and to touch its beauty only with the eyes' it is a perception based upon the natural attitude; a 'profane vision' in which vision at a distance is set in opposition to possession, affirming a concrete division between subject and object. It has been established that for Merleau-Ponty and for Rosso vision of the *visible*, that is, vision not limited to the apprehension of the known, is '*to have at a distance*; painting extends this strange possession to all aspects of Being, which must somehow become visible in order to enter into the work of art'. That is, genuine vision *is* possessive of the object, it is desire, but in such a way that it requires an openness from the subject; it challenges the subject's mastery of the object, and its mastery of itself. Subject and object become less distinct in the 'air' which is their medium. As Rosso says: 'if there is someone before me who has also tried to create something on the basis of seeing, and to go beyond, in his own way, this limited comprehension, then I am the first to approve of it … art is the true way to make people think' (p. 193 [1925]). Nietzsche's 'Indeed you do not love the earth as creators, begetters, and enjoyers of becoming! Where is innocence? Where there is a will to beget. And whoever wants to create over and above himself, he has the purest will', means, surely, just this: *genuinely* innocent perception is the idiot naïvety of love; the openness to the other which forces one to recognise one's limits, oneself, as if from outside oneself, even as that form dissolves into contempt, yet growth. 'Art is the true way to make people think': thinking for Rosso is 'becoming' for Nietzsche – birth. Something which stands against stable identity. Consider the

16 Rosso would probably argue that Berenson was correct in his assessment that 'Italian painting' evoked the tactile, given his belief that Italian art was one founded upon vision-as-touch. One of the weaknesses of Merleau-Ponty's rich essay is that he develops a universal theory of painting drawn from a very limited field of reference, primarily Cézanne (an artist Rosso praised above all others) and the writings of Paul Klee. Merleau-Ponty may be correct in asserting that 'since the power or the fecundity of works of art exceeds every positive causal or linear relation, it is not illegitimate for a layman such as myself, speaking from his memory of a few paintings and books, to express how painting enters into his reflections, and to register his sense of a profound dissonance, a transformation in the relationship between humanity and Being, when he holds up a universe of classical thought' (1993 p. 139), but then to leap into the universal – 'The painter, any painter, *while he is painting*, practices a magical theory of vision' (1993 p. 127) is surely misguided and off-putting.

fate of the pure-perceiving: 'But that shall be your curse, you immaculate, you pure-perceiving ones, that you shall never give birth; and even if you lie broad and pregnant on the horizon!' Consider Merleau-Ponty's perception of the visible which is an openness to the world:

> We speak of 'inspiration,' and the word should be taken literally. There really is inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration in Being, action and passion so slightly discernible that it becomes impossible to distinguish between who sees and who is seen, who paints and what is painted. *We say that a human being is born the moment when something that was only virtually visible within the mother's body becomes at once visible for us and for itself. The painter's vision is an ongoing birth*. (my emphasis, 1993 p. 129)

Developing wonder

Merleau-Ponty claims 'The painter, any painter, *while he is painting*, practices a magical theory of vision' (1993 p. 127). In Rosso's view of art's history this claim is absurd: 'All the others have always seen by touching. They have never respected light and colour – fine so long as you make things for blind people'. Merleau-Ponty makes his claim for art by extrapolation from theories developed out of specific Modernist works, almost invariably Cézanne, whose relation to Rosso is not unnoted, whom Rosso deeply admired, and alongside whom Rosso desired to exhibit. Earlier in 'Eye and Mind' Merleau-Ponty claims: 'art, especially painting, draws upon this fabric of brute meaning which operationalism would prefer to ignore. Art and only art does so in full innocence' (1993 p. 123). It is for this reason that Merleau-Ponty accords special significance to art as an ontological inquiry. However, Rosso knew that the artist's visual engagement with the world was not somehow a 'magical theory' ever-present when the artist is held in the act of making. As with Husserl's phenomenology, genuine openness to perception is something which occurs in the 'wonder which befalls one', but it is something unstable and quick to evaporate. We find Rosso articulating this in his two most sustained statements on perception, both quoted above:

> 1907: After this first flash our eyes, our mind, take back their habits of laziness and thus destroy the first moment of real life, of the complete vision, during which we experience a transposition of values which, though materially in front, seem to be forced back, and vice versa. But although all this is sharply accentuated at the first moment, it is nonetheless true that it is still visible at any later moment. (p. 141)

> 1923: As I looked I saw that the ground, which I believed to be flat so that one could walk on it, was rising up, was coming forward, was like a tone and these people stood out in contrast to this tonality. It was the shadow they left behind them that made it something enormous. I said to myself: I am right, I do not know why. I stopped and ran to another window because as they went further away the shadow appeared to dwindle and no longer has the same effect on me. (p. 179)

We have seen that finding a means to develop wonder was pursued by phenomenology which, as Merleau-Ponty put it, 'is as painstaking as the works of Balzac, Proust, Valery or Cézanne – by reason of the same kind of attentiveness and wonder'. This is put most succinctly by Fink: 'If the origin of a philosophical problem lies essentially in astonishment, then its emergence from astonishment is not a passive occurrence. Rather, the problem becomes actual by man's taking astonishment up voluntarily, by astonishment's being sustained and developed by the awakening force of conceptual cognition' (1981 p. 25).

The question of *how* Rosso attempted to sustain and develop this 'first revelation' is not one which his writings broach; they reiterate the question's origin and importance, but never its means. To understand how Rosso attempted to prolong his inquiry of wonder it is necessary to turn to his works and, in particular, to *Ecce Puer*, as the only work modelled during the period in which his reflections on touch and distance were being developed. Fink argues that 'the essential, fundamental act of a philosophy, is not only the *formulation of the question* but the *development of the question which astonishes* as well. The "radicality" of a philosophy lies in the radicalization of its problem' (1981 p. 24). That is, if phenomenological reduction can move beneath the 'natural attitude' and 'allow wonder's emergence', it cannot be through the passive waiting and observing to which one too readily returns. Rather, it requires an openness and commitment from the subject, something active:

> Not long ago, a little boy of my close acquaintance, only eighteen months old, and of rare zest and energy, was given a saffron crocus-bud by his mother. His delight was boundless. He took it carefully in his small fist and so fell asleep with it unharmed. When she looked in on him later in the evening, it had come into bloom. This called to mind a now far off experience of my own. I was burning – refuse from their bowl of glass – what seemed to be dead twigs of hawthorn, in another spring. As presently they caught fire, they hissed in the heat, the buds suddenly expanded, and the dry twigs broke simultaneously, as if by some minute magic or miracle, into flower and flame. (de la Mare 1943 p. vii)

This simultaneous image of flowering and flame seems obvious but powerfully affecting when extended to Rosso's works; the paradox between his thought and self-presentation, between Vulcan at his forge and the child-like wonderment before the world, before life. It was in pondering *Ecce Puer* that I recalled this odd old passage in Walter de la Mare's *Love*. The image of budding, the miraculous emergence of an image, of life, is indivisible with the subject-matter of *Ecce Puer*. It also recalls Merleau-Ponty's account of the emergence of the genuinely human: 'A human body is present when, between the see-er and the visible, between touching and touched, between one eye and the other, between hand and hand a kind of crossover occurs, when the spark of the sensing/sensible is lit, when the fire starts to burn that will not cease until some accident befalls the body, undoing what no accident would have sufficed to do' (1993 p. 125). In *Ecce Puer* this emergence of life is foregrounded through the anecdote of the curtains; the sculpture's call into being in the moment of eye contact between Alfred William and Rosso, in that moment of astonishment. But, more abstractly, it is there at one remove via photography: of all Rosso's works the sculptural instances of *Ecce Puer* are the ones which feel most like images emerging in the developing tray. Variations in sculptural elements recall different prints – the Piacenza wax underexposed, struggling to emerge from latency; the Edinburgh plaster with the heightened contrast of over-exposed paper prematurely stopped and fixed. Perhaps I've been too sporadic, or too odd, in my journeys into photographic printing to become jaded, but photographic printing is 'some minute magic or miracle', always astonishing.

Similarly, *Ecce Puer* recalls that instant of revelation when the labour of the casting process – so time consuming, so expensive – emerges. It emerges into the world not all at once; rather, working backwards towards the image, some bronze emerges whilst the rest is still shrouded by the remaining plaster investment – this, in *Ecce Puer*, allegorising the work's subject. Rosso's approach to casting was one which brought to the known and repetitious procedures of casting – procedures in which one is always working away from the surface towards the unseen interior, *burying the work* – the revelation of being presented with a new surface. Presented with an object about which, materially, in its constituents and facture, one knows everything. Which to reason should be transparent; yet which presents an aspect which is opaque, unknown and unknowable. When the object becomes not a reproduction, but the physical instantiation of the duet of one's intent and a material's caprice. Mixing improbable materials into the alloy of his bronzes, pouring at one go improbably great volumes of wax – this unknown, this unexpected, this astonishment was something Rosso sought, not just as the origin and eventual effect of his work, but as its ongoing guide.

Rosso's sense of quotation is dense, going beyond the already interwoven dialogue of seer and seen (which the ostensive subject of *Ecce Puer*)/

artwork and beholder/subject and object, to incorporate also the processes of making. If 'the "radicality" of a philosophy lies in the radicalization of its problem', the introduction to this study demonstrated that for Rosso the radicality of his practice lay in the radicalisation of its techniques. This is achieved not only through focusing on the deconstruction and artistic elevation of the stages of production – an art entrenching itself in its area of competence. It is achieved through changing the conditions of production to emulate the human, perceptual moment of revelation with which his artistic practice sought to engage, sustaining wonder.

The complexity of sculptural colour

> *Rosso*: We have before us a colour perspective wholly different from the other traditional and material perspective; and I claim that we need not and should not follow the method of the catalogued celebrities who have measured, and are still measuring, the first plan, the second plan, and follow the material facts of form. (pp. 140–1 [1907])

> *Merleau-Ponty*: But for him [Descartes] it goes without saying that color is an ornament, mere coloring, and that the real power of painting lies in drawing, whose power in turn rests upon the ordered relationship between it and objective space established by perspectival projection. (1993 p. 133)

Compare these lines from 'The colour of sculpture', the second of the three sections of 1907's 'The Impressionism in Sculpture', and 'Eye and Mind'. Given the parallels between their theories of *perception* it is hardly surprising that Rosso and Merleau-Ponty should share common ground on the importance of colour in animating the visible. However, in considering theories of *art*, the discussion gets more complicated. For Merleau-Ponty, whose reflections stem from study of Cézanne, affording colour central significance is unproblematic. For Rosso, dealing with sculpture, matters are less clear.[17] Indeed, later in the 1907 essay, when Rosso does discuss colour within sculpture it is as something intrinsically linked with the decadence he associated with the late antique: 'in later Greek and Roman days works of sculpture are composed of marbles in different colours, and how the statues themselves are coloured … when the

17 Rosso's theories again evidence a response to Baudelaire's Salon of 1846, which states: 'Sculpture, for which colour is meaningless, and any expression of movement difficult, can have no claim to the attention of an artist particularly dedicated to movement, colour and atmosphere' (1981 p. 67) – precisely Rosso's interests.

artist applied himself to the painting of his statue, at this very moment he recognised the impotence and weakness of his work' (p. 141). This hostility to colour is subsequently clarified:

> What does this signify, unless it means that the artist realised that his work did not produce the effect he had intended. And do you think he would have had to resort to such means if, before executing his work, he had painted it in his mind, with due consideration of tone values and light? (p. 141)

For Rosso colour was something which was grappled with in a work's conception and which was conveyed through sculptural form, yet not necessarily conveyed through the work's colour. Colour exists in the sculpture not literally but as a quality the sculpture possesses to evoke a specific atmosphere; the sculpture must reveal the nature of the *air* through which it became visible to the artist. In his 1902 essay 'Impressionism in Sculpture' Rosso is explicit:

> The most important thing is that when looking at what the artist has translated into a subject one can re-establish what is missing … You would thus obtain the atmosphere which surrounds the figure, the colour that animates it … The impression that you make on me is not the same if I find you alone in a garden, or if I see you in the middle of a group of other men, in a room or on the street. It is only this that matters. (p. 130)

Rosso's writings of this period make perfect sense in connecting his project to something familiar within 'Impressionism', a fact emphasised by both essays' titles. However, Rosso's writings neglect the realities of his sculptural project; they overlook or deny the importance of the complex work – an idea which was perhaps more obscure, perhaps more challenging, than the already fascinating interplay of sculpture and painting which an Impressionism in sculpture suggested.

Across the sculptures of *Ecce Puer* we find great variation in 'the atmosphere which surrounds the figure, the colour that animates it'. Literally, of course: the colours are very different across works. But also the changes of material affect the 'atmosphere' beyond colour: the diffused translucency of the Piacenza wax reduces internal contrast, apparently radiating an inner light; the plaster-encrusted Venice bronze, dry, cold and opaque around the neck and lips, yet with warm, rosy cheeks; the varnished plaster in Edinburgh very evidently reflecting light from its surface, yet offering-up a pictorial image from within. Each of these draw into themselves very different worlds. Each bears

a different flesh, a different air. The realities of reproduction and process, the specificity of materials, etc., are never addressed in Rosso's writings; yet, as we have seen, the depth to which they augment one's understanding of his work is immense and truly radical.

The importance of understanding how alterations of colour affect 'the atmosphere which surrounds the figure, the colour that animates it', how potentially contingent factors kindle an understanding of an entirely different 'atmosphere', were explored in literature and philosophy by Rosso's contemporaries. Husserl's reflections on colour in his early phenomenology will be the subject of the next section. Proust, presaging a pivotal moment in his big book's story – Marcel's encounter with his first infatuation, Gilberte – offers:

> I found the whole path throbbing with the fragrance of hawthorn-blossom. The hedge resembled a series of chapels, whose walls were no longer visible under the mountains of flowers that were heaped upon their altars; while underneath, the sun cast a square of light upon the ground, as though it had shone in upon them through a window; the scent that swept out over me from them was as rich, and as circumscribed in its range, as though I had been standing before the Lady-altar, and the flowers, themselves adorned also, held out each its little bunch of glittering stamens with an air of inattention, fine, radiating 'nerves' in the flamboyant style of architecture, like those which, in church, framed the stair to the rood-loft or closed the perpendicular tracery of the windows, but here spread out into pools of fleshy white, like strawberry-beds in spring … And then, inspiring me with that rapture which we feel on seeing a work by our favourite painter quite different from any of those that we already know, or, better still, when some one has taken us and set us down in front of a picture of which we have hitherto seen no more than a pencilled sketch, or when a piece of music which we have heard played over on the piano bursts out again in our ears with all the splendour and fullness of an orchestra, my grandfather called me to him, and, pointing to the hedge of Tansonville, said: 'You are fond of hawthorns; just look at this pink one; isn't it pretty?'
>
> And it was indeed a hawthorn, but one whose flowers were pink, and lovelier even than the white. It, too, was in holiday attire … but it was attired even more richly than the rest, for the flowers which clung to its branches, one above another, so thickly as to leave no part of the tree undecorated, like the tassels wreathed about the crook of a rococo shepherdess, were every one of them 'in colour'. (1929a pp. 188, 190)

Proust's is a compelling example of how a change in colour alters not just the chromatic associations an object evokes, but through this also the ability to suggest different scales and to summon different worlds: one hawthorn evocative of a gothic cathedral, another maintaining something of that votive association, yet transformed into a symbol of the religious; the present an abstraction of that which motivated the earlier association. In Proust this translation across mediums is fundamental, a monad of the whole book: the transformation from piano-work to orchestra echoing that of the famous 'little phrase' of Vinteuil's Sonata into the Septet – memory conjures a captivating richness in perception, mixing memory and desire for that which isn't or is not yet. Attention to the present is sharpened through a yearning for the future which is explicitly grounded in the past.

Music assumes a significant role in understanding Rosso's articulation of relationships across discrete yet related entities. In 1923's interview with Luigi Ambrosini, Rosso states: '*Everything is music* … Literature, sculpture, painting … *I know nothing about them*, to me, it's all emotion, and it's all music' (p. 181).[18] To cite music as either a universal medium to which other mediums aspired (or were subject), or as parallel to the visual arts in leading to some deeper, universal law of feeling, was hardly novel by the 1920s.[19] However, in

18 The view that a separation of the arts was untenable was also expressed in Rosso's first published text, in Edmund Claris's *Impressionism in Sculpture*: 'art is indivisible. There is no painting at one end and sculpture at the other' (p. 131). Rosso later elevates music (tonality) as the universal medium. Claris's book also contains an essay by Rodin in which, as Meier-Graefe notes '[Rodin] concludes with the proposition that there is but one art, that painting and sculpture are merged in a single art – that of drawing' (1908 p. 33). Although 'Eye and Mind' quotes Rodin approvingly, in the context of this dissertation it is useful to note that much of Rodin's thinking, not least the elevation of *drawing*, aligns him with what Merleau-Ponty might term a 'Cartesian aesthetics', in stark contrast to Rosso's theorising of tonality.

19 As Peter Vergo and Olivia Mattis note, a close union or overlapping of music and visual arts runs throughout the nineteenth century, with Wagnerian music drama a clear reference for Rosso (via his early association with the *Scapigliatura*) (2013 §. 3). A closer reference to Rosso's later theorising would be Walter Pater's famous 1888 declaration that 'All art constantly aspires to the condition of music' (in Vergo and Mattis 2013 §. 1). During the second half of Rosso's career many artists were exploring the territory between music and the visual: Alexander Scriabin's symphonic *Prometheus: The Poem of Fire* (first performed 1911) included a part for 'colour organ'; in abstract film Hans Richter explored synaesthesia; indeed, in the year of Rosso's comment (1923) there was a 'colour-sound' concert at the Meierkhold Theatre in Moscow (see Vergo and Mattis 2013 §. 4). Patricia Railing demonstrates the imprecision of the well-trodden interpretation of abstract painting developing from the 'translation of music into painting', but notes that the move to abstraction in the paintings of Vasily Kandinsky, Franz Marc, August Macke and Kazimir Malevich developed from a dialogue with music and a belief that both were built upon the same fundamental ground: 'The 'pure' painters – Vasily Kandinsky, Frank Kupka, Piet Mondrian and Kazimir Malevich – who followed after 1910, however, always declared that their paintings were not music … Rather, they claimed that painting's colours have an effect on the human being just as music's tones do: the relationship between music and painting is a parallel one, colour and tone affecting and enlivening human feelings' (2005 §. 1).

Medardo Rosso: The Man and the Artist Rosso's patron Etha Fles tellingly quotes: 'He himself once compared his *Ecce Puer* to a Bach Prelude: "Ca va bien ensemble. C'est de la bonne musique"' (1922 p. 25).

Rosso's apparent specificity is striking: not simply 'music' or 'musicality' – terms apt for generic application, akin to 'poetic' and very much in the air at that time – but a Bach prelude compared explicitly with *Ecce Puer*.[20] That said, it is hard to know to what prelude Rosso refers. There is a well-known, undated photograph of Fles, surrounded by her Rossos, seated at a piano (reproduced in Caramel 1988 p. 111), upon the music shelf of which is the large, hand-written and semi-legible legend: 'pour Medardo je joue le VIII prelude de Bach'. This might possibly suggest the *Eight Little Preludes and Fugues*, although these – originally either for clavichord or organ – would be unusual in piano transcription. Far more probably, it refers to the eighth prelude (E flat minor) of either book one or book two of the *48 Preludes and Fugues*, the *Well-Tempered Clavier*.[21] Either way, the comparison implies a part of something larger, given the nature of a prelude – *vorspiel*/foreplay: something awaiting conclusion or satisfaction beyond itself. If Rosso does refer to the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, it suggests an individual part of a far greater whole; not simply the fugue which is its natural conclusion, but also the twenty-three other preludes and fugues in the remaining major and minor keys, which constitute each of the compiled work's two books.

To turn to the sentence's second half: '*It goes well together*. It's good music'. This supports the thesis that Rosso was acutely interested in relations of parthood, at least in music – and, as he claimed: 'Everything's music'. It is instructive to contrast this with a rare occasion when Rosso explicitly mentions parts: 'Every work that is built up of different parts, composed, and invented, becomes small, paltry, untrue and material' (p. 141 [1907]). As is suggested by the nature of the complex work, and as will be elaborated later, this contrast points not to an inconsistency in Rosso's thought, but to there being more than one level on which Rosso works are *composed*. Rosso had a nascent awareness of the importance for his works of the relationship of part to whole, or whole to greater whole; he hinted at this, yet did not integrate it into his theorising.

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20 This comment is often cited but never fully unpacked (de Sanna 1985 p. 26; Bacci 2004 p. 154; Mola 2007 p. 17).

21 In light of Rosso's wilful confusion of titles and his finding difference in that which is also identical, it is perhaps noteworthy that the eighth preludes and fugues of each book of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* are unique in that all other pairs across the two works are given in the same key, these – although in the same key – are notated differently: in the first book, E flat minor, in the second its enharmonic, D sharp minor.

Flesh: 'a difference between things and colours'

It isn't by chance that Rosso developed an investigation of associations across identical forms, and of relations of parts to whole; contemporaneous phenomenology was also asking these questions. The first fully developed exposition of what was to become known as phenomenology was offered in Husserl's fifth and sixth *Logical Investigations*. Collectively, the *Logical Investigations* were also the first major work of twentieth-century mereology (the philosophy of part–whole relations), and Husserl 'the earliest systematic mereologist of this century' (Simons 1987 p. 254). The two Investigations preceding the introduction of phenomenology are directly concerned with questions of parthood, most especially the third, 'On the Theory of Wholes and Parts'. Of this Husserl later commented 'I have the impression that this Investigation was too little read. It helped me a great deal, and indeed it is an essential presupposition for full understanding of the Investigations that follow it' (Husserl 1970 p. 49).

Rosso sought to examine the air which surrounds things, through which things are known prior to conceptualising: 'At the first moment of looking spontaneously at any object in nature, we experience a displacement of tonalities, a broadening of the thing before our eyes, before our spirit'. In the third Investigation Husserl asks the opposite: to rarefy the air and seek the 'emphatic' object: 'A "striking" colour or form may seem at times to impress us in isolation, but if we bring such an event *back to mind* we see that the whole object is here phenomenally emphatic' (my emphasis, 1970 p. 449).

Husserl's attempt to deliver the object from perception to reflection is intimately connected to his mereology, drawing on his understanding of parts as either 'moments' or 'pieces'. The former are necessarily non-independent parts of the whole they constitute; the latter relatively independent.[22] Husserl

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22 Of interest in considering complex works, the division of parts into pieces and moments, augmented by Husserl's notion of foundational relations, forms the core of Husserl's method of 'variation'. As Robert Sokolowski notes: '"variation" … is a procedure which uses the contrast between stasis and change. If one aspect of a thing can be varied while another aspect remains unchanged, then we can legitimately distinguish between two parts of a whole, or at least between a whole and its parts. If the brightness of a color can change while the color remains the same, the two can be considered as distinct parts' (1968 pp. 540–41). Eugen Fink puts it clearly and suggestively: 'In the attempt to establish the essential structure of a domain of objects, a domain pregiven in its vague typicality – e.g., the essential uniqueness of the corporal, material thing of nature – the *first stage* in Husserl's method is to *vary* an exemplarily chosen thing in its given composition such that all the possibilities lying within its unawakened horizon of sense, the possibilities of the can-also-be-otherwise, are *tried out* as it were, are expressly run through … it is an intuitive, clear and elaborate *presenting* of the possibilities of being otherwise that do not destroy the identity of the thing' (1981 p. 49). One could almost take Husserlian variation as a summary of Rosso's project, so seductively does it seem to encapsulate Rosso's engagement with the 'could-be-otherwise', the object's latencies. The key term which removes it from Rosso's theoretical world is 'essential'. Rosso's phenomenology was one dwelling in perception not ideation. Hence Rosso, in his bodily interactions with materials,

illustrates this by contrasting a head (piece) and a colour (moment): 'A head can certainly be presented apart from the person that has it. A colour, form etc., is not presentable in this fashion, it needs a substrate, in which it can be exclusively noticed, but from which it cannot be taken out. But the head also, considered, e.g. visually, can only be noticed by itself, since it is unavoidably given as an element in a total visual field' (1970 p. 447). That is, a moment 'essentially' cannot be *conceived* independently, but in *perception* it may dominate (be 'exclusively noticed'). Husserl goes on to note the necessarily dependent nature of pieces within perception: a piece can never be truly independent, since 'it is unavoidably given as an element in a total visual field' – as *Gestalt* psychology would later have it, perception presupposes a figure–ground relation: the piece becomes, *in perception*, a moment.

It is as a direct response to Husserl's comments on colour, so marginalised in the third Investigation, that Merleau-Ponty begins to develop his notion of flesh. In a working note for *The Visible and the Invisible*, dated November 1959 (his first recorded use of the term 'flesh' was the concluding word of the previous note), Merleau-Ponty writes:

> a color, yellow; it surpasses itself of itself: as soon as it becomes the color of the illumination, the dominant color of the field, it ceases to be such or such a color … The 'World' is this whole where each 'part,' when one takes it for itself, suddenly opens unlimited dimensions – becomes a *total part* … each part is *torn up* from the whole, comes with its roots, encroaches upon the whole, transgresses the frontiers of the others … Perception is not first a perception of *things,* but a perception of *elements* (water, air …) of *rays* of *the world*, of things which are dimensions, which are worlds, I slip on these 'elements' and here I am in the *world*. (1968 pp. 217–8)

That which can be 'noticed by itself' in Husserl's account becomes in Merleau-Ponty's a '*total part*'. Yet this total part (certainly not a piece), isn't reducible to an *essence* of yellow, but establishes, through tearing itself from the whole, still rooted, the '*representation*' of the whole. This is by no means remote from sentiments expressed in Rosso's 1926 'Conception – Limit – Infinite': 'sometimes an extremely dominant tonality, for instance purple, diminishes in your perception until you see it as rain falling everywhere' (p. 152).[23] Merleau-

like Merleau-Ponty's intercorporeality, explored a territory in some sense prior to, yet ever infringing upon Husserl's.

23 The paragraph of Baudelaire's Salon of 1846 which raises the 'meaninglessness' of colour for sculpture begins: 'A dominant note can exercise its mastery only at the expense of the rest' (1981 p. 67). Husserl's third Investigation offers a parallel engagement with tonality in music (1970 p. 471), to which Merleau-Ponty seems to respond later in the above note: 'a

Ponty continues his train of thought into the elementality of this perceptual world, its originary position before Being: 'Perception is not first the perception of things, but a perception of *elements* (water, air …) of *rays* of the *world'*. Analogously, Rosso comments: 'This undeniable evidence of non separation, of space, of "air, life", only demonstrated – I repeat – by an unlimited perspective of emotion … I always insist and repeat that nothing will rightly come out if it is not interpreted by means of its tonality, that is never "objectively", materially' (p. 152).

The similarities between Merleau-Ponty's understanding of flesh in 'Eye and Mind' and Rosso's theories of perception – of 'air' – have been remarked. When Merleau-Ponty returns to the question of colour after writing 'Eye and Mind', he is able to articulate a position indebted to Husserl's dry logic of piece and moment, yet expressed with all Proust's vitality. He speaks of a red dress as a 'punctuation' in the field of red things:

> Its red literally is not the same as it appears in one constellation or in the other, as the pure essence of the Revolution of 1917 precipitates in it, or that of the eternal feminine, or that of the public prosecutor, or that of the gypsies dressed like hussars who reigned twenty-five years ago over an inn on the Champ-Elysees. *A certain red is also a fossil drawn up from the depths of imaginary worlds.* If we took all these participations into account, we should recognise that a naked color, and in general a visible, is not a chunk of absolutely hard, indivisible being, offered all naked to a vision which could be only total or null, but is rather a sort of straits between

color can become a level, a fact become a category (exactly as in music: describe a note as particular, i.e. in the field of another tone – and "the same" note that has become that within whose key a music is written)' (1968 p. 218). It is, perhaps, symptomatic of the disparity between Rosso's writing and the direction in which his making took him that at the time when 'tone' and 'dominant tonality' are offered as defining tenets of his theorising, they also become so profoundly problematised in his complex works. A major theme of this chapter is that Rosso's works articulate parallels with profoundly revolutionary cultural developments of his age (Husserl and Proust), yet his writings veneer this radicality with preoccupations of prior decades. In this light it is suggestive that around 1900 the dominance of tonality in music was put under increasing pressure by composers such as Alexander Scriabin and Claude Debussy. In 1907, the year after *Ecce Puer*'s modelling and the year of Rosso's *Daily Mail* essay, the composer Joseph Marx (whilst studying philosophy and history of art at Graz University) is believed to have coined the term 'atonality' (see Hayden and Esser 2009 p. 9). The 1920s, the period of Rosso's renewed theoretical elaborations of tone, coincide with the culmination of Arnold Schoenberg's and Anton Berg's free-atonality (i.e. Berg's *Wozzeck*), and their movement to twelve-tone composition. Schoenberg, also a painter, was inspirational to a younger generation of artists, those moving painting towards abstraction; i.e., Kandinsky wrote to Schoenberg in early 1911: 'The independent progress through their own destinies, the independent life of the individual voices in your compositions, is exactly what I am trying to find in my paintings' (quoted in Railing 2005 §. 2). Similarly, Franz Marc wrote to August Macke: 'Can you imagine a music in which tonality (i.e., the adherence to any key) is completely suspended? I was constantly reminded of Kandinsky's *Composition*, which also permits no trace of tonality' (quoted in Railing 2005 §. 2).

> exterior horizons and interior horizons ever gaping open … less a color or a thing, therefore, than a difference between things and colors … between the alleged colors and the visibles, we would find anew the tissue that lines them, sustains them, nourishes them, and which for its part is not a thing, but a possibility, a latency, and a *flesh* of things. (1968 p. 132)

Reconsidering the origins of Merleau-Ponty's development of 'flesh' illuminates the importance of the question of parthood and the rigorous yet respectful investigations of variation which were undertaken around 1900 by Rosso, Husserl, Proust, and a number of artists to whom this study shall return. This is a generation very much after Impressionism, after those – Helmholtz, etc. – whom Becker sees as united with Rosso by a shared interest in 'dissolving' form. This chapter has shown that Rosso was not alone in combining a fascination with the fleeting with a rigour of inquiry aimed at attenuating and delving beneath the instant – as Proust put it in *Time Regained*: 'We reason, that is, our mind wanders, each time our courage fails to force us to pursue an intuition through all successive stages which end in its fixation, in the expression of its own reality' (1941 p. 230). Rosso's complexity stems from sharing Proust's sentiment – of 'pursuing' an intuition to its fixation – in his inquiry into the visual, whilst combining this with a profound engagement with materials. It is this which makes the idea of fixation untenable; as the chapter on 'Reproduction' will explore, Rosso's relationship with materials always opened the work as conceived, extending beyond any conception, opening its possibilities of otherness.

4. Photography

Reproduction circa 1900

The above reading of Rosso's writings has brought greater appreciation of their relevance to philosophical currents of his age. Yet we have seen that Rosso's *works* go beyond the scope of his explicit theorising, and no more so than in their interrogation of reproduction, which is at its most sophisticated and through-composed in *Ecce Puer*. This is achieved by the interplay of two distinct enquiries. Firstly, a complicated engagement with the reproductive processes of casting and photography, eschewing any direct copy, yet always alluding to its possibility. Secondly, and perhaps uniquely to *Ecce Puer*, an allegorising of the practice of these reproductive processes in the original clay model – *Ecce Puer* is indebted to the photographic image's apparition from latency, as it is also aware that it will perform and re-perform this in another life, or, perhaps more accurately, later in its lifetime.

Rosso's writings pay no attention to how his aesthetic principles could be integrated into the photographic image, let alone how the photograph might aid their resolution in the sculptures. This chapter explores in greater depth Rosso's relationship to the photographic reproductions characteristic of his era, and how his project is a timely response to questions which became pressing around the turn of the century. As noted in the introduction, during the past two decades Rosso's photographs have received unprecedented attention. This is the first study which offers both in-depth consideration of them in relation to the artistic climate of Rosso's age, and, more importantly, of their role within the broader field of technological developments in image transmission, which coincided with Rosso's turn to an exclusive focus on reproduction.

Rosso and reproduction

Rosso's published writings neglect the role which photography played within his practice. When photography is mentioned it is aligned with a tendency towards 'objectivity'; the grasp of the world which he believed characterised the negative history of sculpture – a history of 'paperweights'. Perhaps his most telling remark on photography is an aside in the 1923 interview with Luigi Ambrosini:

> I have always experienced a great deal of disappointment on the rare occasions I have gone to the cinematograph. It is good for people who like photography. That is also objectivism. Me, I say: I must come here with that Kodak eye to understand that they have shown so little respect to so many moving moments of life, that they have wasted so many good visions, and that all that would have been so beautiful if I had seen it with my own eyes! It is the same when I hear someone praising the phonograph. I think it is a machine unworthy even of cats, because cats would run away in fright. It is the assassin of all states of mind, of all the great, natural moments of music. It is not even worth as much as the broken string of a violoncello, because the sound the string produces in breaking still evokes life. (p. 181)

Rosso explicitly condemns the medium of photography as objectifying. He implies that this is a characteristic shared with the other major forms of technological reproduction, phonography and cinematography. The mediated form of experience can never have the vitality of the live encounter, with that which 'would have been so beautiful' seen with one's own eyes – even the sound of a 'cello string breaking has more life than a recording of the finest performance, etc., etc. The subject of death and the spectral in relation to reproduction is a staple of photographic theory and will be returned to in the following chapter. For the moment the important points are, firstly, that even as late as 1923 (seventeen years after modelling *Ecce Puer*), Rosso is unwilling to acknowledge the creative importance of photography within his practice; its importance both as a means of dissemination, and as a formative influence on the sculptures. Secondly, although Rosso dismisses the entire medium as 'objectifying', he nevertheless used it extensively and to great effect.

Whereas Rosso's published writings seldom mention photography, for pragmatic reasons it features in his later correspondence. In these Rosso's dislike of the medium is coupled with a militant insistence that the viewer's encounter with the sculpture, if photographically mediated, should be so via *his* photographs, rather than those of any other photographer. As Rosso wrote

in 1926 to the Futurist Carlo Carrà, regarding photographs for reproduction in an article in the newspaper *L'Ambrosiana*: 'please show me all photographs before publication – as we had agreed. That is, never publish them without my approval' (p. 297). Later in that year he again wrote to Carrà:

> I cannot allow other photographs to be taken. I want those of mine and no others. I also believe these are the best. I don't want any others. Thank the director (I don't know his name) thank him. I don't want, desire any others. Also thank the photographer. But I don't want his, I want only my own. (p. 299)

What is telling in his late correspondence is that he implies a belief that he could move, indeed had moved, beyond this seemingly inherent objectifying quality of the photographic image. In a letter (1927) to Ricci Oddi, the collector who had recently acquired a wax on plaster *Ecce Puer* (Piacenza, in the museum founded upon Oddi's collection), Rosso writes:

> I have never known *worse criminals than photographers*.
> Extremely irresponsible …
> – Enormous enemy of seeing – because it limits – because it is objective …
> The more effects you see on a so-called picture – The falser it is because it is objective –
> Something no different from what is rightly called a statue …
> I send you here a photo – it is not to be retouched to render it possibly objective. (p. 295)

Rosso's letter, although unclear, highlights that Rosso desired to achieve in photography something akin to what he sought in his sculptures – a vision or moment unbridled by objectivity – and, indeed, in his understanding, that he had accomplished this. To this end Rosso's photographic endeavours had developed greatly from his earliest uses of the medium. Whereas the 1883 photograph of the sculptural ensemble discussed in the introduction presented many of Rosso's sculptures simultaneously, as sculptures on stands, a defining feature of Rosso's engagement with photography from 1900 onwards is his attempt to extend beyond the *presentation* of a sculptural work. In this desire Rosso asks of the photograph something very different from the accepted conventions of photographing sculpture – conventions which, by 1900, bore the weight of sixty years' history.

Documenting sculpture circa 1900

In the introduction it was outlined that from at least 1839 onwards sculpture had been a subject of photography. The technological representation of the object allowed the appreciation of a sculpture, and its comparison with other works, remote from the original. This enabled a great shift in both artistic production, and in art's reception. As early as 1881 Jacob Burckhardt, one of the pre-eminent art historians of his day, could write: 'it is a fact that in art history one now believes only in photography, and that one is right with this' (quoted in Nilsen 2011 p. 28) – a view sustained by Donald Preziosi over a century later: 'Art history as we know it today is the child of photography' (1989 p. 72).

Despite photography's relatively long history, and the equally established practice of photographing sculptures, the ten years spanning the turn of the century mark a period of unparalleled change to the form and social function of the photographic image. To understand the significance of Rosso's turn to photographic reproduction and his place within a wider questioning of perception in the light of technology, it is necessary to consider this historical moment. To understand the role of photography within art's reception at the beginning of this crucial period one can profitably turn to Heinrich Wölfflin's 1896 essay 'How One should Photograph Sculpture', which offers a fascinating theoretical text addressing the extent and misuse of the photographic documentation of sculpture. Although Wölfflin writes of Renaissance and classical art, as we shall see in considering the documentation of Rodin's art, Wölfflin's conventions were equally applicable to the contemporary art of his age. Wölfflin's essay opens:

> Whosoever is interested in the history of sculpture is at the greatest loss for good illustrations. Not that the publications [i.e., photographic prints] are missing – the things are offered for sale in all sizes and manners – but it seems to be the widely held opinion that sculptural artworks can be photographed from any side, and it is left totally to the discretion of the photographer at which angle to the figure to set up his machine. He then believes that his artistic temperament will be best revealed if he avoids in every case the frontal viewpoint and seeks out a 'painterly' side view: painterly and artistic being concepts that seem to overlap completely. The public buys these photographs in good faith, [believing] that with a mechanically made illustration nothing of the original could be lost; it does not know that an old figure has a particular main view, that one destroys its effectiveness when one takes away its main silhouette; without batting an eye, pres-

> ent-day people allow their uncultivated eyes to put up with the most disagreeable overlaps and lack of clarity. One gets altogether used to completely false impressions, since the corruption then goes further: the photographs serve as templates for illustrations in popular art-historical literature, indeed even in monumentally scaled publications such false images find a place and are tolerated. (translator's parentheses, 2013 p. 53)

Wölfflin's account highlights the pervasiveness of photographic reproductions of sculpture; they were very much a part of art's reception. There is a superficial point of agreement between Wölfflin's and Rosso's theories of sculpture; for the purpose of photographic reproduction Wölfflin is very clear that works present a best view, and illustrates his argument with quite convincing juxtapositions of similar yet tellingly different 'correct' and 'incorrect' photographs (e.g. of Verrocchio's *David*). This view accords with Rosso's reflections in *The Daily Mail* article of 1907: 'a work of sculpture … is made to be seen at such or such a distance, according to the effect intended by the artist' (p. 141).

Where Rosso diverges from Wölfflin is on the question of the object. For Wölfflin a sculpture's objectivity is vital to comprehending its form, and this quality is brought into documentation through the centrality of the silhouette, its outline – where the work ends and the world begins: 'an old figure has a particular main view … one destroys its effectiveness when one takes away its main silhouette'. This is in complete contrast with Rosso's views on art and perception: 'Nothing in this world can detach itself from its surroundings' (p. 140). Wölfflin equates this main silhouette with '*clarity*' – a clear presenting of the object in itself.

When Wölfflin notes that it is 'Not that the publications are missing – the things are offered for sale in all sizes and manners' he refers to photographic prints. The availability of photographic prints of sculpture was not limited to classical or Renaissance art; indeed, from 1896 onwards Rodin exhibited saleable prints within sculpture exhibitions (Pinet 2006 p. 278). However, although photography offered the near-identical replication of images, potentially in large number, these are not mass-produced images in the sense embodied by photolithographic, photogravure or rotogravure printing techniques.[1]

1 It is remarkable how often the crucial distinction in social function between chemical and photomechanical prints is missed. E.g. Elizabeth Childs, in an essay centring on artists' use of photography for publicity, c. 1900, draws attention to the fact that artists' uses of photography went hand-in-hand with the 'era when artists had increasingly collaborated with galleries and critics in the production of texts to represent themselves' (1999 p. 31), but in no way deals with the advances in image, rather than textual, printing.

The desire for the chemical photograph to be translated into the mechanical print is evident from photography's earliest days. In 1856 Ernest Lacan remarked that 'For us, photography, however complete its results, is only a transitory process; the future lies with heliographic engraving or photolithography' (quoted in Frizot 1998 p. 225). That the desire for the photograph to become truly industrialised remained a concern into the 1890s is evident in the final line of Wölfflin's above quotation: 'the photographs serve as templates for illustrations in popular art-historical literature'. For reproductions in artistic publications photography often still served as the visual source for a lithographic plate produced by hand. Even published photographs were often mediated by manual techniques, rather than being indices of the depicted object; as a commentator in 1874 wrote of reproducing paintings, 'For ordinary purposes, and as separate works with an intrinsic beauty of their own, these fine photographs of rare etchings are to be preferred to attempts to reproduce the actual picture' (in Nilsen 2011 p. 142).[2] The salient point of this is that the high-quality print of a sculpture was still an expensive, limited commodity.[3]

It wasn't until the 1880s that experiments into photographic half-toning made mass-produced photographs technically feasible, a technology which first gained practical application in the 1890s – 1898 saw the first photographically illustrated magazines (Albert and Feyel 1998 p. 362). As noted in the introduction, mass-reproduced photography gained commercial viability in the early 1900s, around 1904.[4] One cannot emphasise too greatly the importance of this shift. Despite the sweeping scale of improvements which had characterised the technological development of photography from its earliest years until the close of the nineteenth century (in image resolution, exposure time, portability, etc.), it is only the transposition of the photographic image to the mass production of commercial printing that marks a decisive

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2 For instance, one of the earliest photographically reproduced (calotype) albums, *Annuls of the Artworks of Spain* (1848), of which approximately 25 copies were produced, consisted almost entirely of calotypes of etchings, plus four photographs from greyscale oil copies, and only one photograph from the original, a sculpture (Sterling in Bann 2011 p. 133).

3 Only in the 1870s was dryplate photography developed, and it was not until 1879 that the first dryplates were available commercially. Until this time the initial stage in producing a photographic print was the preparation of the substrate: the mixing of a photosensitive emulsion and the coating of the paper directly prior to exposure (no more than fifteen minutes). Even the most ubiquitously produced, low-quality photographs of the nineteenth century, the *carte de visite*, required a time-consuming process: exposure of the paper to light, removal into the developing solution, then stop-bath, then fixing solution and finally a thorough wash. The now-wet fibre-based paper then needed to dry.

4 Mechanical reproduction of photographs was refined by Eduard Mertens in 1904 (Albert and Feyel 1998 p. 362), the year which also saw the beginning of photographically illustrated daily publications, e.g., in England, *The Daily Mirror* (Frizot 1998 p. 365). For more on the early years of mechanically reproduced photography, see Michel Frizot's 'Photomechanical Reproduction' (2009 pp. 195–209) and, in greater detail, Anthony Hamber's *A Higher Branch of the Art: Photographing the Fine Arts in England, 1839–1880* (Hamber 1996 pp. 165–70).

epoch in its social function (one coinciding with that other great development in the photograph, the moving image, to which we will return in a later chapter). The migration of the photograph into the popular press cemented the emerging truth that the only way of being a well-known artist was to be known through photographic mediation.

Rodin and photography

Before turning to Rosso's engagement with photography it is instructive to consider how the medium was used and understood by his great rival, Rodin. Like Rosso, Rodin's relationship with photography was deep and richly ambivalent. Rodin claimed photography was 'mere exactitude [which] does not inspire feelings' (quoted in Elsen 1980 p. 11) and famously opined in *L'Art* (1911), that: 'It is the artist who tells the truth and photography lies … And this is what condemns certain modern painters, who reproduce poses provided by high-speed photographs when they want to represent galloping horses' (Rodin 1912 p. 32).[5] Yet, despite antipathy, Rodin is seen as the 'first sculptor to use photography to record and edit works in progress … the first to organise the dissemination of his work by photography' (Becker 1999b p. 93); and, oddly but it seems correctly, of all his contemporaries it was 'only Rodin who professed an admiration for photography' (Kosinski 1999 p. 16).

Rodin's initial uses of photographs, from at least 1878 onwards, were to maintain records of works in progress; as aides for considering changes to the sculptures; and for publicity and sales (Becker 1999b p. 92). During this early period, as Jane Becker notes, 'Photographers were treated no better than *praticiens* in Rodin's studio … Working with the photographers [Karl] Bodmer, Charles Michelez, and Victor Pannelier, Rodin decided on the angle of the shot as well as the lighting and background; in fact, he preferred his photographers to use the same light source as he used when modelling the works' (1999b p. 95).[6]

Rodin's relationship with photography altered when, from 1896, he began working with Eugene Druet (Pinet 2006 p. 278). With Druet's artificial lighting, which moved beyond recording the sculpture's typical studio existence, the prints become something more than documents. It is at this time, from 1896 onwards, that Rodin began exhibiting photographs within sculpture exhibitions

5 This passage is cited approvingly by Merleau-Ponty in 'Eye and Mind' (1993 p. 145). It is hard to know which artist first distilled a maxim from consideration of Muybridge's well-known photographs, but we have seen that from as early as 1902, in his first published writings, Rosso had stated: 'I believe that it is impossible to see a horse with four legs at a time' (p. 131) – this in an essay explicitly attacking Rodin.

6 Elizabeth Childs add: 'For Rodin a passionate will to control the image of his sculpture led him to dictate the angle, the lighting, and the background of each reproduction of his work. Imposing his signature on these photographs asserted his artistic claim not only over the work but over our controlled perspective on it' (1999 p. 30).

(Becker 1999 p. 93; see also Pinet 1998 pp. 74–8). Rodin continued to work with Druet and, from 1900, in business partnership with photographer and publisher Jacques-Ernest Bulloz. However, from 1902 Rodin allowed more explicitly 'artistic' photographers to document his work. This openness to outside influence finds its most canonical expression in Edward Steichen's various depictions of Rodin 'in thought', and later, dating from 1908, the moonlit shots of *Balzac*. By allowing photographers access to his sculptures Rodin became an important figure at the high-point of Symbolist-inspired photographic 'Pictorialism'.

Pictorialist sensibilities encompassed an international array of photographers. Patrick Daum cites Robert de la Sizeranne's 1899 essay 'La Photographie est-elle un Art?' as 'a founding text of Pictorialism' (2006 p. 15). Sizeranne notes that: 'Something is changing, or is going to change, in the aesthetics of black and white. A new movement is taking photographers beyond and against the paths they have taken until now. This movement is international' (in Daum 2006 p. 15).[7] Pictorialist photographers sought to bring a 'painterliness' to the photograph, in order to deny or complicate its causal reference to its ostensible photographic subject (rather as suggested by superficial readings of Rosso's photographs). Pam Roberts notes that, 'Around the turn of the century … pictorial photographers in Europe began to use ever more elaborate manipulative techniques like platinum, gum bichromate, carbon, etc. which resulted in an end product as far removed from the work of the despised "snapshotters" as possible, looking more like pastel sketches or charcoal drawings than photographs' (Roberts 1997 p. 7). The desire to get away from the directness of the photograph, the snapshot, was predicated upon the belief that the 'truth' of its verisimilitude to nature was wholly specious – exemplary of this is Steichen's argument that 'every photograph is a fake from start to finish, a purely impersonal, unmanipulated photograph being practically impossible' (quoted in Brandow 2008 p. 9).[8]

It is under the influence of the Pictorialist photographers, most particularly Steichen, that Rodin articulates a position of openness to the *artistic* interpretation of his sculptures being undertaken by others, outside his 'passionate will to control the image of his sculpture'. Of Steichen he says, 'It doesn't matter to me at all whether the photographer intervenes or doesn't … [a photograph] will always be interesting if it is the work of an artist' (quoted in Johnson 1995 pp. 4–5). As Roxana Marcoci comments, in the period following

7 For more on the disparate groups now subsumed under this rubric, see Roberts 1997 pp. 7–10.

8 Steichen is fascinating in relation to the complex work. He was still using both painting and photography at the onset of his work with Rodin, and his remarkable experiments in gum-bichromate printing led to photographs of which each print had a genuinely unique colour/patina. For example, photographic prints of his *Pond – Moonlight* (1904) are known to exist in only three instances, all unique; but also exist mass-reproduced in *Camera Work*, the quarterly journal on which Steichen worked with Alfred Stieglitz. For more on Pictorialism see Daum 2006.

1902 'Rodin entered a new phase in his relationship with photography, in which, feeling more at ease with the medium, he gave others carte blanche to represent his work' (2010 p. 86).

Leading scholarly opinion (Elsen, Marcoci, Pinet and Becker) promulgates an interpretation of Rodin as an artist who moved from being a reluctant pioneer, using photography as a document ('objectively'), to his later, elevated status as an open-minded collaborator, facilitator and even at times explicit champion of photography as an artform. However, the development of Rodin's relationship with photography wasn't linear but forked. The appreciation of this requires consideration of those contemporaneous technological advances in mass reproduction in the decade straddling the new century, as outlined above. These advances chronologically parallel Rodin's shift to exhibiting photographs (1896) and lead to his early exchanges with Steichen and the other Pictorialists.

Pinet's observation that Pictorialist photographs of Rodin's works from and after the turn of the century 'were no longer intended for the sculptor's immediate use; rather, they were made to be exhibited in photographic galleries and published in prestigious art journals such as *Camera Work*' (Pinet 1998 p. 83) is true but misleadingly one-sided. *Camera Work* was, indeed, a prestigious art journal, expensively printed and dedicated to presenting the finest possible mechanical reproductions of photography. As Pam Roberts notes, 'Its main function was to reproduce, as faithfully as possible in a way which had never been done before – sparing neither time, expense, nor in any way compensation on standards – the work of the Photo-Secession photographers' (Roberts 1997 p. 13). Within its pages depictions of Rodin's works were presented explicitly as art-photographs – that is, as the clearly authored work of Steichen.[9]

Similarly, the rise of the photographic gallery was accompanied by ever-more sophisticated techniques of photographic printing – often, as with Steichen's gum bichromate prints, techniques which emphasised a print's uniqueness and un-reproducibility. For the purpose of this study, the point to highlight is that these varied material qualities which Pinet highlights aren't translatable into the mass-reproduced page; a 38 × 46 cm gum bichromate print, like Steichen's *Balzac, The Silhouette – 4 a.m.*, cannot be reproduced

9 Because the essay from which Rodin's above-quoted comments on Steichen are taken ('It doesn't matter to me at all whether the photographer intervenes or doesn't …') first appeared in *Camera Work*, and this comment is widely cited as important to understanding Rodin's relationship with photography (rather than his playing to his audience's prejudices), his association with *Camera Work* is, perhaps, overplayed. During *Camera Work*'s fourteen years, reproductions of Rodin's sculptures were limited to Steichen's three images of *Balzac* (Roberts 1997 pp. 562, 563, 564); there were five portraits of Rodin the artist (four Steichen (pp. 108, 230, 297, 561), one Alvin Langdon Coburn (p. 387)) and nine photogravures after drawings by Rodin.

mechanically, but at best painstakingly approximated.[10]

If one attends to the vast majority of *publications* from this era, rather than selectively from the posthumous 'archive', variation in the photography of Rodin's work is suppressed to the point of near uniformity. How the artist chose to present himself in mass-produced books and catalogues is very much in accordance with Wölfflin's classical principle of clear silhouette and strong Gestalt; it is entirely remote from Pictorialism's desire to 'free photography from its documentary and technical stranglehold' (Roberts 1997 p. 9).

Before turning to Rosso's use of photography it is appropriate to analyse in greater depth quite how Rodin's work was presented in popular print – that is, when it is presented as images of his work, rather than as another artist's work developed from one of his sculptures. As the above summary of photomechanical reproduction's history would suggest, mass-produced publications on Rodin begin to incorporate photography around 1900. This is also a pivotal moment in the artist's career, 1898 seeing the controversial unveiling of the *Monument to Balzac*, and 1900 his hugely influential retrospective at the Pont d'Alma. *Balzac* was the work on which contemporary publications most dwelt. It was also the source of enduring controversy and animosity between Rosso and Rodin, with Rosso's claim that it owed its conception to Rodin's awareness of his, Rosso's work. Given these considerations, it is clear why a survey of Rodin's public, printed presentation of *Balzac*, from its unveiling until its reputation was firmly cemented (here a slightly arbitrary bracket – Rodin's thought as publicly expounded in *L'Art* of 1911 – is chosen), offers an appropriate background against which to compare Rosso's use of photography.

The below represent all of the images of *Balzac* which appear in publications dedicated to Rodin within the Nation Art Library (V&A) collection.[11]

10 Stieglitz made this explicit in the mission statement of the first volume of *Camera Work*: 'reproductions of photographic works must be made with exceptional care and discretion if the spirit of the originals is to be retained, though no reproduction can do full justice to the subtleties of some photographs' (in Roberts 1997 pp. 13–4).

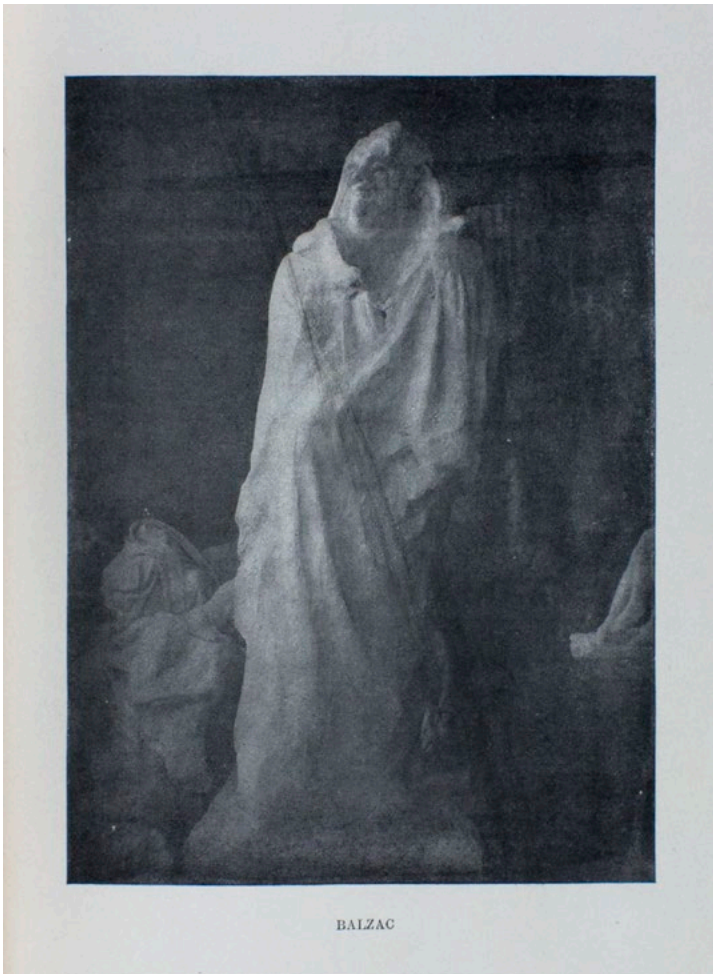
11 This collection isn't exhaustive of published material on Rodin, but it is representative of the most widely circulated. As the repetition of images suggests, it provides enough to establish clear trends. It should also be noted that the manner of reproducing *Balzac* isn't uniformly adopted in presenting other sculptures within these volumes; although the approach is consistent with the majority of reproduced images (other than monuments *in situ*), many show more clearly their studio existence, etc. However, they are certainly not isolated examples selected to present Rodin's works at their most 'objective', in contrast both to Pictorialism's innovations and to Rosso's principles.

BALZAC

style sans noblesse, et lui reprocha avec amertume d'avoir troublé la pureté sculpturale. Il le malmena durement, en termes modérés, et le traita ainsi qu'un hérétique qui aurait détourné la sculpture de sa voie providentielle.

Les œuvres de M. Guillaume jouissent généralement de quelque estime. On en parle sans colère, et il n'est en mémoire de personne qu'elles aient poussé quelques esprits ardents à des actes révolutionnaires. Son discours, véritable émanation du dogmatisme de l'Institut, n'eut aucune action pour arrêter le mouvement d'admiration qui se portait vers l'œuvre de Carpeaux : Ses bustes, ses groupes, ses statues sont désormais considérés comme les représentations les plus émouvantes de toute une période artistique et comme une des phases les plus splendides de l'art, — dignes d'être placés à côté des chefs-d'œuvre des époques les plus réputées.

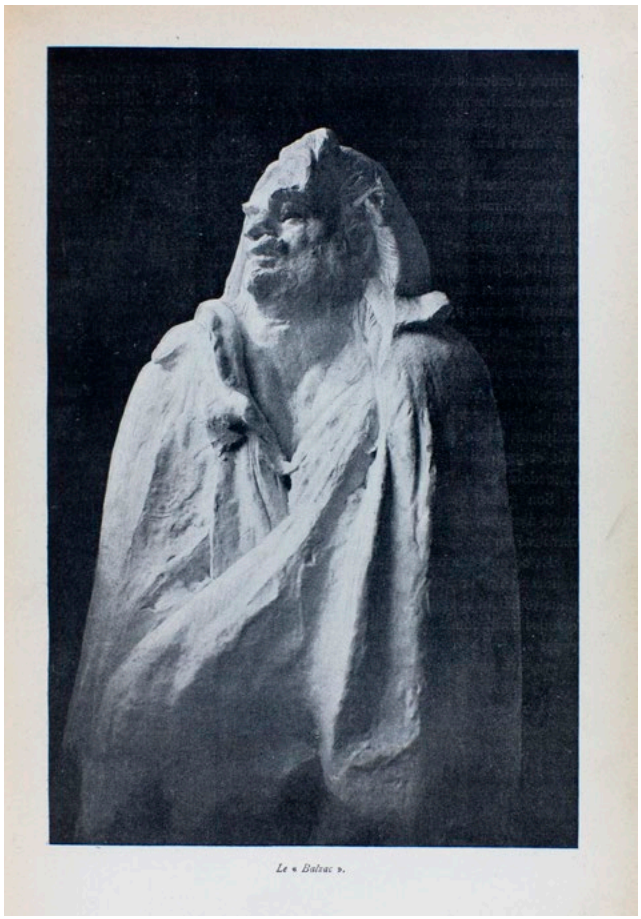
Ainsi qu'importe l'opinion formulée sur une œuvre, si elle ne peut supporter la comparaison avec l'œuvre elle-même qui subsiste et qui dure malgré la critique! Qui n'a tenu à exprimer sa pensée, ou son impression devant le morceau d'art qui passionnait le public? — Les académiciens aussi bien que les passants. Mais parmi les passants, il y a moins de phrases dites et plus d'attention véritable. La vraie foule, même poussée par les examens peu basés des guides artistiques à idées



BALZAC

Top: left, fig. 19; right, fig. 20.
Bottom: fig. 21.

Balzac.



Le « Balzac ».

This page: top, fig. 22; bottom, fig. 23.
Facing page: fig. 24.

BALZAC, par Rodin.

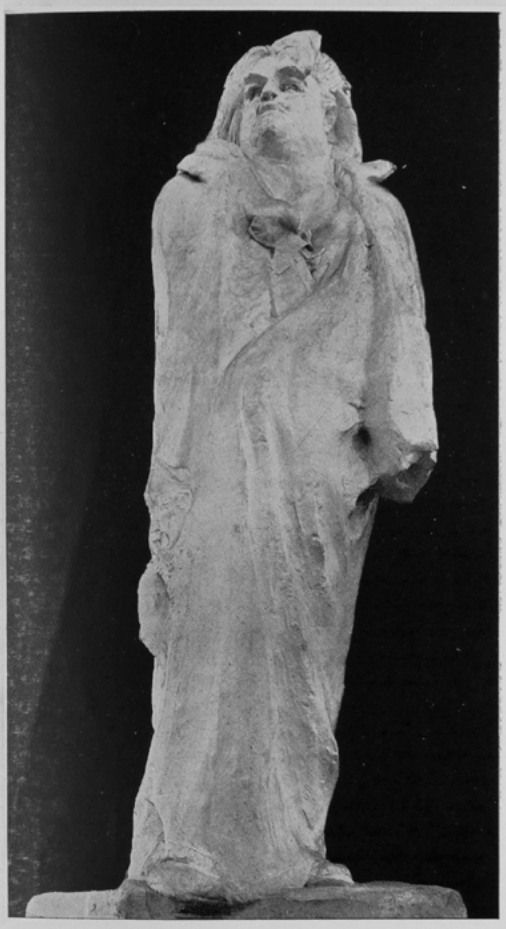
Cliché de la « Lectura », de Madrid.

BALZAC

BALZAC

BALZAC (SIDE VIEW)

To face page 181



BALZAC

To face page 178

BALZAC (MONUMENT)

BALZAC (SECOND VIEW) (MONUMENT)

Facing:
Top: left, fig. 25; right, fig. 26.
Bottom: left, fig. 27; right, fig. 28.

This page:
Top, fig. 29; bottom, fig. 30.

von der Künstlergenossenschaft in Stockholm zu einer Ausstellung eingeladen. Fritz Thaulow und Prinz Eugen von Schweden waren persönlich bei ihm gewesen und hatten ihn gebeten, einige seiner Skulpturen ihnen für die internationale Kunstausstellung in Stockholm zu überlassen. Rodin folgte der Einladung um so mehr, da Prinz Eugen ihm den Ankauf einer Plastik für das Museum zusicherte. Über die Erwerbung für das Museum hatte offiziell eine Ankaufskommission zu entscheiden; und diese Ankaufskommission lehnte die Erwerbung von Rodins „Innerer Stimme" sehr entschieden ab. Als der König von Schweden einige Monate darauf von dieser Rodin beleidigenden Entscheidung der Ankaufskommission Kenntnis erhielt, schrieb er persönlich einen Entschuldigungsbrief an den Meister, in dem er sich nicht sehr zart über die — „ein wenig bornierten" — Mitglieder jener Ankaufskommission aussprach; der König bat Rodin um die Rücksendung der „Inneren Stimme", da er sie für seine Privatsammlung erwerben wollte.

Abb. 36. Balzac. (Zu Seite 32 u. 77.)

Auch das Komitee der Pariser Société des Gens de Lettres wurde bloßgestellt, aber in weit schlimmerer Weise; denn diese Bloßstellung vollzog sich vor der breitesten Öffentlichkeit, vor den Augen ganz Europas. Die Société des Gens de Lettres hatte nicht mit dem geistigen Paris gerechnet, das sie zu vertreten sich nicht rühmen durfte. Am Tage der Eröffnung des Salons, an dem in verschiedenen Tageszeitungen höhnende und vernichtende Kritiken über die Balzac-Statue erschienen, wurden die Freunde und Verehrer des Meisters zu seiner Verteidigung herausgefordert. Feinde hatte Rodin seit seinem ersten Auftreten gehabt. Schon im Jahre 1864 hatten Männer. die offiziel

Abb. 37. Balzac. (Zu Seite 32 u. 77.)

daß sie seinen Mann mit der zerbrochenen Nase aus dem Salon hinauswiesen. Dreizehn Jahre später waren es wiederum Männer in offiziellen Stellungen, Männer mit hohen Titeln und Orden, führende Persönlichkeiten im Pariser Kunstleben, die den jungen Rodin mit unsauberen Verdächtigungen bewarfen. Aber schon damals sammelte sich eine Reihe erster jüngerer Künstler um ihn, die für ihn eintraten und, wie schon erwähnt wurde, auch seine Rehabilitation erreichten. Die Gruppe, die sich zu ihm gefunden hatte, wuchs von Jahr zu Jahr. Doch es dauerte noch lange, ehe die Tagespresse und die Fachzeitschriften auf den wachsenden Meister aufmerksam wurden. Octave Mirbeau war einer der Ersten, der Rodin Heroldsdienste erwies. Im Jahre 1888 brachte der Studio einige Reproduktionen Rodinscher Skulpturen, im folgenden

BALZAC, par A. Rodin (Cliché Druet).

Above: top: left, fig. 31; right, fig. 32; bottom: left, fig. 33; right, fig. 34.

Across reproductions of *Balzac* one can chart the integration of photomechanical reproduction into commercial printing. *Balzac* stirred controversy, so much so that in 1898, the year of its unveiling, to it Arsène Alexandre devoted a forty-eight page book. This volume contained only text and no images.

1899 saw the publication of Léon Maillard's *Auguste Rodin: Statuaire*, in which the main image is a hand-drafted lithograph taken from one of Druet's photographs (fig. 19, all the full-page reproductions in this book are drafted by hand), which is augmented by a small thumbnail photograph in which the background context has been obliterated by a painted mask, isolating the sculpture and emphasising its silhouette (fig. 20).

It has been stressed that 1900 was a pivotal year for Rodin; it was both the year of his (photographically enriched) retrospective at the Pavillon de l'Alma, and a key moment in photo-reproduction. Two major publications date from this year, Octave Mirabeau's *Auguste Rodin et son Oeuvre* and Alexandre's *L'Oeuvre de Rodin*, both of which are lavishly illustrated with photographs. In relation to Rosso's views, the latter is the more striking, presenting as it does three views on the same page (fig. 22), showing *Balzac* from different angles (as though one could walk around it). All photographs present the object starkly isolated through masking, indeed the very plinth floats in space. This 'objectivity' finds some contrast through the inclusion of Druet's famous shot of *Balzac* shrouded in darkness (fig. 23). However, the power of this image is eclipsed by comparison with the others, with which it shares too much to present much more than a fourth viewpoint.

From this time onwards reproductions of Rodin's work fall happily within the conventions of 'objective' photography, in which the sculpture is presented in isolation from any environment, the white plaster sharply offset against the black ground (whereas bronzes were typically presented on a white ground). This situation gets a little more interesting at the end of the decade when the image of *Balzac* which had previously been reproduced with a masked background is now presented unedited, within the studio context (figs. 31, 33). This creates a more compelling pairing with the same Druet shot presented in Alexandre's 1900 book (figs. 32, 34); the naturally dark ground from which the figure emerges now has some vitality through contrast with the situatedness of its comparison. It is as though the latter presents the object, the former its life.

After the turn of the century photographic representations of Rodin's sculptures bifurcate, albeit with some bleeding between projects. Firstly, there are photographic (i.e. darkroom, non-mechanical) prints, seen as of *artistic* worth. Those famous prints by Steichen, Haweis and Coles, etc., were painstakingly printed in the dimension and technical process the photographers chose, be it albumen, carbon, platinum, etc. When these were translated into photomechanical form they were presented explicitly as the works of the photographer. Secondly, there are the mechanically printed documents of the sculptures, intended for mass distribution, embodying Wölfflinian principles of objective clarity and (however specious) documentary truth. In analysing contemporary publications on Rodin one does not find the relentless drive for re-invention and re-invigoration of form for which Rodin is typically praised. Although innovative in exploiting the potential of the photograph for self-promotion, when Rodin's work finds its way into the mass-produced book, at the time of this momentous rupture in the role of photography and its implications for perception and society, it does so with the desire for a convention-conditioned neutrality and transparency remote both from the technological advances of his day, and from Rosso's vision and practice, to which we can now turn with a better grasp of the climate from which they drew.

The Object of Photography

The introduction outlined that, whilst photographic reproductions had been used by Rosso for promotional matter since at least 1883, it was probably not until the dawn of the new century that he embarked upon his mature engagement with the medium. Although dating Rosso's photographic prints is not easy, the images reproduced in Claris's 1902 study offer a guide which establishes that by this point Rosso's use of photography was becoming something more sophisticated than either contemporary conventions of documentation, or Pictorialism, would suggest.

At the heart of Rosso's use of photography is a desire to suspend or deny the explicit objectness or objecthood of the depicted sculpture. This is consistent with Rosso's views on the objectifying nature of photography which opened this chapter, and with the preceding chapter's exploration of Rosso's broader aesthetic theories. In this project he shares parallels with contemporary Pictorialist photography. However, it is possible to divide Rosso's anti-object strategies into two distinct, if mutually compatible, approaches. The first approach could be allied with Pictorialism, and uses unclear focus, blur and printing aberrations to undermine the referential clarity of the depicted object. Importantly, Rosso's engagement with this pre-dates the formative period of mass reproduction, 1895–1905. After assessing Rosso's 'Pictorialism', as it was applied in reproducing *Ecce Puer*, this study turns to Rosso's more original contribution to photographic history. This second approach is very different from Pictorialism: it develops as part of Rosso's mature engagement with photography around 1900, and uses precisely the referential clarity and conventions of transparency associated with photography to undermine the apparatus's grasp on the objective world.

Rosso's photographic denial of the object

Whereas Rodin worked with photographers associated with Pictorialism, allowing them 'carte blanche' to pursue their vision through his sculpture, Rosso was determinedly his own master throughout his relationship with photography. However, his works share clear affinities with Pictorialism, as practiced and theorised. Indeed, his understanding of 'air', his belief that 'A work of sculpture is not made to be touched, but seen at such and such a distance, according to the effect intended by the artist. Our hand does not permit us to bring to consciousness the values, the tones, the colours – in a word, the life of the thing' (p. 141 [1907]) – finds a close precursor in an 1892 essay by the leading practitioner, organiser and theorist of Pictorialism, Alfred Stieglitz:

> Atmosphere is the medium through which we see all things. In order, therefore, to see them in their true value on a photograph, as we do in Nature, atmosphere must be there. Atmosphere softens all lines; it graduates the transition from light to shade; it is essential to the reproduction of the sense of distance. (1892 p. 137)

Pictorialism stood against an established understanding of the photograph as a neutral transcription of objects and against the clarity of presentation Wölfflin asks of the medium.[12] Similarly, in photographs of *Ecce Puer* it is evident that Rosso attempted to overcome the explicit depiction of an object. This was pursued by emphasising those qualities Wölfflin sought to banish: 'overlaps and lack of clarity'. In part this was achieved through the practice of tightly cropping prints of *Ecce Puer*, making the edge of the photographic object impinge on the projected form of the sculpture depicted. Typical of this approach is a photograph of *Ecce Puer* which appears in a publication accompanying a 1923 exhibition in Milan (fig. 35).

12 Given its effects – often emphasising brushstrokes, i.e. Jean Limet's print of *The Burghers of Calais* (1904) – and the backgrounds of its leading practitioners as painters (Stephen Haweis, Steichen) it is easy to view Pictorialism as akin to painting. In this respect the much-repeated anecdote that Rosso was delighted when, on being shown a photograph of *Impressione d'omnibus*, Edgar Degas apparently mistook it for a photograph of a painting, is illuminating (in de Sainte-Croix 1896 p. 391; also mentioned in Bacci 2004 p. 56; Becker 1998 p. 74).

Facing: fig. 35.

The close vertical cropping replicates within the photograph something of the (possible) ostensible initial subject of the work, Alfred William's apparition from between the curtains. The cropping denies the possibility of the viewer grasping an outline of the sculpture as though it is something stamped on a ground. The top-right corner, although presenting a stark division of dark and light between forehead and background, functions less certainly; the darkness alternates between ground and figure, strangely reminiscent of the complexity of figure and ground in, for example, Clyfford Still's *1953* (1953, Tate Gallery).

Another resource for suppressing the object's silhouette is through the use of extreme chiaroscuro – a lack of overall clarity. Rosso's photographs of *Ecce Puer* deny the boundaries of the sculpture by enshrouding the work in shadow. A good example of this is the plate of *Ecce Puer* in Etha Fles's 1922 study of Rosso, in the production of which, given his long and intimate friendship with Fles and his ever-present desire to advance his singular vision, Rosso was surely involved (fig. 36). The effect of extreme light and shade has something reminiscent of mid-nineteenth-century photographic portraiture wherein, as Walter Benjamin puts it in his 'Little History of Photography', 'light struggles out of darkness' (1999 pp. 517).

At the time about which Benjamin writes, the struggle of light and shadow was precisely that – a struggle to get even illumination over the entire photographic plate at an early stage in the technological development of multi-element lenses. However, by the period in which Rosso was working, lens technology was greatly refined; for him this effect is clearly a choice and one which is in sympathy with his understanding of *sculpture*: 'If the light was four times stronger, everything would be consumed, except one or two variants. This dominant plane, this thought, *this thing that survives,* this is what one must sculpt' (p. 171 [1919]). The terms with which Rosso articulates this summary of his sculptural enterprise, the specificity of 'four times stronger', clearly calls to mind engagement with the photographic apparatus – an equivalent of the lens's aperture opening up two stops. This close union of sculpture and photography, the explicitness of the medium as something reproducible, is something which sets Rosso apart from Pictorialism.

The above techniques are examples of Rosso using photography to control the viewing conditions of the sculpture. For Dorothy Kosinski, photography was 'a means of seeing and preserving or controlling the essential qualities of the work of art … Rosso was apparently possessed with a desire to control how his sculptures were perceived – in effect, to control the observer' (1999 pp. 14, 20). It is this control over viewing conditions which, as has been outlined above, allows Giovanni Lista, Francesca Bacci and Gloria Moure to go further than Kosinski and suggest that Rosso's photographs, rather than sculptures, most fully realise his artistic vision – best articulate his theories of art and perception. However, these qualities were evident in his photographic works prior to his deeper engagement with the medium, circa 1900, and place his photographs within the same milieu as Pictorialism. When Rosso turned to photography comprehensively it was at the time of mass production, of photomechanical prints reaching a wide circulation. For Rosso this new means of mediation prompted a revised questioning of the potential of the medium.

Although his first essay was published in Claris's artistic study *Impressionism in Sculpture*, Rosso's writings typically appeared in wide-circulation, non-specialist publications – *The Daily Mail*, *The Observer*, *La voce*, *La vita*, etc. Photographs of his work published during his lifetime appeared both in the publications which bore his writings, and in specialist books on the artist. Unlike the division of 'artistic' and 'objective' representations characteristic of reproductions of Rodin's oeuvre, Rosso's use of photography was consistent across reproductive formats and potential audiences. Furthermore, in Rosso's practice sculpture, darkroom print and photomechanical reproduction begin to overlap and mutually inform. As was adumbrated in the introduction's discussion of the photograph of *Yvette*

Facing: fig. 36.

Guilbert (fig. 3), paint, cuts and pencil lines inflicted upon the manually produced print echo and inflect readings of the sculptural practices of casting, demoulding and patination. An iteration in one medium holds within itself explicit connections to others in different mediums, beyond the unavoidable indexical connection guaranteed by Rosso's techniques. This extends the complexity of relations established between casts of *Ecce Puer*: bronzes caked in plaster, plaster patinated as bronze, etc. The photomechanical reproductions carry the acknowledgement of other instances, other lives of *Ecce Puer*, to an even higher pitch. It is through this interrogation and conflation of the mediation of images that Rosso's practice begins to move far beyond the aspirations and techniques associated with Pictorialism's questioning of the veracity of the photographic image.

Rosso's assertion of the photograph as object

Rosso's most overt, though under-appreciated, strategy for raising translations across mediums to an affective part of his practice was through the explicit depiction of a photograph within the presented image. That is, Rosso made clear that the photomechanical reproduction was of a photographic print. Finding examples contemporary with Rosso, or earlier, of photographs which make explicit that they are photographs of other photographs has proven difficult. In the introduction to *Sculpture and Photography*, a major collection of essays on the topic, Geraldine Johnson devotes a section to 'Photography *of* sculpture or photography *as* sculpture'. In terms of asserting the objectness of the photographic print, Johnson suggests that in the 1890s Paul Martin, an English photographer, 'cut out photographs of London laborers and, by pasting them onto neutral backgrounds, turned them into living sculpture' (1998 p. 13; verbatim [plus 'u'], 1995 p. 6). None of Martin's many works in the Victoria and Albert Museum's collection evidence this, but from the description his seems a rather neutral act, and certainly doesn't correspond with the radical assertion of surface which Rosso's re-photography engenders. Johnson connects Martin's approach to that adopted by Walker Evans when installing 1938's *American Photographs* exhibition at MoMA, some of the photographs of which were 'mounted on boards, cropped flush, and then glued directly to the walls' (Mora and Hill 2004 p. 160).

None of the standard histories of documenting sculpture or painting devote time to the photography of photographs. Viewing over two dozen illustrated books on sculpture printed from the 1890s to 1920, this technique is only used by Rosso. In recent studies of Rodin it is often highlighted that he worked directly onto the photographic print with pens, pencil or paint (see Pinet 1998 p. 71; Curtis 1999 p. 110; Becker 1999b pp. 93–4). When

reproduced today these photographs are fascinating and display a very playful approach to scale. However, they were intended to exist solely for the artist's reference, not for public appreciation. Conversely, when Rosso takes paint or pencil to the photograph there is the implication that it both refers to and informs sculpture, and also points towards the creation of a new photographic image which, publically, could best present an aspect of a sculpture.

Although no sustained scholarly analysis of the novelty, motivation or import of Rosso's re-photography has been offered, several commentators note that Rosso photographed his photographs of his sculptures. Despite not mentioning photographing photographs Jane Becker implies why it would be appropriate: 'In cropping, masking, abrading, and painting or drawing over various photograph, Rosso was literally sculpting the photographic form' (1999a p. 160) – if one believes Rosso turned his photographs into quasi-sculptures, it makes sense that these would become subjects for the camera. Francesca Bacci, in a study devoted exclusively to his photographs, outlines only that it allowed reproductions from professional photographs where the photographer had retained the negatives (2004 p. 78–9). Paola Mola notes that Rosso's 'work is almost impossible to photograph. It appears inert in print … Only Rosso could photograph his sculptures. He deceived the fixity of the lens and transferred the uncertainly of form to the thickness of the emulsion paper. His photographs are out of focus, shifting, roughly cut, spotted, blown up, reworked in ceruse or pencils and then photographed again, reduced and then photographed once more. They are different works derived from a chain of repetitions in castings – impressions in light' (2007 p. 25). Mola's concern is to integrate Rosso's photography into his sculpture in order to establish one consistent oeuvre, each medium playing off the other. However, her account doesn't stress the importance of Rosso making explicit that what one is viewing, in a photograph, is another photograph; she stresses simply that he repeated things with difference. Nor does her account locate the exchange between sculptural and photographic reproduction within the broader issues surrounding reproduction – i.e. the emergent centrality of mass-reproduced imagery – which this chapter has endeavoured to show was crucial to the timeliness of Rosso's project, and his embeddedness in and relevance to a broader culture, however ostensibly hermetic his works.

Having surveyed Rosso's unprecedented photography of photographs in relation to his age, and considered the scope of scholarly attention to this, it is now possible to turn to an in-depth discussion of the photomechanical reproductions of *Ecce Puer*, and to how Rosso uses the explicit mediation of photography to achieve the atmosphere or 'air' advocated in his writings.

Although *Ecce Puer* is this focus of this discussion, it is helpful to begin assessing Rosso's contributions from the first major mass-reproduced photographic study of the artist, Edmund Claris's 1902 *De l'Impressionnisme en sculpture*, from which is taken one of the above reproductions of *Balzac*. The below image represents Rosso's early *Impression d'omnibus* (fig. 37). One can see very clearly that the plate reproduced has as its subject (or, certainly, as its object) a photographic print, not a sculpture. On the right of the image the original photograph's edge falls well inside the plate's frame, running skew to the page. However, it is on the left of the image that the original print asserts itself most boldly. Halfway down, the left edge the print is torn and the whole left side appears to be curled, as though poorly dried, reflecting the light unevenly so as to emphasise this becoming-sculptural of the flat paper. The materiality of the photographed print is as evident as any representation of a sculpture. Indeed, the *photograph* is so evident that one's attention to the sculptural materiality of the more clearly depicted form on the right is radically altered. It is a figure, that much is evident in an instant; beyond that instant of recognition, one is lost in the abstraction of the left – an abstraction all the more powerful for bearing the feel of a photograph, of an index of some*thing*. This early example of Rosso's engagement with the mass reproduction of the photograph already achieves – and beautifully illustrates – something which he argues for in his first published essay, which was written for this book. Namely, the much repeated: 'What is important for me is to forget matter … Actually the most important thing is that while looking at what the artist has translated into a subject one can re-establish what's missing' (p. 130 [1902]).[13]

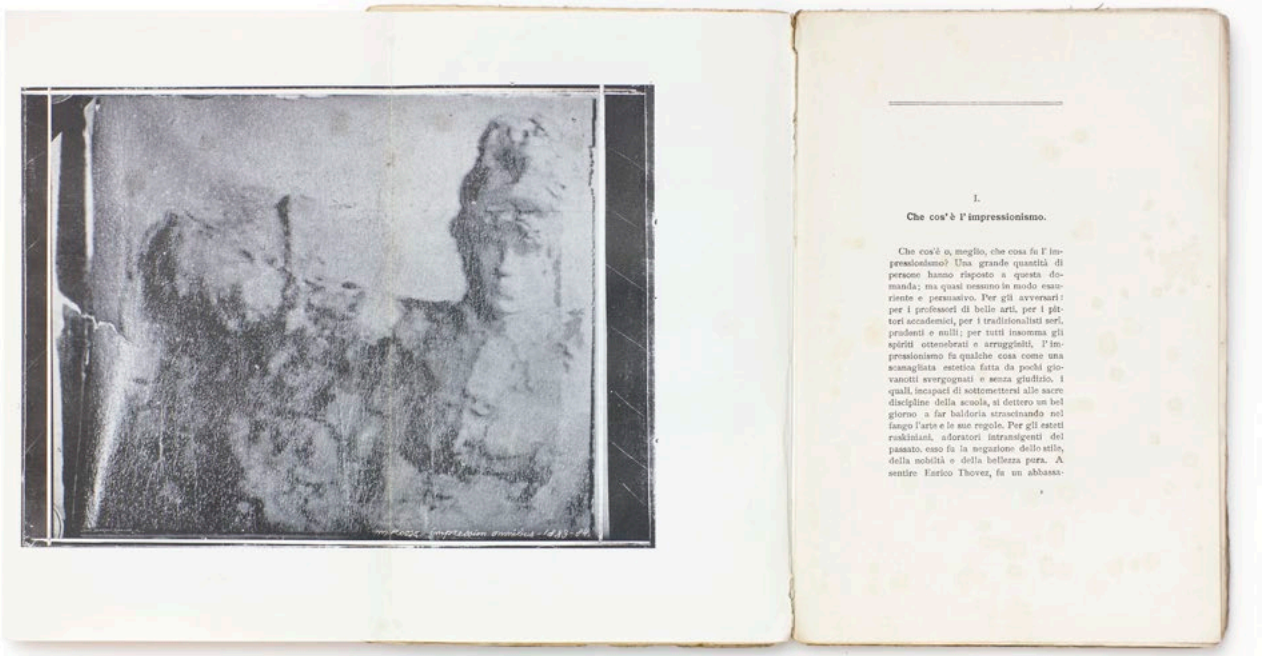
13 Rosso's use of the print as a disruptive membrane leading to the sculpture begins to make sense of Rosso's experiments with vitrines, which date from this period. As one finds in the Salon d'Automne installation of *Bambino alle cucine economiche* (and all works exhibited in the 1914 Venice Biennale), Rosso constructed glass cases for some of his works. Although these

Above: fig. 37. Facing, fig. 38.

By the time of Claris's publication, *Impression d'omnibus* had already been destroyed. To display it Rosso's only recourse was to photographs, and only to photographs shot before his deeper commitment to the medium (this volume was the first major publication to reproduce several of Rosso's sculptures, and could be seen as something of a starting point of his subsequent engagement). However, it would be misguided to imagine that Rosso's choice was purely expedient. He had many other prints of this major early work, one in its entirety and other detail shots. By prevailing standards of documentary reproduction, the image reproduced below (fig. 38) would have revealed as much about the sculpture as that chosen, whilst suiting better the format and general orientation of the book. As such, one must conclude that the print used was the one he believed best substituted for, or augmented, the sculpture.

It is even more telling that the photograph printed in Claris's study finds new life in Ardengo Soffici's monograph of 1909. The first plate of this beautifully printed book is a fold-out spread reproducing not just the detail present in the earlier study, but the entire glass-plate negative, including the lines marking where it was to have been cropped for previous uses (fig. 39).

clearly have a useful conservation value, with Rosso one must look beyond such practicalities. There is, perhaps, nothing more explicitly designed to assert something's objecthood, its removal from the world, than the vitrine. That is, its normal function is entirely against Rosso's desires for art. However, visually the glass acts somewhat like the surface of the photograph, denying the viewer easy access to the object, conflating the viewer's reflection, the reflected environment and the work.



I.

Che cos'è l'impressionismo.

Che cos'è o, meglio, che cosa fu l'impressionismo? Una grande quantità di persone hanno risposto a questa domanda; ma quasi nessuno in modo esauriente e persuasivo. Per gli avversari: per i professori di belle arti, per i pittori accademici, per i tradizionalisti seri, prudenti e nulli; per tutti insomma gli spiriti ottenebrati e arrugginiti, l'impressionismo fu qualche cosa come una scamagliata estetica fatta da pochi giovanotti svergognati e senza giudizio, i quali, incapaci di sottomettersi alle sacre discipline della scuola, si dettero un bel giorno a far baldoria strascinando nel fango l'arte e le sue regole. Per gli esteti ruskiniani, adoratori intransigenti del passato, esso fu la negazione dello stile, della nobiltà e della bellezza pura. A sentire Enrico Thovez, fu un abbassa-

The 1909 plate goes beyond the effect of the 1902 printing. It still highlights the photographed print, distancing the depicted sculpture; however, including the entire negative also foregrounds as visually relevant a part of the process of printing which is typically not present in the resulting print. That is, it shares with Rosso's engagement with *sculpture* something of an overt self-criticality, or at least self-presenting, of the medium. And, likewise, it is a complex celebration of making – with those features to which the maker becomes accustomed and by which they are intrigued, yet which are typically absent in the final artefact.

More than this, it is about time and about generations. A negative exists to produce a print, yet the negative is here explicitly retrospective of the print exhibited as print: Rosso displays both the source of a photograph and, in an older instance, its life to come. Through presenting this future – this future which is the 'original' element of this compound image – as already subject to the (in this instance somewhat merciless) passage of time, Rosso re-affirms a transience of the work, but also that this isn't terminal, but part of a greater complexity of generations and generation.

It would be wrong to think that this discussion of depictions of *Impression d'omnibus* is extraneous to the ostensible focus of this study, *Ecce Puer*. Paradoxically, the reproductions discussed above relate more *fundamentally* to *Ecce Puer* than they do to the depicted sculpture, *Impression d'omnibus*. Both the photographs of *Impression d'omnibus* and *Ecce Puer*'s conception are parts of a simultaneous questioning of the same issue; they exemplify the same use of veiling and concealment as a distancing which allows the image to emerge

Above: fig. 39. Facing, fig. 40.

with greater vitality and, in some paradoxical sense, proximity. And, as in the mysteriously hovering image of mouth and nose in the Edinburgh plaster *Ecce Puer*, so in the above photographs this is at its most captivating when it emerges from *blatant* materiality, be it varnished plaster or the newly explicit stuff of a photograph.

Soffici's book contains an image of *Ecce Puer* (fig. 40) which, although not as explicit as *Impression d'omnibus* in presenting an engagement with the *medium* of photographic processing, also undoes any perceived transparency of photographic reproduction: it too stresses that it is a photograph photographed.

The sculpture is the Milan plaster, and the print derives from the same original negative as the right-hand image in the pairing of photographs discussed in chapter 2 (fig. 17). Indeed, the irregular cropping follows roughly the same outline as that print, although not as tightly. Where it differs is that, rather than the clean yet already disruptively non-orthogonal cropping, the edges seem worn and rounded. Its fragmentariness is less that of a photographic detail than of a broken slate, wave-washed smooth. This effect is heightened by the grey mount, which follows the lines of the print on three edges, but on the right side extends beyond the photograph, making explicit the layering and physicality of the object subsequently photographed. This physicality is asserted still more forcibly by its size, and its scale on the page. As a photograph of an object it doesn't feel photographically reduced or enlarged to fit a space, but simply the size it is. This size has a strong relationship to being held. It is very much like a depiction of an ancient artefact transformed by use. The smooth contours of the right edge await the cleft of thumb and fore-finger; the print's left edge the final joints of the fingers. The image evokes a desire to *touch*. Through invoking touch (Rosso's

anathema), it acts in a manner akin to how the above print of *Impression d'omnibus* asserts the print's materiality in order to vitalise the depiction of the sculpture. That is, the materiality of the thing photographed is entirely distinct from the original photographic image – that of the sculpture. It imbues the layer of mediation – the veil – with those properties from which Rosso sought to deliver sculpture.

Phenomenology and technology

Through making explicit the materiality of the photograph rephotographed Rosso masks the materiality of the sculpture depicted in the original photograph. He imbues this layer of mediation with those qualities from which he sought to wrest sculpture's depiction: from precisely those qualities of objectification which he saw as inherent to the medium of photography. Clarity, even lighting, and a readily graspable silhouette are used to emphasise the mediation of photography, rather than for their conventional ability to present the sculpture with transparent clarity, and through this clarity to deny photography's role in their transmission.

Whereas Rosso's writings direct away from reproduction and mediation to some supposed purity of expression suffusing the sculptural object, the reality is that this clearing of the object, seeing it as a part of life rather than presented as though it were a 'fleeting cloud on a table', is achieved – perhaps could only be achieved – via a complex engagement with photography. This use of photography brings the dissemination of Rosso's works into accord with his aesthetic principles as expounded in his phenomenologically inclined writings; that art should effect a revealing which arises from wonderment. It also aligns his use of technology with a later phenomenological position, that which Martin Heidegger expounds in his 1954 essay 'The Question Concerning Technology'.[14]

In this essay Heidegger attempts to think, to question, the 'essence' of technology; to open 'our human existence to the essence of technology' (1977 p. 3); to move away from an 'instrumental and anthropological' conception of technology, 'according to which it is a means and a human activity' (1977 p. 5), to an understanding of technology as a bringing-forth and revealing:

> What has the essence of technology got to do with revealing? The answer: everything. For every bringing-forth is grounded in revealing … Technology is a mode of revealing. Technology comes to presence in the realm where revealing and unconcealment take

14 The essay is based upon the 1949 lecture 'Das Gestell' (for more on the history of the essay, see Heidegger 1977 pp. ix–xi).

Facing: fig. 40 (detail, 1:1 scale).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> place, where *alētheia*, truth, happens … this prospect strikes us as strange … The word stems from the Greek. *Technikon* means that which belongs to *technē* … *technē* is the name not only for the activities and skill of the craftsman, but also for the arts of the mind and the fine arts. (1977 pp. 12–13)

Technology – if one is willing to tread with Heidegger down his etymological trails, back to the word's Greek origins – has revelation as its essence. However, this does not imply that the fruits of technological apparatuses necessarily participate in revealing. Quite the contrary: in this age we are sundered from its essence, which is concealed through an entrenched belief in its instrumentality; the belief that it is a human-controlled means to a human end. Heidegger's view here draws from Husserl's understanding of the natural attitude outlined earlier. Technology, when understood – *pursued* – instrumentally, masks rather than reveals. Yet it is from within this very masking, in its violence to the fullness of the world, its framing the world as something for human use, that stems its potential to open genuine perception – that wonderment which was Rosso's impetus, stated aim and, in *Ecce Puer*, subject-matter. Heidegger illustrates the redemptive potential arising from darkness with memorable lines from Friedrich Hölderlin's *Patmos*:

> But where danger is, grows
> The saving power also.

It is precisely this quest for redemption within that which is seen as destructive which characterises Rosso's engagement with technology. Rosso is explicit that the entire history of sculpture from 'the second Greece' until Rodin is marked by an objectivity which he believed weakened thought, belittled the truly human, and established itself as the artistic representative of all that was against life.[15] Through photography he sees this tradition find industrialised magnification and unlimited reproduction. Yet it was precisely within and through these means that Rosso worked – what matters is how he worked.

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15 It is an instructive coincidence that Rosso and Heidegger both elevate early Greek culture as the last (Western) moment of unity of art and life. For Rosso 'in the first Greek period … you will be forced to recognise … the preoccupation with the impression, the intuition of life, and the neglect of matter' (p. 142 [1907]). 'I have called the works of the second Greece, Rome and the Renaissance the most banal, unlucky, because they are more materially conceived, accessible to all. They have been tools for the universal establishment of an educational "enterprise" reinforced by those subsidiaries that comprise these different States' (p. 149 [1926]). Similarly, for Heidegger, 'In Greece, at the outset of the destining of the West, the arts soared to the supreme height of the revealing granted them … The arts were not derived from the artistic. Artworks were not enjoyed aesthetically. Art was not a sector of cultural activity' (1977 p. 34).

The key to *technē* as revelation is how one approaches it. Approached instrumentally it conceals; it frames the world through the logic of instrumentality. In Rosso's explicit opinion this is how Rodin's practice related to technology:

> I am glad that I can use this enquiry to point out the artistic concept that sculptors cannot reveal [those conforming to Rosso's theories of perception] due to the sort of Inquisition that is used against them by the Administration [Rodin and the French state]. I believe that a work of art can only be done by he who has conceived it, and this is the first goal to meet. Therefore works will be suppressed and so will the Administration of which so many artists say they are not employees, although they *are* marble masons; they work finishing hands and feet, copying them from a model covered by the master with humid cloths and plaster. (p. 130 [1902])

An 'administered' art in which an established aim is achieved through the allocation of specialised tasks to *praticiens* could never, for Rosso, express the 'wonderful panorama of mighty and healthy nature' (p. 131 [1902]): 'Is it possible that a work of art is not the property of an idea, and that any hand but that whose owner has conceived this idea should be able to express it?' (p. 141 [1907]) For Rosso, to bring to light, to reveal, it is necessary to engage with ones' materials, to be an expert practising one's expertise. This is entirely consistent with Heidegger's understanding of the original meaning of technology:

> From the earliest times until Plato the word *technē* is linked with the word *epistēmē*. Both words are names for knowing in the widest sense. They mean to be entirely at home in something, to understand and be expert in it. Such knowing provides an opening up. As an opening up it is revealing. Aristotle, in a discussion of special importance, distinguishes between *epistēmē* and *technē* and indeed with respect to what and how they reveal. *Technē* is a mode of *alētheuein*. *It reveals whatever does not bring itself forth and does not yet lie here before us, whatever can look and turn out now one way and now another.* (my emphasis, 1977 p. 13)

Rosso argues for artistic involvement in all stages of making. More importantly, although his published writings only assert this as the necessary means of imbuing one's conception with 'life', in his late correspondence is implicit the belief that through working with materials new ideas develop: 'I am busy working with materials … I have done work not yet done by celebrities with every resource available to them' (p. 290 [undated letter]). Rosso worked with

materials; he dwelt within his relationship to the stuff of art. He was an expert in patination and casting and an innovative explorer of photographic printing techniques. His involvement with technological reproductive processes was one of giving existence to latent possibilities; of finding significant ways for that which is to be otherwise; of being driven to make and remake in order to reveal new possibilities of the same generative form. Precisely of revealing 'whatever does not bring itself forth and does not yet lie here before us, whatever can look and turn out now one way and now another'.

Heidegger concludes his essay with a circumspect hope that, in the depths of 'extreme danger', we can be 'astonished' – that wonderment may develop. As the object of this hope, Heidegger (somewhat unconvincingly) turns to art:

> Because the essence of technology is nothing technological, essential reflection upon technology and decisive confrontation with it must happen in a realm that is, on the one hand, akin to the essence of technology and, on the other, fundamentally different from it.
>
> Such a realm is art. But certainly only if reflection on art, for its part, does not shut its eyes to the constellation of truth after which we are *questioning*. (1977 p. 35)

Rosso and Heidegger shared the desire to wrest perception from the 'habits of laziness' which 'destroy the first moment of real life, of the complete vision'; habits formed through a relationship to the world built upon instrumentalised utility. It is tempting to read Rosso's engagement with technology as opening a path towards this revivified relation with the world, this new relationship of Being. In some respects such a reading is surely germane, or at least has the potential to be. However, in considering the final sentence of Heidegger's above comment in relation to Rosso's trite dismissals of technological mediation, one cannot avoid the acknowledgement that Rosso did 'shut his eyes', or, perhaps more fairly, fail to perceive, the truth after which Heidegger is questioning – the question of the essence of technology, of technology as disclosing. He was not alone in this, and it is testament to his practice's strange blend of (now-evident) acute timeliness and untimely timelessness that this be his lot, in his time at least.[16]

16 It seems apt to re-quote Nietzsche's 'Untimely Meditation', now also in relation to Heidegger: 'For I do not know what meaning classical studies could have for our time if they were not untimely – that is to say, acting counter to our time and thereby acting on our time and, let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come' (1997 p. 60). Offering rather a nice image of a certain timelessness directed to the future, in *Between Good and Evil* Rudiger Safranski notes that 'in his Plato lectures Heidegger had stated that he wished to return to the Greek

That is, the seductive fit of Heidegger's seminal essay and Rosso's practical engagement with reproductive technologies in no way ensures the relevance or success of Rosso's practice in achieving what his aesthetic principles advocated. The question concerning technology is asked historically, and its relationship to a constellation of thought is necessarily contingent. As such, the relevance of Rosso's practice is historically determined – 'In what respect does the saving power grow there also where the danger is? Where something grows, there it takes root, from whence it thrives. Both happen concealedly and quietly and in their own time. But according to the words of the poet [Hölderlin] we have no right whatsoever to expect that there where the danger is we should be able to lay hold of the saving power immediately and without preparation' (Heidegger 1977 pp. 28–9).

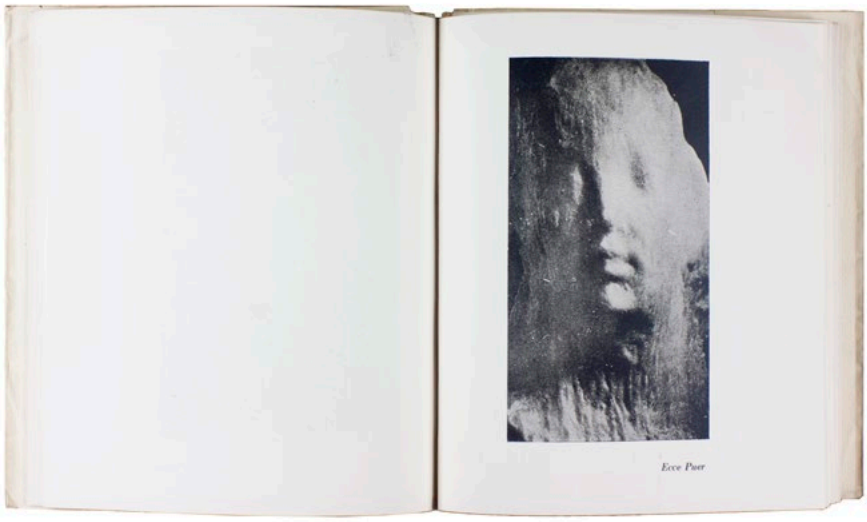
Surveying Rosso's three decades of engagement with photography allows one to understand the artist as constantly rethinking, newly preparing, a ground of questioning the human relationship with the world, a relationship which stemmed from technological mediation. Rosso doesn't present the explicit mediation of the object as a method to achieve this – as a simple means to an end. Rather, he engages in the nurture and growth of an idea or impression which developed from making photographs. His means are never fixed, never instrumentalised, but always probing. The 1909 reproduction of *Impression d'omnibus* asserts the photographed print's *surface* and prompts acknowledgement of the physical act in producing the *print* (Rosso highlights the glass plate negative, not the commercial printing plate). Conversely, *Ecce Puer* highlights the print's *edges* and evokes a bodily relationship to the original (non-mass-reproduced) print's reception/life after production, through its overt tactility.

Throughout the 1909 study, very few photographic approaches to depicting the sculpture repeat themselves. *Femme a la violette* has a simple diagonal cut across the top right corner. The right side of *Aetas Aurea* is cropped orthogonally, the left side cut following the outline of the mother's head, etc. And, although perhaps articulated most starkly in the 1909 study, this diversity was consistently explored throughout Rosso's career. Moving to the final major photographic book of Rosso's lifetime, a catalogue of 1923, although less overtly diverse in their presentation – all exhibiting strong tonal contrast and elongated portrait orientation – each of the four spreads below offer a different

beginnings in order to gain distance for the leap into the present and beyond it' (1998 p. 227). Perhaps this return to the past wasn't without its painful implications in the present; Rosso was a firm friend of Mussolini's mistress, Margherita Sarfatti, and Mussolini attended the opening of Rosso's major 1923 Bottega di Poesia exhibition (see Mola 2007 p. 155). Heidegger's affiliations with contemporary politics are well known (and a major subject of Safranski's fascinating study).

emphasis on the materiality of the photograph. The image of *Ecce Puer* (fig. 41) has been discussed above; the volume of the sculpture is flattened through the illumination of the proper-right cheek, kindling a relationship to the plane of the print. In *La portinaia* (fig. 42) the glass-plate negative is cracked, resulting in a strong, dark vertical running the length of the right side, emphasising the stages of the pre-mechanical, darkroom process. The image of *Bambino ebreo* (fig. 43), presents a photograph clearly of another photographic print; the print's irregular edges internally framed by its mount. Finally, *Uomo che legge* (fig. 44) has a decisive diagonal crop on the right, making its framing on the page conspicuous.

The salient point to be drawn from Rosso's diverse approaches to the photographic re-veiling of sculpture is that the re-animation of the depicted sculpture through the overwhelming material presence of its reproductive medium never becomes programmatic. If it had, it would become convention, and this would become, in some respect, transparent.



Above: fig. 41. Facing: top, fig. 42; middle, fig. 43; bottom, fig. 44.

Concierge

Enfant

L'homme qui lit

One cannot realistically claim that Rosso's radical questioning of the connection of technological mediation and human perception had contemporary impact in shaping the development of art and its relationship with reproduction. However, one can surely claim that Rosso was engaged in a project of great complexity, which went beyond the scope of his theoretical grasp in questioning what images want and need. And one can speculate that it is no idle coincidence that it is now, during a period which has seen a transformation of the technologies of image making and distribution as seismic as that of Rosso's day, that the relevance and results of his project are coming newly into focus as both art-historically fascinating and of contemporary importance. This suggests why Rosso's work is currently generating so much interest (although the interpretations may not be convincing, the past two decades have undoubtedly seen a great deal more scholarship on Rosso than ever before). This greater interest, specifically the emphasis on Rosso's uses of reproduction, is exactly contemporaneous with the popularisation of the internet through the advent and rapid rise of the web. Bound up with this is the development of the digital camera; first into a commercially viable approach to image-making and then into a ubiquitous, integrated part of so many people's experiences of the world. Given Rosso's intense, yet inscrutable, engagement with the effects of the form and transmission of images, it is surely no surprise that his works still hold mysteries which strike viewers as elusively relevant.

Furthermore, beyond the compelling but possibly misleading or sophistical proximity of Rosso's practice and Heidegger's later thought, one can assert that Rosso's use of technology was a consistent extension of a project of phenomenology which in Heidegger finds its formalised, philosophical articulation a half-century after the modelling of *Ecce Puer*. If Rosso so failed to understand the significance of his practice in relation to his ideas, this points to more than the evils of rhetoric-become-habit, which could be seen to have ossified his reflections on his own work and on perception more generally. It points to the meaningfulness which can emerge unknown (if in its own way bidden by certain commitments) from dwelling within one's medium; dwelling in a manner which is 'akin' to the essence of technology – of revealing – yet 'fundamentally different from it'.

5. Reproduction

Death and Hope in *fin-de-siècle* Paris

Despite outward hostility Rosso approached the possibilities of reproduction in an engaged and unprecedentedly exploratory way. Through the explicit presentation of a photographic print within a photomechanical reproduction, conflating into one image apparently conflicting contemporary approaches to photography ('objectivising' clarity and Pictorialist opacity), Rosso offers something beyond novelty. He uses photography as a part of a sophisticated inquiry into the mutability of perception, and into how his phenomenological tenets of wonderment and revelation could exist in a medium he associated with sterility.

There is an evident timeliness to Rosso's project, the turn of the century being a period a profound technological expansion of photographic mediums. Rosso met this technological advance with hostility and fear. He consciously associated photography with the deathly or spectral; technological mediation makes an object of that perceived, ripping the photographic subject from its physical environment, and from the weave of memory and association which gave it life, 'air'. Yet, in his use of technologies of reproduction, whether casting, darkroom photography, or its migration into the mass-printed page, he believed that he found something vital, something which could 'enter into the very spirit of creation' (p. 142). This chapter begins by reflecting on the complexity of this tension between technology as something spectral – feared – and as something pregnant with hope. These were explicit concerns of Heidegger in the 1950s, and, famously, of Walter Benjamin in the mid-1930s. However, a major concern of this study is assessing the meaningfulness of artistic production, rather than the reflections or theoretical positions which can subsequently be drawn from these. That is, it is concerned with art as thought. In the chapter on phenomenology Marcel Proust assumed signal importance as a contemporary of Rosso's who also sought to question the nature of perception, of the newly legible world which a fleeting perception

can conjure. In Proust, too, the question of technological reproduction's ambivalence is compellingly articulated. However, before turning to Proust it is appropriate to consider the relationship of photography and the spectral as it is currently offered in mainstream photographic theory – not least because the latter is descended from the former.

The photograph: a catastrophe or a narrow escape?

We have seen that for Rosso mass-reproduced experience 'is not even worth as much as the broken string of a violoncello, because the sound the string produces in breaking still evokes life': it is the site of something spectral, ghostly – of death.

It is a truism of recent photographic theory to cite absence or loss or death at the heart of discussions of reproduction. The image is always of something that was, which cannot be again. Rosso was scarcely original in finding something of death in the photographic image, yet it is to Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida* (1980), rather than earlier thinkers, that so many recent theorists are indebted. Although Barthes's beautiful book is richly layered with phenomenological insights – with a concerned questioning and loving vitality which denies ready 'use' – one of the messages invariably drawn from it is that the photographic image is haunted by inevitability: '*This will be and this has been* … In front of the photograph of my mother as a child, I tell myself: she is going to die … Whether or not the subject is already dead, every photograph is this catastrophe' (2000 p. 96).[1]

1 Variations on this theme have been ubiquitous since the publication of *Camera Lucida*. Limiting examples to those of well-known scholars, for Thierry de Duve 'the photograph cannot fail to designate, outside of itself, the death of the referent' (2007 pp. 109). For Geoffrey Batchen the photograph is 'a life born in death, a presence inhabited by absence … Whatever its nominal subject, photography was a visual transcription of the passing of time and therefore also an intimation of every viewer's own inevitable passing' (1999 pp. 12–3). James Elkins extends Barthes's formulation to a general sensibility towards the world, suggesting that 'Photographs have forced something upon us: not only a blurred glimpse of our own deaths … but something about the world's own deadness' (2011 p. xii); for Margaret Iversen, 'The nature of the medium as an indexical imprint of the object means that any photographed object or person has a ghostly presence, an uncanniness that might be likened to the return of the dead' (2007 p. 114). Evidently, a cast sculpture is equally an 'indexical imprint of the object', albeit an object modelled for a task. If Iversen is correct in claiming a causal link ('this means') between an artefact's indexicality and affect, then any cast sculpture should *necessarily* exhibit a 'ghostly presence, an uncanniness that might be likened to the return of the dead'.

Siegfried Kracauer's 1927 essay 'Photography' offers a fine early theorisation of the spectral in relation, not to photography only, but more importantly to the mass reproduction and consumption of commercial photography – 'That the world devours them [photographs] is a sign of the *fear of death*. What the photographs by their sheer accumulation attempt to banish is the recollection of death, which is part and parcel of every memory-image. In the illustrated magazines the world has become a photographable present, and the photographed present has become entirely eternalized. Seemingly ripped from the clutches of death, in reality it has succumbed to it' (1995 p. 59).

Of course, there is vastly more in Barthes's questioning of his experience when viewing a specific photograph of his mother, the famous 'Winter Garden Photograph', than the intimation of her now already-occurred death. Barthes's first recourse to grapple with this image's effect on him is to evoke Proust: 'For once, the photograph gave me a sentiment as certain as remembrance, just as Proust experienced it one day when, leaning over to take off his boots, there suddenly came to him his grandmother's true face, "whose living reality I was experiencing for the first time, in an involuntary and complete memory"' (2000 p. 70). Of note here is that the example in Proust which Barthes chooses is not about a photograph but about performing a perfectly quotidian manual task: taking off one's boots. It isn't, in itself, about an experience specific to the medium of photography. However, within the broader scheme of Proust's novel, it can indeed be read as an experience specific to the medium of photography; specific not to the photographic print, but to a *sensibility* born of photography.

On several occasions Proust turns to the photograph as both subject and metaphor. Perhaps the most famous example involving an actual photograph is when, returning to Balbec, the coastal town at which he had previously stayed with his beloved, now-dead, grandmother, a photograph of her prompts the visceral realisation of the full significance of her death – now months past – to strike him with devastating effect. This episode falls within a lineage of photography-as-index-of-death (albeit wonderfully extended through consideration of the effects of language in framing and re-framing his experience). However, before his grandmother died Marcel had another telling encounter with her in technologically mediated form, within which the photograph features as part of a greater constellation of technologically mediated perceptions. Whilst on holiday in Balbec Marcel receives a telephone call from his grandmother (his first direct encounter with this recently developed technology): 'I heard that voice which I supposed myself, mistakenly, to know so well; for always until then, every time that my grandmother had talked to me, I had been accustomed to follow what she was saying on the open score of her face, in which the eyes figured so largely; but her voice itself I was hearing this afternoon for the first time' (1930a p. 179).

For Marcel the mediation of his grandmother effects a radically altered understanding of his relationship with her. This results from the divorce of her voice from the subtle weave of her existence: 'A real presence indeed that voice so near – in actual separation. But a premonition also of an eternal separation! Over and again, as I listened in this way, without seeing her who spoke to me from so far away, it has seemed to me that the voice was crying to me from depths out of which one does not rise again' (1930a p. 178). Whereas Rosso's writings somewhat tritely invest the technologically mediated with an implicit deathliness or spectrality, Proust offers a more nuanced understanding

of how the body's permanent loss resonates through the disembodied voice. 'A real presence indeed that voice so near' accords with Rosso's understanding of touch: mediation is not a simple remoteness or distancing; it conjures a genuine proximity coupled with an unutterable absence.

Seeking to re-invest his image of his grandmother with the fullness of her person, Marcel returns to Paris – 'I had to free myself, at the first possible moment, in her arms, from the phantom, hitherto unsuspected and suddenly called into being by her voice … Alas, this phantom was just what I did see when, entering the drawing-room before my grandmother had been told of my return, I found her there reading' (1930a p. 186).

Marcel's technologically mediated vision of his grandmother became the lens through which he grasped her embodied reality. Tellingly, Proust compares this understanding, ripped from the continuum of habit and memory, ripped from the *air* through which Rosso sought to animate his sculptures, with the photograph – 'The process that mechanically occurred in my eyes when I caught sight of my grandmother was indeed a photograph. We never see people who are dear to us save in the animated system, the perpetual motion of our incessant love for them … for the first time and for a moment only, since she vanished at once, I saw, sitting on the sofa, beneath the lamp, red-faced, heavy and common, sick, lost in thought, following the lines of a book with eyes that seemed hardly sane, a dejected old woman whom I did not know' (1930a p. 188).

Proust offers an example of the pain which can accompany the technological isolation of an aspect of Being. It is this which accords with Rosso's hostility to reproductions. However, Proust offers more: the new sensibility which Marcel brought to Paris, through which he saw his grandmother anew, is a 'revealing', *alētheia* – in its way as sincere and truthful as it is horrific. Indeed this is in complete accord with what Rosso actually asks of art: 'Can't we realise that the only way for every conceived work of art to resist and survive is by ripping away a dominant value from the experience effect (which is the hard-earned *fauteuil* of life) in these moments of surprise (that is, what are you, why aren't you aware of your existence)?' (p. 152 [1926]) Proust's swollen novella offers the same inquiry, at the same historical juncture and in the same city, into the complex interweaving of destruction and proffered new life that permeates Rosso's practice, but so fails to find illumination in his writing.

In the period in which the issue of the technological reproduction of images became pressing – in which the photograph assumed a defining role in everyday life – Rosso and Proust undertook compelling explorations which struggle with the ambiguities both of photography and reproductive mediums more broadly. Although slightly later and not of the same Parisian milieu, in *The Man without Qualities* Robert Musil offers another valuable, if far less discussed, consideration of the effects of photography. The novel's (anti-?) hero, Ulrich, recalls a recently viewed photograph of himself as a young boy. Ulrich's experience contrasts instructively with an analogous account in *Camera Lucida*. On viewing a childhood photograph of himself Barthes offers the famous phenomenologically grounded suggestion that 'what I am seeking in the photograph taken of me (the "intention" according to which I look at it) is Death: Death is the *eidos* of that Photograph' (2000 p. 15). *The Man without Qualities* offers a very different picture, reflecting – that is, retaining identity with, yet fundamentally reversing – Barthes's foregrounding of death:

> Coming into the open, he breathed this peace and remembered for no special reason some childhood photographs he had recently been looking at, pictures showing him with his mother, who had died young; from what distance he had regarded the little boy, with the beautiful woman in an old-fashioned dress happily smiling at him. There was that overpowering impression of the good, affectionate, bright little boy they all felt him to be; there were hopes for him that were in no way his own; there were the vague expectations of a distinguished, promising future, like the outspread wings of a golden net opening to enfold him. And though all this had been invisible at the time, there it was for all to see decades afterward in those old photographs, and from the midst of this visible invisibility that could so easily have become reality, there was his tender, blank baby face looking back at him with the slightly forced expression of having to hold still. He had felt not a trace of warmth for that little boy, and even if he did take some pride in his beautiful mother, he had on the whole the impression of having narrowly escaped a great horror. (Musil 1997 p. 706–7)

This passage points to something in the photograph which is starkly other than death or loss, yet of which they are very obviously a part. Whereas Barthes, et al., foreground *inevitability* – '*This will be and this has been*' – for Musil the photograph demonstrates that things could have been otherwise. It points to photography's powers of making present latent possibilities: 'the midst of this visible invisibility that could so easily have become reality'. This is in accord

with Heidegger's account of technology which was explicated in the previous chapter: '*Technē* is a mode of *alētheuein*. It reveals whatever does not bring itself forth and does not yet lie here before us, whatever can look and turn out now one way and now another' (1977 p. 13). Fundamentally, Musil highlights memory's capacity for recognising something as the same yet otherwise; the fascination of being identical and not-identical. This is precisely the complexity which we encountered in discussion of *Ecce Puer*'s title, finding compelling, sultry voice in Agathe and Ulrich's exchange. It is also the complexity which forms such a vital aspect of how the discrete parts of *Ecce Puer* interact.

Musil, like Rosso, works within an ineffably precise space between difference and identity. Twins intrinsically participate in an insuperable co-identity: yet Musil's twins are siblings whose status as twins is self-appointed; they are not born into it – they 'declare' themselves to be twins. Telling in regard of *Ecce Puer*, Ulrich's first thought upon re-encountering his estranged younger sister is one of difference-within-similarity as a question of medium specificity: 'he studied her face again. It did not seem very like his own, but perhaps he was mistaken; maybe it was like the same face done in pastels and in a woodcut, the difference in the medium obscuring the congruence of line and plane. There was something in this face he found disturbing' (1997 p. 735). This suggestion of the 'same face done in pastel and in a woodcut' finds graphic parallel in the photographic pairing of *Ecce Puer* which featured prominently in discussion of this work's parts (fig. 17): the image on the left is soft and diffused like pastel; that on the right, rigid and hard – something stamped. It is enough to suggest identity, but such a reading is always deferred (in spite of the object photographed being the same in both images).

The Man without Qualities and *Ecce Puer* function through the indeterminable yet *specific* tension between related yet necessarily different elements. It is this specificity and how it comes to exist in the works that will concern the rest of this chapter. Although this study has already considered the relationship of Rodin's oeuvre with what Rosso achieves in *Ecce Puer*, it seems permissible to open reflections through a return to this question, not least because of the persistent conflation of their projects.

Making Friends

Profound rivals

Hélène Pinet, a leading scholar of Rodin's relationship with photography and long Head of Photographic Collections at Musée Rodin, makes the explicit claim that the dialogue between Rodin and Pictorialist photographers, specifically their development of novel printing techniques, made Rodin's engagement with photography richer than Rosso's: 'Even if these three latter artists [Rosso, Brancusi, Picasso] present interesting parallels in certain respects, the fact remains, nevertheless, that they all relied on a single type of photographic support, gelatin silver paper, for their images, which resulted in much more homogenous images incapable of the great variety seen in Rodin's photographic archive' (1998 pp. 83–4).

Whether or not 'variety' can be determined by the range of processes involved is debatable. More importantly, the meaningful point isn't whether the photographs associated with Rodin are of greater formal breadth than those produced by Rosso: comparison on such a facile level is unprofitable in that it masks the deeper divergence of these artists' endeavours. If Rodin and Rosso, in today's light rather than that of their own milieu, can be understood as rivals, they are so on the most absolute level. Superficial formal congruencies may invite comparison, but, from the time of their mutual-though-opposed turn to deeper photographic exploration, their projects moved in entirely different directions. To champion one at the other's expense misses the point unless it champions a *position*, not a *solution*. If the latter, it is assessing one by the other's rules. Pinet does just this: happily affording novelty its own significance she denigrates Rosso for a supposed homogeneity, for lacking the 'great variety' she finds in Rodin.

Rodin's approach to reproduction was one which emphasised diversity as a condition of openness or opening-out: completed and ongoing works became the subject and source of subsequent works. With Rodin's acceptance of photography as an artform this position extended: his works became the source of new works, the authorship of which was not – certainly not exclusively –

his own. This openness went hand in hand with his position on making. As primarily a modeller in clay, reproductive processes of casting and photography, although elevated to explicit, formative aspects of the works' function, did not require his direct involvement. The proliferation of casts and photographs, the increasingly complicated relationships between these, become performers in an oeuvre which seems to have this diversity as its goal – irrespective of the great care, revision and honing which accompanied the original modelling.

Conversely, the complex work adopts a critical position to this, asking What does diversity mean? Where does one locate meaning in novelty as such? How does the shockingly novel not swiftly become gimmick and effect? Is it in that resonant tension between difference and identity?

For the photograph of Ulrich to affect him it is necessary that it carry some specific 'truth' or potential. The passage quoted above suggests that in the photograph he and his mother are dressed in the typical upper-middle-class Viennese dress of his childhood. A photograph of the child in sailor's attire, or as an Arcadian shepherd, or a cherub perched upon a smiling crescent moon, although apparently more novel – overtly offering wider formal breadth and ostensive symbolic association than quotidian attire – wouldn't develop a greater tension between what he might have become and what he who now looks at it is. Rather, the specificity of the child would have been occluded by the generality of late nineteenth-century Austrian upper-middle-classness; it would become theatricalised, striving for effect. The complex work offers meaning through the deferral of identity, for which the assertion of identity is also necessary. Perhaps this explains why Rosso wouldn't publically present more than one element of a work at a time, despite how fascinating such a display is for today's viewer. It is not about marvelling at the range of possible effects, or at the cleverness with which a work can find new life outside itself. It is about how one's understanding of an object can grow to encompass greater possibilities of one instance, without dispersal. About how a certain logic of the snapshot can be integrated into experience as something not readily assimilable to identity – not an image to be consumed – but as something which renews its relevance, which resonates by denying the closure which derives either from too easy identification, or from too literal, overt difference.

'Real friends' – Lewis on love

Rosso and Rodin approach difference by exploiting reproductive processes, but for Rosso the question of alterity is bound by *form*, form achieved by establishing *meaningful* connections, which he understands as arising from his commitment to making. Rosso's engagement with reproduction always asserts difference, but never arbitrary difference: his variety is never gratuitous but

concise and focused. Every piece, every part of the complex work, relates to the others in a manner which imparts something new to how the others are perceived. This was evident in the earlier analyses of the hybridity of materials across sculptures. It also finds elegant articulation in the pairing of photographs discussed in the same chapter, in which two photographs of near-identical scale and camera angle assert their differences, whilst retaining reference to their identical source. The nature of how the relationship between different elements mutually inflect is neatly expressed by C. S. Lewis in *The Four Loves*. Lewis explicates how a richness and a fullness develops in friendship, which allows the individual to be augmented by its relation to others, whilst retaining its identity as something unique in itself:

> [Charles] Lamb says somewhere that if, of three friends (A, B, and C), A should die, then B loses not only A but 'A's part in C', while C loses not only A but 'A's part in B'. In each of my friends there is something that only some other friend can fully bring out. By myself I am not large enough to call the whole man into activity; I want other lights than my own to show all his facets. Now that Charles is dead, I shall never again see Ronald's reaction to a specifically Caroline joke. Far from having more of Ronald, having him 'to myself' now that Charles is away, I have less Ronald. Hence true Friendship is the least jealous of loves. Two friends delight in being joined by a third, and three by a fourth, if only the newcomer is qualified to become a real friend. They can say, as the blessed souls say in Dante, 'Here comes one who will augment our loves'. (1960 p. 73–4)

One must acknowledge that there is a considerable gulf between Lewis's idea and the complex work. Lewis outlines relationships of co-presence, whereas the complex work is predicated upon recollection. In the complex work something like co-existence is achieved through a difference within an identification of multiple instances perceived as intrinsically indivisible – as all somehow the same work. If in Lewis's example A becomes A + C's part of A, then in the temporally discrete complex work something like this would occur when B encountered A after knowing C. But if B were to re-encounter C, C would be re-extended, etc. In itself this might seem as self-evident as saying that every perception brings to it a recollection of previous perceptions; thus that every time we re-encounter people we can anew see clear familiar faces. However, Lewis's significant suggestion, when applied to the complex work, is the notion of 'true friendship', which, in *Ecce Puer*'s case, refers to the ineluctable association between elements, their common source uniting them (though in itself this doesn't guarantee friendship, as we shall see).

This altered identity through association over time isn't irrelevant to Lewis's argument. In relation to loss, Lewis doesn't follow through on his position. If A should die, then B loses not only A but A's part in C. However, C doesn't revert to being C, but becomes manifestly 'C without A's part of him'. That is, not only is C a reminder of B's absence, he is also, in some sense, a betrayal of himself, C, at an earlier time. Even if one can acknowledge that if one were now meeting C for the first time he may seem an admirable person and a well-qualified friend, C may well prove unbearable in the light of who they once were. I make this observation, in part, to acknowledge that Lewis's lucid account of the relationships which hold in love, in true friendship, perhaps lack the temporal complexity which seems to underscore the reality of friendship and *Ecce Puer*.

Aside from these clarifications, the basic point of Lewis's comment is that a deeper and richer knowledge of something is achieved through the illumination provided by others, and that this is dependent on the nature of '*real friendship*'. That is, not arbitrary coupling or connection, but something specific, if not necessarily conceptualised or knowable – not something obtained by meeting criteria. Indeed, the great virtue of the notion of friendship is that it makes apparent through non-artistic analogy that meaningful connections aren't preconceivable: although the indexical, genetic connections developed between members of *Ecce Puer* guarantee familial ties, these alone aren't sufficient to add to the work's richness, just to its volume.

This isn't necessarily to deny that something of a familial or self-identifying character inheres in friends, as an important part of a relationship, but rather to establish such a characteristic's latency and unpredictability. In this regard Aristotle's comments in *Eudemian Ethics* apply even more felicitously to *Ecce Puer* than to people: '"friend" really denotes, in the language of the proverb, "another Hercules" – another self; but the characteristics are scattered, and it is difficult for all to be realized in the case of one person; though by nature a friend is what is most akin, yet one resembles his friend in body and another in spirit, and one in one part of the body or spirit, another in another. But still none the less a friend really means as it were a separate self. To perceive and to know a friend, therefore, is necessarily in a manner to perceive and in a manner to know oneself' (1984 p. 1974).

The idea of friendship demonstrates that it is the *specificity* of elements, not their number or scope, which illuminate the connections of the complex work – which make it meaningful. One can't predict or pre-ordain friendship. One might list which qualities one would expect or believe to find in a friend, but people may satisfy these conditions without satisfying friendship. Conversely, others might not fulfil the criteria, yet be real friends. Indeed, more deeply and more importantly, their friendship can mean so much precisely because of its unexpectedness; because it – and because *recognising* it – coaxes

or drags something from one, about one, which would otherwise have lain dormant, yet which emerges as intrinsic and necessary: as growth, as becoming. For Aristotle, 'To perceive and to know a friend … is necessarily in a manner to perceive and in a manner to know oneself' – this means to know oneself anew. The first note from Ottilie's journal in Goethe's *Elective Affinities* – that discussed in chapter 2, through which ran the 'thread of affection' – hints towards this rather beautifully: 'there is something exciting about being with a much-loved portrait, even if it is not a good likeness, just as there is sometimes something exciting about arguing with a friend. You have the pleasant feeling that you are divided, and yet can never be separated' (1971 p. 164). The friend can neither be dismissed nor subsumed, but requires – desires – true participation and openness.

Similarly, in making art one can neither arbitrarily change material and assume enlightenment of a related object, nor plan what addition a group requires. Such a belief in knowing what a work requires, or should be, prior to making, almost always betrays itself as misguided when subsequently contemplating the work (if things have 'gone to plan' in making it); however greatly one may try to persuade oneself that a work is right because it fulfils requirements which are believed necessary, one knows it isn't. Rather, when a work begins to form in the mind it is as a presence, not an idea of a materialised object. It is shrouded. There is a feeling of size, or scale; a feeling of what it asks of the maker as viewer, rather than an understanding of how and with what it is made – these are what determine the existence it becomes. Making is an unveiling, not a materialisation of an idea. Yet, like *Ecce Puer*, it is an unveiling which seeks to prolong or attenuate the moment of revelation. This is what phenomenology stood for, and what so clearly emerged from Rosso's desire to give life to 'the shadows not the shoes' – 'It was the shadow they left behind them that made it something enormous. I said to myself: I am right, I do not know why'. Perhaps Philip Guston expressed this most beautifully, with the aid of Clark Coolidge and alcohol:

> Well, there's something I think I'll probably constantly keep vacillating or wavering between, movement and no movement. I think it's true of my whole past, *to be fascinated by the one and the multitudinous* … There's just something about having a single form … There's no movement to speak of, visually. It's just there, and yet it's shaking, like throbbing, or burning or moving … It vibrates! In other words, it's like nailing down a butterfly but the damn thing is still moving around. And this seems to be the whole act of art anyway, to nail it down for a minute but not to kill it … I want to do what nature doesn't do. I mean, I can look out and see the trees blowing, wind moving, and things are happening. I

> don't have to duplicate that. But what I don't see is a single form that's vibrating away, constantly, forever and ever and ever to keep vibrating. And that seems to be magical as hell, enigmatic as hell, really. Gee, I never said that before, that way. (my suggestive emphasis, Guston and Coolidge ed. 2011 pp. 196–7)

So much of this is pertinent when thinking of Rosso, when thinking of the profound tension between his desire to depict the world as experienced and the realities of his engagement with reproduction. The enigma for Rosso and Guston: how to put fleeting clouds on a table without them becoming inert – paperweights, waxworks. It is an enigma wrestled with in making; this process is one in which one goes beyond what one knows, and, through dialogue with materials, beyond what one was. In a letter to the novelist Ross Field, Guston later wrote:

> I have recently done a painting which continues to baffle me, a highly desired state … For if, as I believe, one is changed by what one does – what one paints – continuous creation can be furthered only in *time*. That is, to *maintain* the condition of continuity – or, as we might put it, the subversion of an intolerable finality. Not to do so would be to enter the waxworks museum, which is comic and hilarious – a sort of mock death. Further, in refusing this waxworks state, one is propelled to make what one has not yet made, nor seen made. What one does not yet know how to make. (2011 p. 280)

Avoiding the 'waxworks state' is achieved by means of the 'subversion of an intolerable finality' – that is, of closure. But, fundamentally, this is not attained through the establishment of an interminable 'potential infinity' – the proliferation of new versions of a work without *significant* boundaries – i.e. through a simple chain of succession: 1, 2, 3 … n (n = 12, if 'authentic' posthumous casts …). Rather, it is the forming of friends which, for them to be meaningful, are necessarily limited in number.[2]

In the studio, as in life, the ties of friendship are revelations whose germ is in plunging, doing, acting; they are *revealed*, as Rosso fully understood and made evident in his sustained attacks on those whose practices were apportioned

2 Similarly for Aristotle in *Eudemian Ethics*, directly following that quoted above: 'As to seeking for ourselves and praying for many friends, and at the same time saying that one who has many friends has no friend, both statements are correct. For if it is possible to live with and share the perceptions of many at once, it is most desirable for them to be the largest possible number; but as that is very difficult, active community of perception must of necessity be in a smaller circle, so that it is not only difficult to acquire many friends (for probation is needed), but also to use them when one has got them' (1984 p. 1974).

to various specialists. It is that surprised moment of revelation and recognition which *Ecce Puer* depicts and desires. Before concluding this chapter with a return to C. S. Lewis, it is as well to touch briefly on a suggestion of how this bodily relationship to materials, this revelation of an 'unknown' which is yet part of oneself, might arise and enter into the production of an artwork. This is a matter considered by Rosso's contemporary, Proust, in relationship to friendship. Marcel's closest friend, Robert de Saint-Loup, takes Marcel to dine at a Parisian restaurant frequented by other young aristocrats. To protect the delicate Marcel from the cold draught Saint-Loup borrows the Prince de Foix's vicuna cloak. Marcel is seated in a seemingly inaccessible corner of the restaurant, yet the nimble noble, 'like a horse in a steeplechase … having to get past his friends, climbed on the narrow ledge behind them and ran along it, balancing himself with his arms … unfolding along the wall the frieze of his flying course' (1930b pp. 142–3, 147). Later that evening, Marcel's enjoyment of this recalled spectacle is somewhat marred by his acknowledgement that Saint-Loup, who had devoted himself to the advancement of his mind, would have been hurt to know that it was for his bodily comportment – seemingly the inherited vitality of a background he had consciously attempted to transcend through the intellect – that Marcel so admired him. However, for Marcel, if Saint-Loup

> had not kept aloof for so long from the pride that goes with noble birth, there would have been something more studied, a certain heaviness in his very agility, a self-important vulgarity in his manners … in order that Saint-Loup's body might be indwelt with so much nobility, the latter had first to desert a mind that was aiming at higher things, and, reabsorbed into the body, to be fixed there in unconscious, noble lines. In this way the distinction of the mind was not absent from a bodily distinction which otherwise would not have been complete. An artist has no need to express his mind directly in his work for it to express the quality of that mind. (1930b pp. 146–7)

In this rich melee of ideas there is, in the implicit championing of breeding and nobility, something troubling. Furthermore, in Proust's elevation of the entrenched intelligence of artistic creation one is apt to hear strains of what Robert Musil refers to as 'a kind of music in which harp notes and sighing glissandi predominate' (1997 p. 274). Yet the passage does begin to grapple (or, within its context, re-grapple as a pivotal part of an ongoing questioning) with a fundamental problem: how does one understand the unthought/unconceptualised material outcome of activity as something other than 'inspiration' ('sighing glissandi'), innate genius, etc? How is art an intellectual pursuit, one in which engagement with a propositional body of knowledge

can, in Rosso's words, 'enter into the very spirit of creation' (p. 142 [1907])? Of course, this isn't something which could be formalised for application; something which could become instrumentalised. Proust's ideas do, however, begin to engage with the paradoxical manner in which the division of mind and body is both untenable and fundamentally creative, fundamentally necessary.

To return briefly to the subject of incest in relation to memory and the photograph, now in the light of Lewis's account of illuminating friendships. Lewis's reflections on friendship, although overtly dealing with loss, with the loss of a friend and the other losses this engenders, have nevertheless a positive tone – their focus is on what the friend added, not what was lost. *The Four Loves*, published in 1960 but based upon radio lectures from 1958, sits curiously with Lewis's harrowing reflections (the term is too distant) on love and loss, published pseudonymously the following year. *A Grief Observed* (1961) collects Lewis's notebook entries of the weeks immediately following the death of his wife. Extending beyond *The Four Loves* these offer a powerful account of memory's role in the subject's relationship with another.

> What pitiable cant to say 'She will live forever in my memory!' Live? That is exactly what she won't do. You might as well think like the old Egyptians that you can keep the dead by embalming them. Will nothing persuade us that they are gone? What's left? A corpse, a memory, and (in some versions) a ghost. All mockeries or horrors. Three more ways of spelling the word *dead*. It was H. I loved. As if I wanted to fall in love with my memory of her, an image in my own mind! It would be a sort of incest. (1964 p. 19)

For Lewis, to be in love with his memory of his wife would be akin to incest. But there is, surely, always something of this incestuousness in love. This is not because the lover structures their understanding of their beloved anyway; not that they are necessarily 'an image' in the mind – we shall see Lewis defending the other's recalcitrant otherness. It is incestuous under the terms of Lewis's previous argument: H. was necessarily also Lewis's part of H., as Lewis was Lewis and H.'s part of Lewis – he illuminating something in her which was specific to him, which was a *part* of him, if remote from his body. His part of her, in her, whom he loved.

After death this alters. Although it was his part of her which he loved, he is now master of that memory. When Lewis begins to look back upon what he has written on previous days he is shocked by how evident it is, even at this early stage, that his memory of his wife is already *his*:

> Already, less than a month after her death, I can feel the slow, insidious beginning of a process that will make the H. I think of into a more and more imaginary woman. Founded on fact, no doubt. I shall put in nothing fictitious (or I hope I shan't). But won't the composition become more and more my own? The reality is no longer there to check me, to pull me up short, as the real H. so often did, so unexpectedly, by being so thoroughly herself and not me. *The most precious gift that marriage gave me was this constant impact of something very close and intimate yet all the time unmistakably other, resistant – in a word, real*. (my emphasis, 1964 p. 18)

Establishing connections between somebody's lamentation for their lately deceased wife and the act of making sculpture may seem tactless. However, there is something in it beyond the possibility of productive metaphorical illumination. The respect for materials, for the human interaction with the world of objects, is also an expression of respect and love, which is, in sculpting, something beyond narcissistic self-love.[3] Materials are resistant, *real*. They may not be overtly capricious, but they possess qualities and possibilities which extend beyond one's potential understanding – this most certainly in the case of bronze, plaster and wax. This space between self-identification and unremitting otherness is something which pervades the complex work, both in its making and in its beholding.

The making of *Ecce Puer* is based upon a genuine dialogue with artistic materials, from which emerge objects which could not have been conceived remote from the making. These are not the arbitrary or stochastic result of material left to its own devices in the name of chance, or of 'undermining the myth of artist as creator'. Rather, they are the result of a deep knowledge of materials, acquired over a career of experimentation, directed by curiosity and a desire that one's knowledge not become instrumental, as it would if one were in the position of a technician charged with producing a desired effect. For this reason the casts of *Ecce Puer* are all different, but all form a specific dialogue with previous casts, the new works being, in some regard, an indirect response to that learnt in the former.

As became evident when assessing Rosso's writings' relationship with phenomenology, in beholding *Ecce Puer* Rosso sought to maintain a distance between beholder and beheld, so that the sculpture would not become 'objective', but would retain space, *air*, allowing an intimate exchange of subject and object without domination. The complex work affirms Rosso's

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3 This thesis quotes too many big lumps of Modernist literary tomes (even if they are the best sections) to justify a footnote of a six-page sentence from Hermann Broch's *The Death of Virgil* (1945). However, for a compelling yet violently distancing attempt to grapple with the similarities and differences between human love and artistic striving, please see Broch 1946 pp. 147–152.

theory of art in his practice. Recollection constructs a work greater than the sculpture directly beheld: the beholding is manifestly provisional yet arrestingly convincing in itself. In the complex work the individual sculpture becomes, not a *fragment* of something greater, but – as shall be explored later in relation to Modernism – a *moment* of a greater whole. This is achieved by amplifying a latent potential in reproductive techniques: that what is given could be otherwise. At its heart Rosso's engagement with the 'instability' of materials and the nuances of reproduction became this search for inconceivable, true friendships. When making, one is working with materials. One is also open to them, open to their offering, through one's acts, the possibility of becoming something which extends far beyond one's understanding of their potential. One is never master of that which one lets live, and material, for Rosso, is alive. His materials are enigmatic, and his use of reproductive techniques without re-iteration is the hallmark of *his* aliveness to their potential to be continually more than he knew.

Reproduction and the Complex Work: Hercules Segers, An Art-Historical Precursor

The following chapter on Modernism will reassess Rosso's place within *fin-de-siècle* art and culture in the light of the above discussions of phenomenology and reproductive processes. This will allow greater appreciation of Rosso's place amongst artistic, rather than ostensibly just sculptural, peers. It will also open on to considerations of his relevance today. However, despite being atypical of the late nineteenth century in his direct involvement in the reproduction of his work, within a broader history this productive experimentation with materials is not unique to Rosso. It is instructive to consider Rosso's practice and the notion of the complex work in relation to an art-historical precursor, the Dutch seventeenth-century painter and printmaker Hercules Segers. In part this is to understand the complex work within a broader art-historical lineage, rather than seeing this aspect of Rosso's art as wholly unique. It is also, in considering how Rosso's and Segers' projects differ, to allow fuller understanding of how Rosso's works developed from engagement with a specific economic and cultural milieu, i.e. photography, photomechanical reproduction and, more broadly, the industrialisation of all sectors of production.

> *Carl Einstein*: Objects anaesthetise, rigidify into a myth of guaranteed continuity, into the drunken slumber of the mechanical. Civilisation represents itself in a storeroom of objects, memorised obstacles to function. (2004a p. 141)

> *Rosso*: The works of the second Greece, of its subsidiary, Rome, and of the renaissance, sub-subsidiary of the latter (without mentioning the sub-sub-subsidiary and rightly called 'Empire,' as useless as a paperweight, by Mr. Antonio Canova) belong to the most objectively conceived periods. Mr. Rodin belongs to these three periods and will endure as one of their great representatives. (p. 203 [1921])

On the face of it the art historian and social critic Carl Einstein (1885–1940) maintained a hostile attitude towards reproduction; for the greater part, objects, images and cultural memory are an encumbrance, a restraint which limits thought – why would one reproduce these artefacts, add to the 'storeroom of objects', of Rosso's paperweights? However, as an early and outspoken champion of the Cubists from 1913 onwards, he afforded art the possibility of playing a formative role in constructing a richer relationship with our historical burden: 'When viewing an individual picture or gazing upon nature the beholder is burdened by the memory of all previously seen art. Art transforms vision as a whole, the artist determines how we form our general vision of the world. Hence it is the task of art to organise these images' (2004b pp. 116–7).

A generational gulf divides Einstein and Rosso: Einstein was of the Futurist's generation; Rosso, although an important influence on the Futurists, earlier and very different.[4] Yet in their relative positions on the unnecessary weight demanded by art of the past there are connections between them. Consider Rosso in relation to Einstein's above comment on art transforming vision: 'The less objective a thing is … the more it makes you feel, makes you think. Art is the true way to make people think' (p. 193 [1925]). Einstein also bore (and bore-out in practice) a hostility to the objectification of art via reproduction. This was most explicitly directed at the reproduction of paintings; in an essay on Einstein, Charles Haxthausen cites a 1922 letter to the Cubists' Parisian dealer Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, in which Einstein insists that his book on Juan Gris not contain reproductions of paintings, 'since on the whole I can no longer bear to look at reproductions of paintings' (Haxthausen 2004 p. 57).

In 1929 Einstein published a short essay on Hercules Segers – a curious artist about whom, by the 1920s, little had been written for two-and-a-half centuries. Einstein's interpretation of Segers' prints orientated itself to the highly politicised surrealism of *Documents*, the journal Einstein co-founded with Georges Bataille, in the fourth volume of which the essay was first published. Despite being wayward, his interpretation is fascinating and what he says of the prints' formal qualities unexpectedly rings true. Einstein sees Segers as an artist overwhelmed by seventeenth-century Dutch society's 'Netherlandish contentment'; with the harmonious compositions of the landscapes of his age; with 'a Holland that affirmed all objects with perfect contentment and mastered the observation of the external world with extraordinary virtue' (2004c p. 157). It is perhaps testament to Einstein's perspicuity that these sentiments are later so closely echoed in Svetlana Alpers' *The Art of Describing:*

4 Boccioni, in 'The Futurist Sculpture' (1912), referred to 'the genius of Medardo Rosso' as 'the only great modern sculptor ' (1996 p. 223).

Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century: 'The Dutch present their pictures as describing the world seen rather than as imitations of significant human actions. Already established pictorial and craft traditions, broadly reinforced by the new experimental science and technology, confirmed pictures as the way to new and certain knowledge of the world' (Alpers 1983 p. xxv).

Although it is not an explicit subject of Einstein's essay, from the writings on repetition which he published elsewhere, especially those found in his essay 'Totality', one can understand that for Einstein this Dutch objectivising and mastery accords with his concept of 'unity': 'unity always implies repetition, indeed, repetition into quantitative infinity' (2004b p. 119) – precisely the addition without specific significance against which, this study has argued, Rosso's works turned. Through the mastery of perception (the suppression of genuine perception – openness to the world), Dutch art was entering a period in which the depiction of individual objects and their integration into the unity of an individual painting proceeds to 'anaesthetise, rigidify into a myth of guaranteed continuity, into the drunken slumber of the mechanical'. That is, unlike Walter Benjamin's contemporaneous auratic subject, who 'follow[s] with the eye – whilst resting on a summer afternoon – a mountain range on the horizon or a branch that casts its shadow on the beholder', who 'breathe[s] the aura of those mountains, of that branch' (2002 pp. 104–5), Dutch art closes the possibility of genuine exchange between object and subject.

Rather than work against this mastery of the object, in Einstein's view Segers extends it – 'he obtains minuscule forms, isolated and devoid of dynamism. Seghers [*sic*] is a monomaniac of the atom, he lingers over every small point. Every rock, every leaf is isolated, asocial, decomposed, enclosed within itself. Then the leaves are massed together as though an angry storm had condemned them to be a tree' (2004c p. 155). For Einstein, Segers' is a 'shredded baroque' in which 'planes have been ground up into tiny pieces' (p. 155). There is something compellingly accurate in this view of Segers: 'condemned' perfectly expresses the sense of inevitability and relentlessness which many of Segers' etchings engender.

Before reading Einstein's essay I had been considering the oddness of line in so many of Segers' etchings; the lines function as dead-ends in a low maze, moving over which one stumbles. This finds its parallel in Einstein's reading: 'Here the baroque no longer stands for the conquest of space by condensation; instead we observe a disgust with any space that could be suggestive of movement or élan. The baroque has gone off-track and landed in a narrow labyrinth' (2004c p. 155). But this impenetrability is more about the quality of line than atomisation through attention to detail. Take, for example, *River Valley with a Waterfall* – as reproduced in *Documents* (fig. 45).

Compositionally the work is by no means unorthodox, at a push reminiscent of Segers' slightly younger contemporary, Claude (i.e. *The Disembarking of Cleopatra* in the Louvre, although Segers' closure of the horizon with hills begins to effect something different). However, the relentlessness of Segers' line becomes dominant; one cannot ignore its own volume, it becoming incapable of merely suggesting the forms.[5] This presents a conflict. Obviously the line isn't governed by perspective; it is as thick and dense when articulating a foreground pebble as when suggesting a remote peak. The work's space collapses upon itself – what should lead the eye into pictorial space is repelled to the surface by the insistent continuity of line.

5 Perhaps even more than Rosso, Segers' use of materials extended their conventions. The quality of line in Segers' etchings is substantially due to his invention of sugar-lift etching. In this technique the composition is drawn onto the plate in a sugar solution by pen or brush. The plate is then covered in a resinous acid-resistant ground. The plate is then bathed in hot water, making the sugar granules swell, causing the ground to blister off where the design is. The plate is then etched, inked and printed. As An van Camp notes, this technique, which Segers invented, was 'not practised again until the eighteenth century' (van Camp 2012 p. 5).

Above: fig. 45 (1:1 scale).

This isn't quite true –

Not that it's untrue that *River Valley with a Waterfall*, reproduced in *Documents 4*, exemplifies this quality of line which has a its own volume – a weight beyond its pictorial, descriptive function. Even the sky, which ought to offer relief from the relentless convolutions of line in the scenery, is inexplicably marked with cross-hatching. But to talk of *River Valley with a Waterfall* as though it is a single, simple entity is to ignore that the work reproduced in *Documents* is one of over a dozen *River Valley with a Waterfall*s, none of which share the close-similarities which typically characterise an edition. There are simple technical differences, the alterations of colour wash and the colour of ink the most explicit. Then there are the differences between plates. Below are reproduced a further thirteen prints. The first four prints are version I (figs. 46–49), the next nine version II, of which the above is also (figs. 50, 52–58). The second version's plate is greatly altered after the third print by the plate being re-bitten in acid, resulting in a deeper etch and a more dominant, less detailed line. Through these alterations, remaining within the limits – if pushing them – of the same form, an incredibly nuanced wealth of associations is achieved.

The image which Einstein chooses is perhaps the most direct and the most easily reproducible (and conveniently in Paris), being a black ink print on unprepared off-white paper. In contrast, the first print of *Version I* (fig. 46) is on linen, prepared in oil with a transparent sienna glaze, printed a deep brown and heightened, or painted, with a cream oil- or body-colour. The scalloped highlighting accentuates individual clusters of rock, whereas the thick horizontal line three-quarters of the way down both draws attention to the central valley, through its echo in narrower horizontals above, and has its own, playful existence as a line sitting atop the composition. The faint lines in the upper-right are residual marks resulting from the plate being recycled from a previous work. Mirroring the tree-branch on the left, they resemble a curtain framing the scene.

The Berlin *Version I* offers a marked contrast to this (fig. 47). On paper prepared with a brushed creamy green-yellow, washes applied after printing draw the eye through the composition from bottom right to the left, then into the depicted plain. This is fascinatingly balanced by the details from the plate's previous use, with the inverted rigging framing this movement. The colours are striking and one cannot but wonder what light and what material is depicted in this jaundiced landscape – whether it is pure phantasm or an experiment in colour-relations. The first two prints differ from the rest in that they present the scene 'full-frame' – subsequent works are irregularly cropped.

Of the Rijksmuseum *Version I*s, the first is printed on ochre paper prepared with a grey-blue body-colour, the tonal proximity of the near-complementaries producing an unstable iridescence (fig. 48). This instability

Above: top, fig. 46; left, fig. 47; right, fig. 48. Facing, fig. 49 (1:1 scale).

is accentuated through the image's printing in blue rather than black ink – not sitting on the surface but fusing with it. The second print – partly because of its colour, partly because of its diffused line – is reminiscent of what I want to find in the background of Leonardo's *Burlington House Cartoon* in the National Gallery (*The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne and Saint John the Baptist*), or for that matter that of the *Mona Lisa*, although in content it's more like Leonardo's lovely small drawing *A Rocky Ravine* in the Royal Collection. In both of these works the inverted ship's-rigging is compositionally vital. These semi-recognisable lines cut across the sky to describe a line – mirrored in the rugged horizon – which parallels the line of the fence in the bottom left. The upside-down post visually connects the rope to the branch of the tree at the top left of the print. The tree's branch leads into the trunk, which draws the eye to the diagonal fence. The sum of these lines is a visual aperture into the main scene depicted. In spite of being entirely alien to the work's subject, the rigging is integrated into the design in a way which results in the most harmonious composition of any of the prints.

The *Version II* prints are produced by near-exact manual copying of the first plate's composition onto a different etching plate. As such, they don't have the rigging donated by *Version I*'s plate's previous use. The most striking effect of this is that, without the visual confusion, the peculiarity of the rock at the top right becomes prominent. It wasn't until spending some time looking at a print, and then comparing it with another, that I realised that this isn't a printing error but a *Chien Andalou*-like cloud cutting across the rock-face. It begins to make that area disintegrate. Whereas the tonal values in the lower left of the print lead one into the vale more clearly than the previous works, the rocks of the hills seem to want to surround one, to form a sphere containing the viewer. The lacunae in the rock, which are depicted clouds, suggest rends in the rock's tissue – most notably in the top right, as though a hemisphere had been flattened onto a plane. This effect is most pronounced in the first print (fig. 50), in which everything draws itself into the enigmatic round patch in the sky, which is neither sun nor moon but an peculiar technical result of the etching-plate's porous ground.

Having had a reproduction of the image on a computer screen, in the background to other tasks, every time I glanced at it the image more and more strongly made me think of cartographic projection, or of being stuck in a globe, looking up to the pole. To illustrate, compare it with a Dutch map from 1598 (fig. 51), when Segers was a child, also in the Rijksmuseum collection. If one – for shame! – imagines the oceans unpeopled by sea-beasts and compasses, the similarity in outline and movement towards a void is pronounced. Indeed, in the map the outlines of Greenland and Russia peter out as they approach the pole, leaving the same void (relief?) as in the print. In some respects the map is the perfect symbol and tool of the domination and objectivising of the world, and

Facing: fig. 50.

the late sixteenth century its establishment in modern form – in 1569 Gerardus Mercator introduced the cartographic projection which would be the standard of nautical navigation for over three centuries. As Alpers notes, 'While in another country a battle would be accounted for in a large history painting prepared for court and king, the Dutch issue a popular news map' (1983 p. xxvi).

These advances in the objectification of space allowed the domination of natural and cultural resources to reach a new height of sophistication and pervasiveness with the formation of the Dutch East India Company in 1602 – itself a symbol and agent of Dutch prosperity and ambition, and an archetype of a world in which value is determined through exchange. This was the climate in which Segers and his contemporaries worked, and in which, for Einstein, Segers 'had no place'.[6]

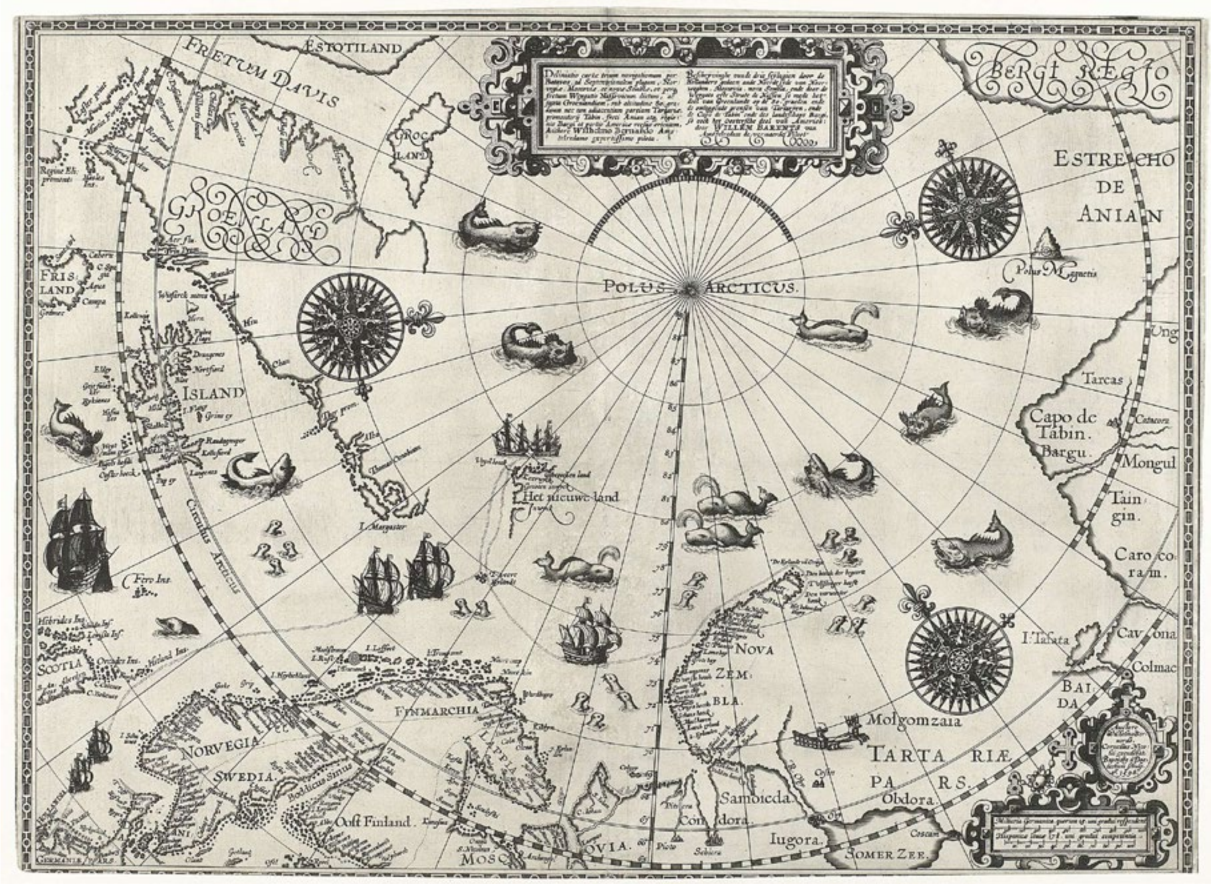
If we turn now to the fourth print of *Version II* (fig. 54) we are struck by the density of line which characterised our initial observations on *River Valley with a Waterfall*. To achieve this Segers subjected the same printing plate to a second immersion in acid, thus etching deeper into the existing incised line. This effects an even greater flattening of pictorial space, the composition as a whole becoming reminiscent of a rock-face or, more closely, petrified brain coral.

Moving to the final two prints, in London (fig. 58) and Dresden (fig. 59), these reverse this visual claustrophobia. The tonal contrast added in body-colour after printing produces compositions of space and openness bordering on the conventional. In the Dresden print the viewer is led though the work by pools of light which echo the clouds in the valley, these now functioning more as highlights. In the British Museum print the church is given as the central focus, and the background hills, rather than claustrophobically enclosing the scene, are made just one more plane in the composition by the addition of a smooth mountain-range behind them. It is questionable whether the painting is by Segers' hand. It is, however, fascinating as an example of the potential latent in the plate.

The map illustrated serves as an instructive symbol for considering *River Valley with a Waterfall*. For all that it functions to determine a space, to bring it wholly within human reason, in Segers' age this task was incomplete; hence the void in the map – the northern extremities of uncharted land – populated with the usual array of gigantic and remarkably buoyant animals. Perhaps within an individual print we can find much to corroborate Einstein's claim that in Segers 'The baroque has gone offtrack and landed in

6 Alpers also understands the Dutch 'art of describing' developing from mapping, which she sees being first integrated into art in Hendrick Goltzius's drawings (Goltzius was also an innovative printmaker), i.e. *Dune Landscape near Haarlem* (1603). For Alpers this mapping–describing tendency is later exemplified in Vermeer, most especially his *The Art of Painting* (1666), *The Astronomer* (1668) and *The Geographer* (1668–9), in which Vermeer 'confirms the relationship between picture-maker and maker of maps' (1983 p. 222).

Facing: top, fig. 51; left, fig. 52; right, fig. 53.


ESTOTILAND
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GROENLAND
FRIS LAND
ISLAND
POLUS ARCTICUS
ESTRECHO DE ANIAN
Polus Magneticus
Tarcas
Capo de Tabin.
Bargu.
Mongul
Tain gin.
Caro co ra m.
I. Tafata
Colmac
BAI DA
Het nieuwe land
Circulus Arcticus
Fero Ins.
Hebrides Ins.
SCOTIA
Orcades Ins.
NORVEGIA
SWEDIA
FYNMARCHIA
Oost Finland
NOVA ZEM BLA
Molgomzaia
TARTARIÆ PARS.
Samoieda
Obdora
Iugora.
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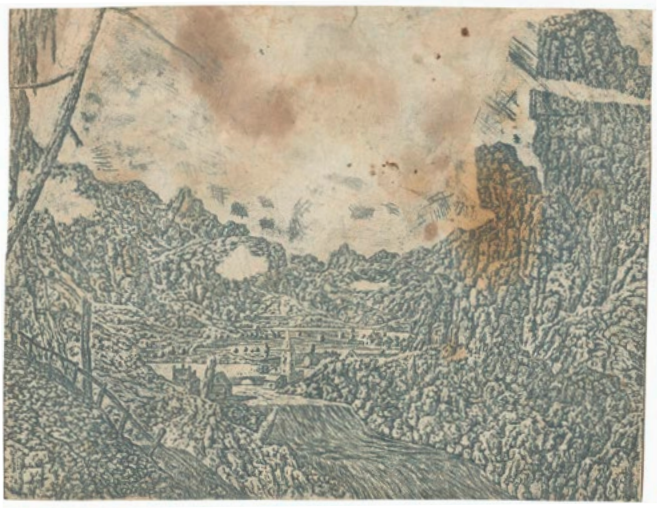
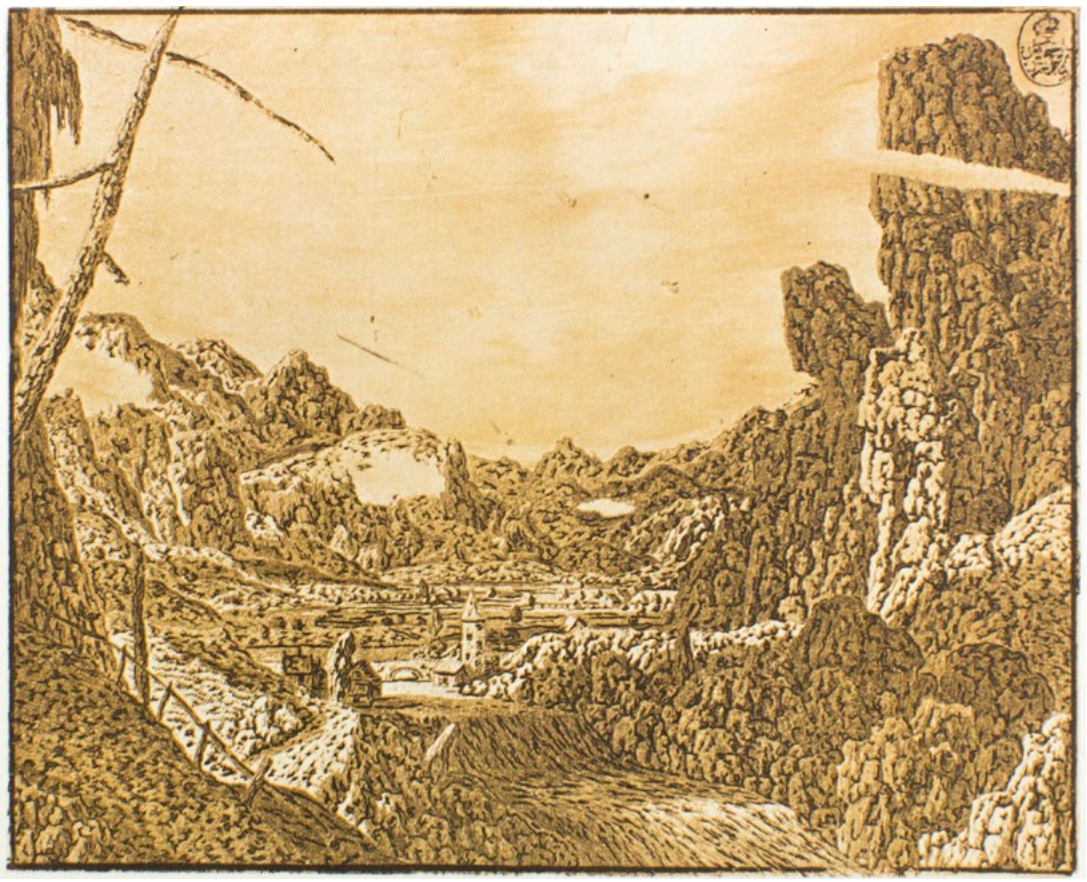


Above: top, fig. 54; centre-left, fig. 55; centre-right, fig. 56; bottom, fig. 57.
Facing: top, fig. 58; bottom, fig. 59.



a narrow labyrinth. The eye is at once attracted and repelled. This technique is a zero technique, a dialectic of forms under the sign of death, a reciprocal destruction of parts. In this instance, totality results not from one element augmenting the other, but from their mutual extirpation' (2004c p. 155). Across the prints of *River Valley with a Waterfall* discussed above, something else is clearly evident – *inventiveness and imagination*. If the work-internal effect in one print is the 'reciprocal destruction of parts' resulting from detail heightened to atomisation, it is countered by an externalising pull from other prints – the question always asked: what else could this be? The work is governed by fascination both for what it is, and what it isn't but could be. It never feels as though the myriad technical innovations are attempts to arrive at 'the image' – the 'correct' combination of line thickness, line colour, support quality, etc.[7] They are all part of an engagement with opening what is closed and limited.

It is curious that an art historian and thinker as subtle (he was, at times, despite his stark rhetoric) as Einstein, and one who, in other essays, placed repetition at the centre of understanding art's history and potential, should at no point in his discussion of Segers grapple with the complexity of Segers' engagement with reproduction.[8] For in Segers' apparently fractured output there is a clearly something which warrants the term 'complex work'. The interpretations offered above demonstrate that Segers denies the right of conclusions about *River Valley with a Waterfall* to be drawn from any single print. Also, Segers asserts that the importance of the 'work' is to deny the objective unity which Einstein finds in the art of Segers' age. This is not achieved, as Einstein sees it, through 'suicide', through a totality of 'mutual extirpation'. Rather, Segers' complex works propose a positive account of 'totality' which, elsewhere, Einstein theorises:

> Totality is not unity; for unity always implies repetition, indeed, repetition into quantitative infinity; whereas totality as a finite system exists only when all the discrete and varied parts within the system come into play. (2004b p. 119)

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7 It should be noted that Leo Collins suggests *entirely* the opposite position on these late *River Valley with a Waterfalls*: 'Segers lives up to the serenity of such a peaceful conception. The experiment phase has been overcome. Nothing reminds us of the struggling natural forces or of disarray which precedes creation' (Collins 1953 p. 104). He goes on to suggest that, through producing a prior plate, Segers became so assured with the composition that he: 'shaped the picture of his mountain valley on the copperplate with the firm accuracy of a sculptor … The last possibilities of the etcher are closer to sculpture than to the art of painting' (1953 p. 104).

8 I have focused upon this one 'work', partly because it is one Einstein chose to illustrate his essay and partly because it highlights how great a shift can be achieved through relatively small changes of technique. In relation to some of Segers' innovations it is conservative; i.e. *Distant View with the Branch of a Pine Tree* [*Landschap met de sparretak*] not only has great contrasts of colour and substrate across prints, but also offsets some, reversing the image, etc.

In Segers' works we find, if we choose to look beyond individual prints, precisely this interplay of 'discrete and varied parts', achieved, again, through the resources of technological reproduction. Yet there is something different between the complexity of Segers and of Rosso. Rosso's era, and his engagement with it, foregrounded mass-transmission, rather than simply reproducibility, in the production of the artwork. Hence, as Benjamin notes, although reproductive technologies had been present since ancient Greece, only at the end of the nineteenth century do they become a pressing issue: 'Around 1900, technological reproduction not only had reached a standard that permitted it to reproduce all known works of art, profoundly modifying their effect, but it also had captured a place of its own among the artistic processes' (Benjamin 2002 p. 102). Rosso was aware that technology, via mass commercial printing of secondary reproductions (that is, the explicit reproduction of artworks rather than artworks produced through reproducible techniques), had opened the possibility of his work being known in the richness of its mutual inflection, drawing together discrete elements within an archive remote from the objects. His was also an age of public exhibitions, of albums and retrospectives, a time in which the artist's oeuvre stood for something greater than its parts, in which artists packaged their careers and tailored their legacies. For Segers the reproduction was the individual work, with no possibility of secondary reproduction. The works couldn't readily form an archive. The true complexity of his works is a complexity known only to the artist (and possibly to a close circle of friends, although Segers' biography suggests that he was relatively reclusive), and when works were sold this interplay of parts was diffused; the prints becoming objects of commercial exchange outside the exchanges which were established across the separate prints. It was this personal engagement with the birth and growth of the work which gave vitality to his project, and why it would make little sense to replicate a single print amongst a dozen from the same plate. It also suggests why it was only in the twentieth century that Segers' work received renewed interest – only with the advent of mass reproduction, with its archiving capacity, could the richness of each complex work begin to be appreciated.

This claim shouldn't be seen as denying the fascination an individual print holds and – as I think one does find, amongst much else – from which Einstein genuinely draws. It is more to claim that in attending to the growing network of associations within the complex work, Segers was in some sense at a remove from the individual print; liberated from certain strictures of completeness-in-itself within what was now, for the maker, *also* a part of something else. The subordination of the print to the 'work' allowed an openness to the print becoming indecisive in itself. Perhaps not an openness compositionally, but an openness to something truthful and restricting, and, in the complex work, a quiet but tenacious consideration of how it could be

otherwise.

6. Modernism

Rosso's Place in Art History

For the greater part this study has focused upon *Ecce Puer*'s work-internal structure; that is, the relationships which obtain within the intensive nucleus of sculptures and photographs which constitute what is here termed the complex work. When comparison to Rosso's contemporaries has been made it has been to establish what distinguishes Rosso's project from theirs. Yet, whatever the singularity of Rosso's project, he is not an artist in isolation, a fact attested to by the esteem in which his work was held by his contemporaries and subsequent generations of artists. It is important to consider the development of the complex work as one arising not exclusively as an innovative response to the exigencies of technological-reproduction and self-promotion, but as a response to a specific period of art history (as it must necessarily be, given that the latter is also bound up in the former). Having identified a fundamental dynamic of his work which has not been recognised in prior accounts of Rosso's place within art history, it is now possible to locate the complex work within a broader account of modern art.

Within English-language histories dedicated to sculpture Rosso's inclusion, however fleeting, is usual.[1] For many decades interpretation centred around Rosso's stated desire to bring Impressionism into sculpture and his connection to Rodin.[2] More recently, in conjunction with the inclusion

1 For concision this chapter omits detailed outline of where Rosso is located in relation to Modernism within studies devoted to the artist, although this has been alluded to in the introduction. An obvious point to make is that, as no current studies conceive of Rosso's works using reproduction to establish an inwards intensity of discrete works into a greater whole (at the level of work, not oeuvre), subsequent understandings of Rosso's relation to broader art-historical tendencies in this study differ from those outlined elsewhere.

2 Within studies devoted to Rosso these two points are also the most debated, yet with a clear bias for understanding Rosso as being unjustly over-looked in Rodin's favour. I.e., especially in Italian scholarship, the influence of French-centred Impressionism is downplayed, stressing the earlier influence on Rosso from the Milanese *Scapigliatura* (Caramel 1988; 1994). Such a move, based upon Rosso producing 'mature' works prior to his move to Paris, situates

and elevation of Rosso's photographs within exhibitions, Rosso's uses of reproductive media have taken centre-stage. Herbert Read's *Modern Sculpture* (1964) is representative of the former position, placing a classicist-humanist pre-Modern Rodin squarely at the opening of his study and contrasting Rodin's classicism with Rosso, who: 'remained an Impressionist, his work fragmentary and accidental, lacking a synthesis' (1964 p. 128).[3]

The second position, informed by greater scholarly attention to Rosso's photographic output, is exemplified by Penelope Curtis's *Sculpture 1900–1945* (1999). Curtis's study begins with a focus on Rodin, paying close attention to those aspects of his practice which have here been dubbed 'open oeuvre', followed by discussion of Rosso:

> It was clear that to understand Rodin one needed to go much further than a single figure on show in the Salon. One needed to spend as much time on the unfinished as on the finished work, and such study showed how the artist drew upon and replenished his own inventory of forms and images. Understanding Rodin involved seeing him invent and reinvent, form and re-form … In looking at the use of repetition within the sculptural oeuvre, Rodin's contemporary, Medardo Rosso, provides further interesting examples. During the last 20 years of his life Rosso turned to re-inventing and re-presenting his earlier work, which he recast, enlarged, reduced, coloured and repatinated. He changed scale, material, and colour, tailoring his production and his legacy.

Rosso's importance in the modelling, not in the project which took shape at the turn of the century and which seems better understood as a response to a specific Parisian climate after Impressionism.

3 Amongst other examples of the first approach are Krauss's *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, which relegates Rosso to the place of Rodin's inferior rival, whose only significant work is *Ecce Puer* – a work Krauss believes only begins to 'draw close to the deepest resources of Rodin's art'. This study has shown that by the time of modelling *Ecce Puer* Rosso had embarked down an entirely different path than Rodin's, one of hermetic intensity rather than open free-play of elements across an oeuvre. It is little surprise that in this century Krauss's views and dismissive tone should be echoed by Yve-Alain Bois in *Art Since 1900* – that behemoth of *October* art history, co-authored by Bois, Krauss, Hal Foster and Benjamin Buchloh. In one of two entries for the study's first year, 1900, Bois locates Matisse's visit to Rodin's studio as central to the development of twentieth-century art. In a brief aside on Matisse's treatment of surface in his early *The Serf*, Bois argues that Matisse 'goes too far and approaches the style of Medardo Rosso, the Italian self-proclaimed rival of Rodin who labelled himself an Impressionist and indeed aspired to imitate Impressionist brush-strokes in his wax sculpture' (Foster et al 2007 p. 58). Published three years before *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, William Tucker's *The Language of Sculpture* (1974) places Rodin as its key initial player, with brief, insightful notes about the sculptural significance of Rosso's tighter formal focus. Also of importance in establishing Rosso's position within English-language art history at this moment was the exhibition *Pioneers of Modern Sculpture* at the Hayward Gallery, London (1973), accompanied by a catalogue with an extended essay by organiser Albert Elsen, from which developed Elsen's slightly extended *Origins of Modern Sculpture: pioneers and premises* (1974).

> Rosso also worked with photographers … Rosso attached even more importance to photography than Rodin, as it helped him to control the ways in which his work was seen. (1999 pp. 108–11)

For Curtis, Rosso is a significant contributor to a tendency in sculpture in which the process of casting, often allied with photographic experimentation, led to the evolution of sculptural forms across mutating generations of sculpture. We have seen this in Rodin's works (*St John–Walking Man–Torso*). Curtis extends the practice to Matisse, especially the four 'Back' reliefs, in which 'each new version began life as a print of the previous one', and to Brancusi, who 'explained in a 1917 letter to his patron, these "repeats … must not be considered as reproductions of the first ones, for they have been differently conceived, and I did not repeat them merely to do them differently, but to go further"' (1999 p. 112). Curtis suggests that 'sculptures can be both concrete moments which catch an evolutionary process and points of departure in a way that paintings could never be' (1999 p. 112).

For the purpose of this dissertation it must again be noted that Rosso differs markedly from Rodin, Matisse and Brancusi. We have already seen how at odds the complex work is to Rodin's 'open oeuvre', and Curtis's accounts of Matisse and Brancusi make apparent a developmental *linearity* in their understanding of sculpture's engagement with processes of repetition and reproduction. Although Curtis doesn't state this difference, one can infer it from her account by contrasting her remark that Rosso 'tailored' his 'legacy', with Brancusi's desire 'to go further'. That is, as has been stressed throughout this study, Rosso used reproduction to intensify a closed group, looking backwards to form connections which revivify existing sculptures, whereas his contemporaries were concerned with opening out – Rosso with developing earlier works, the others with developing subsequent works *from* earlier works.[4]

This chapter will argue that Rosso's engagement with reproductive processes extended his art beyond 'Impressionism in sculpture'. Today this is a conventional interpretation. This chapter's more unusual aim is to show that this extension beyond Impressionism resulted from a return to the fertile ground from which Impressionism itself grew, specifically to the work of Édouard Manet. However, it will be shown that this return was inflected by

4 Within dedicated Rosso scholarship it should be noted that the most recent discussion of the complexity of relations across works in Rosso's oeuvre likewise assimilates Rosso's complexity to the logic of Rodin and Brancusi, and also Morandi (which I don't quite understand, unless it simply refers to doing the same thing over and over again, or refers perhaps (rather improbably) to Anna Morandi, the eighteenth-century anatomical wax modeller). We read in Paola Mola's 2007 *The Transient Form*: 'what we see unfold before our eyes is a process of work in series, whether of sculpture or photography. Beyond any putative confinement to the nineteenth century, Rosso worked far into the new century on an "*oeuvre* of the *oeuvre*," through a series of variations and repetitions that find parallels in the production of Brancusi, Morandi and Rodin' (2007 p. 14).

the philosophical and literary milieu of Paris c. 1900, indeed turned upside-down by this inflection. The potent ferment of turn-of-the-century culture has been a consistent topic of the preceding chapters; in Rosso's works it changes fundamentally the nature of pictorial complexity one finds in Manet's early masterpieces. Locating Rosso's works within a broader, more inclusive history of French pictorial art, not only is Rosso's use of reproductive processes understood anew, his works are also shown to be of parallel significance to contemporaneous developments in pictorial art in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Beholding *Ecce Puer*: Rosso beyond Impressionism

Through a Merleau-Pontian reading of Rosso's contemporaneous writings it became clear that Rosso's complex work *Ecce Puer* is concerned with a convoluted exchange of seer and seen within perception, which extends the instant of beholding into a rich weave of vision and memory. This was contextualised within Rosso's age through the writings of Proust. It is now possible to reconsider the complex work in relation to Rosso's artistic milieu. To this end one can profitably turn to one of recent art history's most significant and thorough-going analyses of perception, pertaining exactly to the Parisian climate from which Rosso's engagement with reproduction emerged: Michael Fried's account of beholding from the mid-eighteenth century to Manet's 'breakthrough' canvases of the 1860s, which spans *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and the Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (1980); *Courbet's Realism* (1990); and *Manet's Modernism* (1996).

It is as well first to consider the general merits of Fried's history of French painting in relation to Rosso and the complex work. Although focused explicitly on painting, and terminating with Manet, Fried's work offers a sustained and nuanced attempt to understand the context leading to the advent of Impressionism and, as such, to understanding the situation from which both Rosso's works and theories arose. Despite being idiosyncratic and by no means universally accepted, it is compelling in its thorough attention both to the art and contemporary criticism upon which it focuses, and is widely respected even by those who are not Fried's natural allies.[5]

The internal complexity of Fried's work is also suggestive and, as in Rosso's, stems from a single-minded dedication to an initially hard-

5 I.e. T. J. Clark, whose socio-political art history makes him a natural antagonist of Fried's, writes that Fried's works are: 'By far the most serious account we have of Modernism's extremity and changes of face' (1999 p. 176) and 'In general I think we have barely begun to discover the true strangeness and tension of nineteenth-century art, lurking behind its extroversion. Michael Fried's books have opened the way' (1999 p. 12).

to-comprehend intuition. A multi-part complexity is evident across the three books; on an obvious level, *Courbet's Realism* opens with a fifty page recapitulation of *Absorption and Theatricality* and concludes roughly plotting a path predicting *Manet's Modernism*; *Manet's Modernism* absorbs both prior volumes into itself, that it might become a work complete in itself, whilst clearly part of something greater. Rather more interestingly and unusually, *Manet's Modernism* opens by a radical return to Fried's work prior to *Absorption and Theatricality*. After a brief introduction one finds more than one-hundred pages devoted to an unedited reprint of Fried's essay 'Manet's Sources', which was first published in March 1969's edition of *Artforum*, constituting the entire magazine, which Fried now brings into the purview of the greater project. The relevance of this becomes clearer when one considers that it was also in *Artforum*, less than two years earlier, that Fried published 'Art and Objecthood', an essay which caused great controversy at the time and which is still very much a part of English-language discourse on art.[6]

In 'Art and Objecthood' Fried famously posited a phenomenologically grounded division of Modernism and Minimalism, with a clear, implicitly morally grounded advocacy of the former. I suspect one of the reasons I and others have returned to this essay is that there is something seemingly incomprehensible in it, an oddness beyond the remoteness of the artistic ferment of its time. This rests in part on its language, and especially on the term 'theatrical', which denoted Fried's fundamental objection to Minimalism. Returning to the essay with the knowledge of Fried's subsequent art history, this essay acquires new meaning and deeper historical significance. This is of interest in two ways. Firstly, Fried's project is aligned with Rosso's (and Husserl's, if read with David Woodruff Smith) in that certain fundamental insights are apparent early on and never refuted in subsequent works, yet only later seem conscious – certainly demonstrative – of their own full relevance. Here it should be noted that the change of medium – art criticism to art history, which for Fried are treated as discrete practices – gives Fried's project a weight one feels neither approach alone could maintain. Secondly, the return to 'Art and Objecthood' in light of the subsequent books on the advent of Modernism is of art historical note: there is good reason to imagine that Fried's narrative of French painting provides a tenable position from which to interpret Rosso's place in Modernism; given that Fried's art history shares themes with his criticism of contemporary art of the 1960s, it is not unreasonable to suppose there to be

6 That it is important to Fried's self-understanding is evident in that it lent its title to the volume of his collected criticism, in which it is reprinted (1998). Speaking anecdotally, in my first year as a Fine Art undergraduate at Chelsea it was recommended to me by two tutors. Later, on a fine art MA at the Slade, it was a set text for the initial series of seminars. Given that the majority of texts were not explicitly related to art, but fell more into the 'theory' range, Fried's essay still seems to occupy a singular place in how one considers a vital time in art's history.

threads which run from Fried's art history, through Rosso, to the 1960s. This is by no means a logical necessity, but it is a reasonable supposition. Rosso's relation to the 'sixties will be discussed at this chapter's conclusion.

Another interesting point of contact between Fried and Rosso (as read here) is Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty was the philosopher shared/split between Fried and the Minimalists, championed by both as offering a strong philosophical foundation informing their positions on contemporary art and perception. It is hoped that this study's discussion of phenomenology has made it clear that Merleau-Ponty's thought is not alien to Rosso's.[7]

Fried's histories of French painting are detailed studies which pay unremitting attention to a wealth of artworks and, with the exception of *Courbet's Realism*, contemporaneous criticism. Amounting to around 1,300 pages across three volumes, I cannot here do justice to the wealth of pictorial interpretation and textual reference which make Fried's account compelling (in retrospect). However, although reductive, a schematic account of the argument can be offered. Fried notes that 'Starting around the mid-1750s in France (and only there) the inescapableness of beholding, or say the primordial convention that paintings are made to be beheld, became deeply problematic for the enterprise of painting precisely to the extent that the latter took upon itself the task of striving to defeat what Diderot called theatre' (1990 p. 13); namely, 'an artificial construction whose too obvious designs on its audience made it repugnant to persons of taste' (1990 p. 7) – a literalness, an overtness. Fried discusses examples from Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin and Jean-Baptiste Greuze, which he reads as seeking to counter this Diderotian understanding of theatricality through 'absorptive strategies', exemplifying the position that 'the task of the painter might be described, and in Diderot's 'Essai sur la peinture' (1766) actually was described, as one of establishing the aloneness of the figures relative to the beholder' (1990 p. 7). That is to say, for the painting to convince the beholder it sought resolutely to deny the beholder's presence through an internal completeness sustained by engrossed subjects. Of fundamental importance within this is the acknowledgement that these strategies were historically determined – dialectical – their successful resolution provisional: what pictorially satisfies at one historical juncture is liable to become untenable later.

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7 One should note that Minimalist theories are typically related to Merleau-Ponty's early magnum opus *The Phenomenology of Perception* (1945); Fried's criticism from the 'sixties connects more closely with slightly later essays, specifically 'Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence' (1952); as a further complication, my reading of Rosso's writings is indebted to Merleau-Ponty's final thoughts in 'Eye and Mind' (1960) and *The Visible and the Invisible* (unfinished at Merleau-Ponty's death in 1961).

Such a historical shift is read in the unfolding of Jacques-Louis David's oeuvre, whose works from the 1780s emphasised Diderot's understanding of the 'dramatic' (as distinct from the theatrical), in which the *tableau*'s *dramatis personae* are wholly pre-occupied – absorbed – in the work's heightened internal drama, e.g., *The Oath of the Horatii* (fig. 60, 1784).

By the turn of the century Fried sees this approach becoming untenable in David's judgement; the dramatic had shifted in David's appreciation to the theatrical: 'by the time he [David] came to plan and paint *Leonidas* [fig. 61, 1812–14] he seems to have found himself compelled, throughout most of this teeming composition, to forego all but the most superficial representation of action and expression, and to concentrate instead on depicting, in the figure of the Spartan general, a strictly inward action whose avowed content couldn't have been less momentary or more final' (1990 p. 19).[8]

8 It must be remembered that Fried's understanding of pictorial effectiveness is thoroughly historical; his interest is the interpretation of David's work in his day. Although the pictorial qualities that Fried asserts of the works may not seem embodied in their pictorial truth today, his analyses of contemporary criticism suggests how they were understood in their moment.

Above: top, fig. 60; bottom, fig. 61. Facing, fig. 62.

Fried's story of absorption moves through Gericault and Delaroche to Courbet, in whom the problematic of painting and beholder reached a new crisis and complexity. Courbet's 'breakthrough' canvases of 1848–50, *An After Dinner at Ornans*, *The Stone Breakers* and *Burial at Ornans*, emphasise the proximity of the picture-plane with the space of the beholder, but in such a way that the role of the 'painter-beholder' – the specific mode of attention of the artist when in the act of making; in Courbet, the 'physical and psychical engagement in the activity of painting and, ultimately, his desire to transport himself as if bodily into the work taking shape before him' (1990 p. 152) – becomes a part of the experience of the non-painter-beholder. This reaches its most pronounced thematisation in *The Stonebreakers* and, later, *The Wheatsifters* (fig. 62). In these works Fried sees an allegorical translation of the act of painting into the subject and composition of the works: the stonebreaker on the right of the canvas, active, wielding the long, thin-handled tool of his trade; the youth on the left passive, bearing a circular container, for Fried thematising a palette. Fried's view is recapitulated in his analysis of the *Wheatsifters*: 'the seated, drowsy sifter plucking bits of chaff from a dish … her relative passivity, subordinate status, and place in the composition make her a figure for the painter-beholder's left hand holding his palette in distinction to the kneeling sifter understood now as representing specifically the painter-beholder's right hand wielding a brush or knife' (1990 p. 152–5).

Fried's implications for considering *Ecce Puer*'s modelling

At this juncture in Fried's narrative it is necessary to digress by returning to Harry Cooper's essay 'Ecce Rosso!', the second half of which, as noted above, engaged with *Ecce Puer* from a late-Merleau-Pontian perspective. The first half of the essay develops a Friedian account of Rosso's oeuvre, stemming from reflection upon Rosso's early *Aetas Aurea* (fig. 63). Drawing explicitly from Fried's account of 'realism' in Courbet, Cooper reads the mother's gesture with her right hand as both a depiction of a maternal caress and as an allegorising of the act of the maker, in which the subject of mother – life-giver, creator, etc. – is aligned with modelling. In itself this is a germane if obvious (indeed, in comparison with Fried, compellingly direct) suggestion. Cooper then asserts that, as Fried reads the *Wheatsifters* as containing 'what might be called corporeal metaphors for all three primary components that went into its making: pigment, canvas and stretcher' (Fried 1990 pp. 152–3), so *Aetas Aurea*'s ambiguous central passage between mother and child is 'neither abstract nor figurative but what might be called self-figural; neither pure lump nor depicted bump (of a breast, for example) but a depiction of sculptural material itself … This is neither relief sculpture nor traditional illusionism nor Modernist opacity: it is the rhetoric of sculpting as becoming' (Cooper 2003 p. 6).[9]

Cooper's suggestions regarding *Aetas Aurea* are, to some extent, compelling. He develops them into a broader Friedian account of absorption across Rosso's oeuvre, from early works such as *Aetas Aurea* through to the *Grande rieuse* (fig. 64). In this work Cooper understands Rosso to be responding to the literalness of absorption in his previous works (the pictorial effectiveness of which, as we

9 I think the section to which Cooper refers is what I take to be an exquisite modelling of the child's forearm and bent hand, which (in the d'Orsay bronze, not so clearly in the Milan wax) emerges from initially inchoate matter with dazzling clarity.

Above: fig. 63. Facing, fig. 64.

saw in Fried's account of David, is historically labile) through a work explicitly 'meant for our beholding' (2003 p. 13). For Cooper, this is a much simplified analogue of the dialectic of absorption and facingness which underscores Fried's account of Manet's Modernism, in which the historical dialogue of absorptive strategies reach a head in an 'acknowledgement of beholding as the inescapable fate of painting', to which Manet responded with 'an attempt to make every portion of the picture surface face the beholder as never before' (Fried 1996 pp. 286–7). Discussing those works directly following *Grande rieuse*, Cooper suggests that:

> The faces in these sets of work have two things in common: they give the impression, to one extent or another, of being veiled, although Rosso dared to make this explicit (as if fearing to trigger too literal a reading of the rest) only in *Impression de boulevard: La femme a la violette*; and none of them faces the viewer with anything like the directness of *Grande rieuse*. It is as if Rosso had a violent reaction against what he had dared to do in that work, and it continued to bother him for the rest of that decade. (2003 p. 14)

Understandably, this leads Cooper to outline the singular and definitive importance of *Ecce Puer*, which 'represents a return to the ambition of a large iconic frontal bust represented by *Grande rieuse*' (2003 p. 15), whilst complicating the frontality of the look through the allusion to veiling.

Cooper does not bring to bear the full import of Fried's analyses (although his greater directness and brevity has its merits). The most serious objection is that Cooper makes Rosso rehearse the pictorial history of the French nineteenth century leading up to Impressionism, as though Rosso's oeuvre really were an attempt to do in sculpture what had previously been accomplished in painting. In typical readings of Rosso this would already be problematic. In relation to the thrust of this study, the obvious objection to such a view is that it doesn't take account of the complex work; or, for that matter, the course of modern sculpture which Curtis charts; or, indeed, the emphasis on production and reproduction which is the purported emphasis of *Second Impressions*, the book which Cooper's essay opens. That is: how does the linearity of Cooper's reading of Rosso's *modelling* – his engagement with absorption, followed by direct facingness, followed by indirectness, followed by synthesis in *Ecce Puer* – stand up against the back-and-forth re-engagement with works, which was already a substantial focus of Rosso's practice? At the same time as moving away from absorptive clarity in his modelling, in his *casting* Rosso was still unproblematically giving public prominence to prior works through their continuation in new, nuanced forms. This is not entirely to dismiss Cooper's argument, or the theory of modelling which his essay adumbrates, but to point to a dilemma in approaching Rosso: that there is potentially a historical development across his works' modelling which sits uneasily with his project of artistic and technical introspection, his development of complex works. It will become apparent that *Ecce Puer* offers a resolution of this, for in the modelling the temporally complex life-to-come is already thematised.

Tableau and *morceau*, part and whole

Cooper is correct in his assertion that the problematic nature of facingness is relevant to understanding *Ecce Puer* and as such demands fuller consideration. Yet Cooper's engagement with Manet and facingness in his interpretation of *Grande rieuse* is cursory in its engagement with *Courbet's Realism*, and does no justice to the complexity of facingness in Manet's works as detailed in *Manet's Modernism*. For Fried the emphasis on facingness in the discourse of painting and beholder doesn't develop as a direct response to a now-perceived over-literalness of absorptive strategies; such a response would be ready-made within painting of this era as the norm of portraiture. Rather, Fried's concern is principally with facingness in multi-figure compositions: it was 'facing compositions involving more than a single figure [that] were disturbing to contemporary audiences because they could not easily be reconciled with the prevailing desire for absorptive closure' (1996 p. 282). Manet's engagement with facingness is part of a broader dynamic at play in pictorial composition,

focusing around the notion of the *tableau* – a 'topic that obsessed and baffled Manet's generation … the term *tableau* denoted the achievement of a sufficiently high degree of compositional and coloristic unity … to produce a powerful and instantaneous effect of formal and expressive *closure*' (1996 p. 267). The *tableau* was the subject of correspondence between Manet and what Fried terms the 'generation of 1863' (Henri Fantin-Latour, James Abbott McNeill Whistler and Alphonse Legros); and formed a vital, contended term in contemporary criticism.

Fried finds in the generation of artists developing out of Courbet a working-through of the problem of a formally satisfying compositional unity in which the closure typically associated with absorptive compositions was combined with a facingness typically associated with portraiture. As Fried notes in relation to Fantin-Latour's *Homage to Delacroix*: 'the valorisation of excess in the interests of intensity and strikingness that took place in 1860s went a long way to blurring the distinction between portrait and *tableau*, or rather to establishing a new sense of the *tableau* as being in crucial respects portraitlike. Conversely, there is every likelihood that Fantin in the *Homage to Delacroix* imagined himself to be working toward a new conception of the *tableau* in which facingness rather than closure would be the operative principle' (1996 pp. 269–70). Within the context of this dissertation it is important to make explicit that the idea of working 'toward a new conception of the *tableau*', which reaches its most complex pictorial form in Manet's breakthrough canvases of the 1860s, *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe* (fig. 65, 1862–3) and *Olympia* (1863) was also a question of working towards a new understanding of the *morceau*. That is, *a question of establishing a new relationship of part to whole*.

Fried outlines a history of the *tableau* and the *morceau* paralleling his history of French painting from Diderot, through Courbet, to its 'new conception' in Manet's era. He places considerable emphasis on how contemporary critics evaluated the difference between Courbet and Delacroix, citing, amongst many examples, Zacharie Astruc's observations in *Le Salon intime*:

> Courbet does not bring to the *ordonnance* of his works as much care as one would like … In contrast to Delacroix, who only sees an ensemble resonating with the idea, he prefers the particular *morceau* that keeps it at a distance. From the *morceau* we move toward the ensemble, the *tableau*: hence the errors and contradictions of harmony. He doesn't concern himself enough in advance with the disposition of the *tableau*. (in Fried 1996 p. 268)

In Astruc's reading, which, Fried demonstrates, was in no way unusual for the time, Courbet's interest is in assembling parts without concern for the

form underlying the whole. Manet's generation attempted to couple the long-standing influence of Courbet's Realism with their profound respect for Delacroix's compositional harmony (of which Fantin's *Homage* is the clearest embodiment), in 'an aspiration to go beyond Courbet in the direction of pictorial unity, which is to say the pursuit of the *tableau*' (Fried 1996 p. 269). This couldn't be achieved by the adoption of conventional, absorptive compositional devices; the historical dynamic of spectatorship demanded something else – a new conception of *tableau* arrived at through a complication of the *morceau*. As Astruc suggestively wrote later, in his 'Salon of 1867': 'Abandon the detail; enlarge the *morceau* to become the *oeuvre*' (in Fried 1996 p. 279). This was the dilemma of the most advanced painting, a dilemma for which there could be no programmatic solution, and which the four artists in Fried's account undertook through related but independently evolving means. Manet is the central focus of Fried's study and the following discussion of *tableau* and *morceau* will attend specifically to Fried's reading of *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe* (fig. 65), the work to which Fried – and Cooper – devotes deepest scrutiny, and which is the most characteristic and – with *Olympia* – most influential work discussed.

The most important point to be stressed when considering *Déjeuner*'s 'radical facingness' is its temporality which, in Fried's reading, is riven with complexity. It should be remembered that the idea of an artwork employing a complex temporal address is something inherent in understanding the complex work, and is at odds with the notions of Impressionism within which Rosso's works are too often subsumed. Where *Déjeuner* does relate to theories of perception which became associated with Impressionism is its foregrounding of *instantaneousness*. In the Diderotian tradition leading into early David instantaneousness was a necessary condition of convincing dramatic *tableaux*.

Above: fig. 65.

The *tableau* should depict a moment in which there is an 'at-onceness' in which is apprehensible a moment intelligible within a continuum – i.e. that it not appear posed/theatricalised. For Fried, Manet's concern with instantaneousness led him to a very different understanding of visual instantaneity; 'led him to depict not a moment in an action but rather to seek to evoke what came to be understood as the *instantaneousness of seeing, of visual perception itself*' (1996 p. 296). This is achieved through the formal assertion and simultaneous denial of a comprehensible narrative, through 'blatantly violating the demand for narrative and dramatic intelligibility' (1996 p. 296) in the non-reciprocity of gazes within *Déjeuner*'s central group, the jarring conjunction of clothed men and a naked woman, etc. This may seem remote from *Ecce Puer*, given that *Ecce Puer*, like *Grande rieuse*, is a single figure typically understood as facing the viewer. This becomes less evident in the complex work, which will be discussed later. For now, reflections limited to the model are in order. *Ecce Puer* is very much a conscious thematisation of 'the instantaneousness of seeing, of visual perception itself' in a way *Grande rieuse* is not. *Ecce Puer* both depicts and allegorises the instant of vision, and it is telling to note that the antecedent to *Déjeuner* which Fried posits as achieving this instantaneousness of vision is the *Street Singer* (fig. 66), in which Victorine Meurent (*Déjeuner*'s model) is depicted emerging from a café: 'the green café doors, which a moment earlier presumably swung outward as she stepped across the threshold, are shown swinging back … the momentariness yet containedness of her actions is a telescoping of time, an exploding into view, that was perhaps meant to capture something of the clamorous dark-into-light excitement of Rembrandt's *Nightwatch*' (1996 p. 292). Rembrandt was one of the artists of whom Rosso thought most highly and Fried's description of *Street Singer* admirably highlights *Ecce Puer*'s fleeting, yet still and somehow sufficient, character. More telling, Fried also compares *Street Singer* with Raphael's *Sistine Madonna* in a manner which draws direct connections to *Ecce Puer*:

> the presentational mode of *Street Singer* might be characterised as *revelation* – not just of the woman but also of the painting – and indeed I am tempted to compare Manet's canvas with Raphael's *Sistine Madonna*, in which the Virgin and Child in glory between Saints Sixtus and Barbara appear to have just been revealed to the viewer (they also appear to be moving toward him) by the immediately previous drawing of a curtain, and the iconographic meaning of which is precisely revelation, *revelatio*'. (1996 p. 292)[10]

10 Raphael is important in Fried's reading of *Déjeuner*, stemming from Fried's contention, in 'Manet's Sources', that the composition of the main figure group is a direct quotation of Marcantonio Raimondi's etching after a Raphael drawing, *The Judgement of Paris*.

The account of instantaneousness so far has revolved around a complication of the *closure* expected of a *tableau*, without mention of the *morceau*. Fried highlights a sweeping array of contemporary critics who praised Manet's painterly ability, made evident in his rendering of *morceau*, whilst lamenting with evident frustration his works' ultimate refusal of a coherent, closed *tableau*. As one critic put it, 'in the canvas *Christ Mocked*, there are *morceaux*, mainly the head of the soldier at the right, that are treated in an extremely remarkable manner. Also in *Olympia*, where the chest, the hands, in a word all the completed *morceaux*, could serve as a lesson' (cited in Fried 1996 p. 307). In Fried's reading of *Déjeuner*, *morceaux* are understood to 'emblematise' disparate temporalities; to imbricate stillness and speed within the *tableau*, specifically through articulating the distinction between the speed of *seeing* and speed of *rendering*. Fried's most obvious contrast in this respect is of the detailed rendering of the airborne bullfinch in the canvas's upper centre with the rapidly executed frog at the lower left. In the former, the speed of seeing is emphasised through depicting a necessarily fleeting instant with sparkling, studied, vitality; in the latter, the loosely brushed frog reads as an index of the deft brushstrokes from which it is formed, its speed of facture.

The modelling of *Ecce Puer* is not entirely remote from this exchange of temporal registers. Perhaps most apparent in the Edinburgh instance (ep. d), although manifest in different ways across all sculptures, with an uncanny precision the sculpting of Alfred William's mouth ('his lips parted in amazement' – perhaps the work's most obvious focal-point) exquisitely summons shadow. Although achieved across the *Ecce Puer*s more broadly, this is augmented in the Edinburgh sculpture by the layer of light-brown varnish coating the plaster, which is deeper when over a cleft than a relief, thus reinforcing the effects of shadow. There is in it a smoothness, a softness indeed, and something akin to what Benjamin referred to in an early essay as the 'mark'– bruises, blushes, stigmata, *the photograph*, etc. – non-sculptural marks emerging from their support and, as such, somehow obviating the question of their manual facture.[11] The features glow beneath the face's less-pronounced but still-evident sculptural facture. This is one of the most remarkable things about *Ecce Puer*: in the mouth and nose there is a magical overlapping of depiction and matter. It is wholly remote from Cooper's 'self-figural', or – though somewhat closer – from notions of 'seeing as' and 'seeing-in'. The depicted mouth occupies a perceptually distinct plane from the material,

11 In 1917's 'Painting, or Signs and Marks' a youthful Benjamin contrasts the 'sign' of inscription or marking a surface (demarcating – the sign of Cain), with the 'mark': 'the first basic difference is that the sign is printed on something, whereas the mark emerges from it … the mark appears principally on living beings (Christ's stigmata, blushes, perhaps leprosy and birthmarks) … the mark is so often linked to guilt (blushing) or innocence (Christ's stigmata)' (1996 p. 84). This essay is important in Howard Caygill's development of a Kantian and surprisingly visual Benjamin, in *Walter Benjamin: The Colour of Experience* (1998).

Facing: fig. 66.

which, in its slight impasto, remains obstinately present: opaque yet opening onto an inner stratum. This is in marked contrast to the vertical grooves and gouges which extend down the length of the bust's proper-left-hand side, their weight running downwards and terminating almost in a pool of matter, with a rawness only outdone by the gnarled, knotted furrows of the work's reverse, which forcibly asserts matter over depiction. Such a contrast of overt delicacy and manual abandon was rare for Rosso. Indeed, although both approaches are evident within his oeuvre, their stark combination in a single work is unexampled. Looking to the works of the 1890s, the most chronologically proximate busts (though these still remote), *Bambino alle cucine economiche*, *Femme a la voilette*, *Yvette Guilbert* and *Madame Noblet* share an all-over roughness; *Bambino malato* and *Madame X* a uniform, amniotic smoothness.

However, returning to Fried's account, the most important relationship of speed and stillness in what one might understand as the relationship of *morceaux* to *tableau* is not evident in *Ecce Puer*'s modelling, but in the complex work the model was destined to become.

Fried's implications for considering the complex work *Ecce Puer*

The points of convergence between Fried's interpretation of *Déjeuner* and the characteristics of Rosso's modelling of *Ecce Puer* suggest that Cooper may have been intuitively correct in connecting Rosso and Manet, yet misguided in the over-simplified location of that connection. The foregoing discussion highlights the points where Rosso's modelling of *Ecce Puer* coincides with Fried's reading of *Déjeuner*, most importantly: a) the instantaneousness of vision, in both instances connected to revelation; b) the complication of a direct, portraitlike mode of address through the temporally discrete, mutually interpreting modes of *morceau*, which yet are integrated within the *tableau*. It is crucial to stress that in Manet's work the first point is indivisible from the second. It is this which established his work as something entirely different from Impressionism, which a focus on the first might suggest. On this Fried is also very clear: 'the Impressionists' bracketing of the issue of the *tableau* – at least up to a point – was a crucial factor in the radical simplification of the enterprise of painting that they brought about. Something more tortuous and ambiguous took place in the 1860s' (1996 p. 279). In later discussion of the troubles of contemporary critics confronted with Manet's 'denial of closure on the plane of facture' Fried adds: 'it would take the Impressionists and subsequent developments to *make* them effective, as if by deferred action – in French, *après-coup* – and at the cost of a massive simplification of Manet's achievement' (1996 p. 307).

It makes sense that a generation of artists over whom Impressionism's shadow loomed large, and from which they had derived much, should return

Facing: ep. d.

to a complexity of artistic engagement with issues of composition which Impressionism had occluded. Such a need is adumbrated by Julius Meier-Graefe, the influential critic who visited Rosso's studio around the turn of the century, and whose thoughts in 1904's *Modern Art* were clearly influential upon Rosso. In the chapter 'Impressionism in Sculpture', which bears Rosso's 'Rien n'est materiel dans l'espace' at its head, Meier-Graefe writes: 'We have seen how in painting Impressionism has only contributed great and important fragments to art. The same thing has happened in sculpture; but the results, which in painting have been glorified by the glamour of splendid new gifts, are more manifestly pernicious here' (1908 p. 31).

Clearly a concern with part and whole was pressing for this generation, and the effects of Impressionism, its legacy, viewed as problematic. Yet successful confrontation with this could not be achieved by a direct response – let alone direct return – to Manet's strategies, although Meier-Graefe fascinatingly notes: '[Rosso's] art could have only developed in Manet's age, but it is perfectly independent. The famous phrase about an art all one's own finds its complete application only in him' (1908 p. 23). Impressionism had changed the terms of art. Indivisible from this, the world had changed, and how one might consider the instantaneousness of perception had necessarily changed with it, not least through the contemporaneous advent of mass-distributed photographs. Rodin, Matisse and Brancusi share a common interest in extending the boundaries of a work, complicating the relations between apparently distinct sculptural entities. Rosso shares this basic interest, yet his approach is fundamentally at odds with their practices in marking-out a complex two-tiered relationship within a 'work', rather than establishing a complex network of relations or works across an oeuvre. Rosso's works share Manet's commitment to establishing a new manner of unifying parts within a convincing whole, or wholes into greater wholes. In contrast to this, in Rodin we find something more like a de-forming of the sculptural work, across his 'inventory of forms and images'. Unlike Rodin's oeuvre, Rosso's development of complex works around the turn of the century signals a return to working-through the complex relationship of the instantaneity of vision and *morceau–tableau*, part and whole.

We shall see that Rosso's complex works are a specifically *sculptural* response to the course of art after Impressionism; in this they extend well beyond the single work, Impressionist-inspired theories of art which he expounded in nearly unchanged form until death, upon superficial readings of which much theorising of Rosso's work has been grounded. This theorising has reduced readings of Rosso's works to a concern with a specifically *pictorial* address. Clearly Rosso is deeply engaged with the pictorial, but to limit his project to those terms is highly reductive. This study has urged that Rosso's practice was one intimately concerned with sculpture. This is evident, firstly,

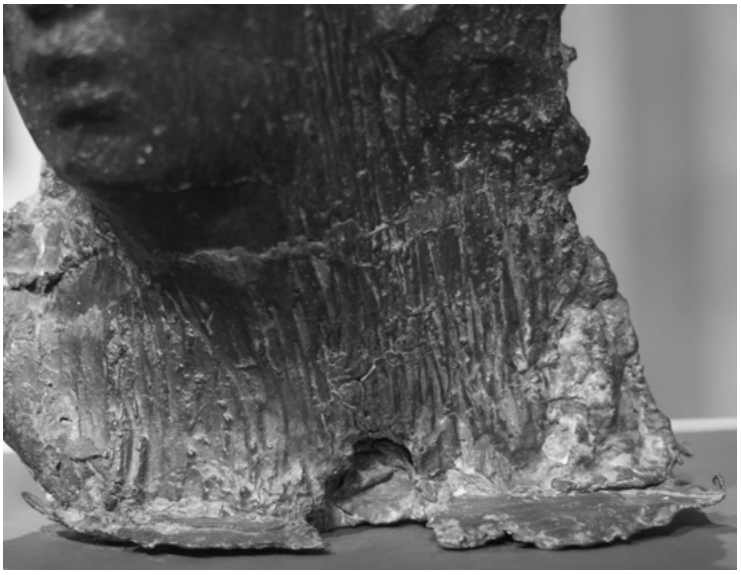
in facture; in the emphasis Rosso placed on reconsidering materials and processes which were inherently freighted with classically sculptural associations – plaster, wax, bronze. Allied with this is a fascination with the perceptual and intellectual realm specific to reproduction – a history which begins with casting, millennia back, yet which had assumed new and greater significance with the rise of photography. It is this engagement with reproduction which materially allowed, and conceptually fostered, the development of complex works. It should not be surprising that something specifically sculptural arises from this, which, in *Ecce Puer*, results in a sophisticated weave of both pictorial and sculptural address.

It has been demonstrated that there are subtle affinities between characteristics of *Ecce Puer*'s model and the elements of *Déjeuner* from which Fried expounds Manet's contribution to Modernism: facingness; a complex temporality resulting from facture; and a profoundly new engagement with the relationship obtaining between *morceau* and *tableau*. The importance of *Ecce Puer* in relation to art after Impressionism is in its exemplification of the complex work. It is exemplary not simply by being one – most of Rosso's works are complex – but because it is the only work modelled after the fully realised shift away from modelling in Rosso's practice, incorporating into the model an awareness of its future instances, including photographic and mass reproduced. Given that the model allegorises this complexity, it is not surprising that the *model*'s points of contact with Fried's reading of Manet should find amplification within the complex work. It is now possible to reconsider *Déjeuner*'s facingness, facture and *morceau/tableau* relations as they resonate with the complex work *Ecce Puer*.

In *Ecce Puer*'s facingness there is none of the overt multi-figure complexity of *Déjeuner*. There is, however, something more complicated than in *Grande rieuse*. We have seen that Fried's comments on Manet's *Street Singer* are suggestively applicable to *Ecce Puer*: a 'momentariness yet containedness of actions' as a 'telescoping of time, an exploding into view'. Something remote from *Grand rieuse*'s *blatant* presence. But *Ecce Puer* doesn't explode into view. The photographs make this most clear. They contain movement, in the sense that the figure doesn't appear static, yet the movement is indeterminate or self-contradicting. Returning to the photographic pairing in which Rosso contrasts photographs of *Ecce Puer* facing different directions (fig. 17), that on the right appears solid and either to be assertively moving forward and downwards, or timidly withdrawing. The photograph on the left is apparitional; either somewhat ecstatically emerging from, or sinking back into the darkness – almost a looking backwards whilst conjuring-forth memories. These qualities are latent in the model, of course, but brought to life most clearly through the photographic parts of the complex work. And they establish a somewhat jarring discontinuity of facingness, especially in the odd juxtaposition. There is an

acknowledgement, a rational awareness of self-identity between them, yet they articulate affective and associative registers set starkly at odds. Although more demonstrative in the paired photograph, this effect is present and, I believe, more potent when implicit throughout the work.

The complexity of facingness in *Ecce Puer* highlights the importance of facture and material, which becomes most apparent in the photographic elements. If we return to temporality in relation to *Ecce Puer*'s sculptural facture we recall that Rosso achieves a remarkable instability between the explicitly material and the apparitional, the depicted. Somehow this occurs both in distinct areas of the model, and, in the mouth, as appreciably discrete planes of the same section. Understandably, in the complex work *Ecce Puer* this temporal complexity is greatly increased. Take for instance the Venetian bronze (ep. b). The overflow of bronze at the sculpture's base asserts something resolutely material. It resembles Serra's thrown lead in *Casting* (1969) or Lynda Benglis's contemporaneous works, e.g. *Quartered Meteor* (1969) and, like those works, emphasises the work's facture: the fluidity of the metal, its *pouredness*.



In Serra this is understood as all those things which inhere in *Ecce Puer* – the body, the movement, the heat – with a post-minimal focus on gravity and formlessness: material doing its thing, *taking its time*. This is also the case in Rosso, but it throws into relief the *form* of the sculpture's face, its *filledness*: it makes patent that in an important respect form – something instant or, perhaps better, atemporal – is prior to matter. This is a literal truth of the casting process (in terms of the matter present in the sculpture, not in terms of the process of making it), in that wax is melted-out to produce a cavity which is then filled by the bronze. In the sculpture's face this instantaneousness contrasts with the base's evident process-dependent accretion of material. Something similar is present in the Edinburgh plaster (ep. d), yet the complexity is lost in

Above: ep. b.

the Barzio plaster (ep. e), the base of which has been cleanly shorn, imparting to the sculpture an entirely different relation to the question of form, an all-over instantaneousness. The difference is heightened by the sculpture's reflectiveness, which makes the face seem more unsure – less a bearer of form than something interstitial, fleetingly opening outwards to its environment.

To turn to temporality within the photograph. In the pairing (fig. 17), that on the left presents a flattened image, as though a photograph of a very low relief. The form emerging from shadows loses its dimensionality through the shadow entirely submerging its proper-right cheek, asserting itself as if it were the ground of a bas-relief. In fact, it almost wants to curve towards one at the edge of the image. In contrast, the right-hand photograph manifests volume, sculptural weight. The pronounced proper-left cheekbone – entirely absent in the left image – draws the whole face into a sphere, whereas the left-image flattens out onto the photo-plane, much like the right's neck and upper torso. This gives the work a feeling of tangibility which is both instantly whole yet wishing to be dwelt upon.

If each instance of *Ecce Puer* is a compellingly different *morceau*, their unity as the complex work *Ecce Puer* is a *tableau* very different from that which Fried finds in Manet. It is one essentially temporal, rather than spatial. In considering temporality and spatiality in relation to *Ecce Puer* it is instructive to return to Rosso's musical analogy of a Bach prelude and *Ecce Puer*. Music implies temporality, rather than all-at-onceness. Yet it also implies a coalescing of temporal progression into moments in which flow crystallises into spatial form. As distinguished twentieth-century music historian and aesthetician Carl Dahlhaus put it:

> Rigorously to deny music all 'objectivity of its own' would be erroneous too. Like a work of plastic art, music is also an esthetic [*sic*] object, a focus of esthetic contemplation. However, its objectivity is displayed not so much immediately as indirectly: not in the moment when it is sounding, but only if a listener, at the end of a movement or section, reverts to what has passed and recalls it into his present experiences as a closed whole. At this point music assumes a quasi-spatial form (Gestalt). What has been heard solidifies into something out there, an 'objectivity existing on its own.' And nothing would be farther from the truth than to see in the tendency to spatialization a distortion of music's nature. Insofar as music is form, it attains its real existence, paradoxically expressed, in the very moment when it is past. (1982 pp. 11–12)[12]

12 Dahlhaus's sentiments echo those in Proust, when Swann first isolates the famous 'little phrase' in Vinteuil's sonata: 'hardly had the delicious sensation, which Swann had experienced, died away, before his memory had furnished him with an immediate transcript … He was able

Clearly this doesn't exactly parallel the complex work, yet, approaching from the opposite extreme, it comes closer than an Impressionist theory of instantaneity. It is enlightening in attending to the presence of a greater objectivity than apprehensible in the moment of perception – an 'objectivity existing on its own'. That is, although it is experientially evident that recall and recognition prefigure music's affectiveness whilst one is listening – either through nuanced development and recapitulation, or through exact repetition within an altered context – this is still primarily of a temporal nature (it is also fundamental to understanding *Ecce Puer*). Dahlhaus points to a more difficult to theorise 'objectivity' or 'object without objectivity'; one which resonates with *Ecce Puer*'s ability to point to form at a higher conceptual order, something allied with the model from which the elements were derived, yet separate from it. If, as Rosso is reported to have claimed, art is 'all music', then the art Rosso made is best explicated by Dahlhaus's interpretation of music. The complex work is not simply an Impressionism, an ephemeral flow, but also a synthesis into a quasi-objectivity, an objectivity which stands outside the fixity of classical sculptural aesthetics.

Given Rosso's intellectual and artistic climate, music was possibly an easier point of analogy than sculpture for understanding his work's temporal address. Yet it is equally from sculpture that the temporal complexity of *Ecce Puer* draws and upon which it builds. Rosso attempts to achieve a sculptural address without reducing the ineffable intertwining of subject and object which, for Rosso and Merleau-Ponty, constituted genuine, human, perception. We have seen Rosso's abhorrence of a sculpture one could walk around: 'We should no longer make any of those things that nobody has ever seen, those statues made for walking around! It is a cold, objective thing' (p. 192 [1925]). This is Rosso's way of saying that there is something inherently theatrical in sculpture as object: to walk around it is explicitly to acknowledge its posedness, its objectness. To treat it in this way is to deny the space – the *air* – which separates whilst uniting beholder and beheld, reducing the work to an object possessable, a possession reinforced through 'touch'. The complex work allows the intrinsically sculptural, rather than pictorial, to be returned to that which, coming out of Impressionism, was originally conceived as pictorial. It allows a building-up of temporally distinct, unfolding instances and impressions into an enriched whole. This succession of instances does not result from the physical object apprehended by literal traversal, but from the conjured memories and affective associations of previous, related viewings; of similar, intrinsically connected yet tellingly distinct impressions.

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to picture to himself its extent, its symmetrical arrangement, its notation, the strength of its expression; he had before him the definite object which was no longer pure music, but rather design, architecture, thought' (1929b pp. 288–9).

This construction of a greater whole from an accumulation of memories crystallising in a perceptual instant aligns Rosso's project with something entirely at odds with a directly photography-inspired reading of Rosso. It places his work centrally within its cultural time as something into which was incorporated the affective *experience* of the photograph that one finds in Proust, rather than the metaphorical potential of the apparatus or technology as the record of a past instant. The overlapping and confusion of images and memories become the fertile ground of apparition and revelation.

Through the complex work Rosso makes *sculpture* deny its posed or theatricalised duration without asking it to deny itself; without becoming purely pictorial. The sculptural quality is removed from the *morceau* and resituated at the level of *tableau*; of sculptural, temporal *tableau*. If one is to view Rosso's project as a response to Impressionism, it is not as an attempt to do Impressionism in sculpture, but the growing realisation that sculpture offered a way forward for Impressionism, through re-affirming the sculptural from the pictorial. The prolongation of the artwork through the movement from the individual piece into the complex work initiated a new conception of the *tableau* in an overtly temporal rather than spatial register. This returned art to the *compositional* complexity of Manet. It should be remembered that the loss of this complexity in Impressionism was noted ambivalently by Rosso's contemporary Meier-Graefe. For Rosso this complexity was pursued on fundamentally altered terrain; yet this ground was in accord with the radical literary and philosophical ideas of his age.

'A synthesis situated in the passage of time' – the complex work's contemporaries

This study has focused on Rosso's relationship to those contemporaries with whom he is compared in scholarship – Rodin primarily, but also Brancusi, Matisse's sculptures, etc. As a natural corollary of presenting a considerably different analysis of the problems with which Rosso was engaged – the development of his works into complex works – this study prompts reconsideration of Rosso's connections to other artists of his time. Given their facture and formal appearance, it is understandable that Rosso's works have typically been considered in relation to contemporaneous sculptural enterprises. However, although arguing for Rosso's rootedness in a specifically sculptural questioning, the above discussion of Manet places Rosso suggestively within a broader network of artists who were working through the legacy of Impressionism, whilst coming to terms with a richer history of art, a history in which Manet's works assume signal importance. Though it may seem an improbable parallel, if we briefly recap the points raised earlier in this chapter it is hard not to consider *Ecce Puer* drawing connections to developments in painting of the first decade of the twentieth century.

Rosso's writings urge that his works be approached from a single position. Subsequent commentators have argued that this is exemplified in Rosso's photographs; indeed, Lista, Moure and Bacci suggest that Rosso's works are revolutionary because they compel a single point of view. To suggest that Rosso is a radical artist because, at the start of the twentieth century, he urged a single-point perspective on the world, is perverse; if reductive accounts of Impressionism can plausibly suggest that it was influenced by, or otherwise paralleled, a simplistic physics of light and its registration on the retina, post-Impressionism marked a clear assault on the primacy of perspectival art. To suggest that he is a radical *sculptor* because of this is more plausible, but ignores those artists he esteemed as *his* tradition (Velasquez, Turner, Constable, Manet,

Cézanne). More importantly, it unjustly reduces the scope and significance of his work – not least given his constant if problematic belief in the indivisibility of the arts – and ignores the fact that contemporaries already saw classical sculpture as, for better or worse, asserting a 'correct' position for the viewer (e.g. Wölfflin 2013 p. 53; Adolf Hildebrand 1907 p. 17). Contrary to the received wisdom that Rosso's photographs impose interpretive strictures on the sculptures, analysis suggests that they assert the work's heterogeneous possibilities: there is variation in both camera angle and, within photographs taken from similar angles (Rosso's pairing discussed above offering a lucid exemplar), great variation in the work's address – its mood, sex, age, etc. *If* a lens-based theory of vision is applicable to Rosso, it is in a nuanced way and in dialogue with other elements; the single instance is enwrought with the memory of others – the single point riven with former encounters, all tellingly different.

In discussing the complex work the temporal unfolding and coalescing of a work became paramount: the work becomes 'a synthesis situated in the passage of time' (Roger Allard, quoted in Kern 2003 p. 22). This suggestive phase, written in 1910, is poet and critic Roger Allard's, and refers to the Cubism of Jean Metzinger. As Stephen Kern notes, such views were by no means unexampled in early theorising of Cubism: indeed Metzinger himself suggested that the Cubists 'have allowed themselves to move round the object, in order to give a concrete representation of it, made up of several successive aspects. Formerly a picture took possession of space, now it reigns also in time' (quoted in Kern 2003 p. 22). Although visually there may be no clear reason to compare *Ecce Puer* and Cubism, the issues which the complex work raises demands that their connections be considered.[13] T. J. Clark notes that the stimulus which led to the advent of Cubism was Picasso's concern 'above all to see if some other model of representation might be salvaged from the wreck of the nineteenth century – I mean from the masters whose versions of mimesis still mattered in Picasso's view: the early Manet, for example, the later

13 Although there are no clear visual parallels between Rosso's sculptures and Cubism, Picasso's busts of 1906 bear some resemblance to Rosso's sculptures. Indeed, in *Modern Sculpture: Origins and Evolution*, Jean Selz claims that Rosso's oeuvre 'had no direct influence on other artists … Picasso's earliest busts are the only sculptures related to Rosso's' (1963 p. 125). Paola Mola also advances connections between Cubism and Rosso, specifically Rosso's use of glass cases and photography. Her suggestions lack clear grounding in any analysis of works; she suggests that 'His images are almost hallucination [*sic*] that are either translated by hand directly into wax [*sic*] or deferred by means of cast to the sensible film. These are spaces described by super-impositions and collages in which the inside and outside exist simultaneously, the above and the below appear together' (2007 pp. 24–5). These 'spaces' in the photographs Mola sees as 'of some years before and alternatives to Cubism' (2007 p. 38). These views echo those in her earlier *Trasferimenti* (2006 p. 76). Whether or not the photographs really echo the spaces of Cubism, her position is remote from that advanced here; that is, her concern is a visual relationship within a given (unspecified) Rosso work, rather than a logic operating across them.

Puvis, the *Odalisques* of Ingres, Courbet at his most truculently materialist, all stages of Cézanne' (1999 pp. 191–3). The background interests from which both projects stem are akin: what is the role of representation after post-Impressionism? How does one rise to the challenge of Manet's works of the 1860s? How does one consider one's enterprise in relation to Cézanne (as Rosso did explicitly through choosing to exhibit in the same room as Cézanne in 1904's Salon d'Automne and, photographically, making much of this juxtaposition)?

What Cubism sought and achieved, and when it occurred, is too contested to allow a working definition of what Cubism is.[14] However, the implication that Cubism involves the co-presence of different perspectival views of an object within a formal scheme, offered to the viewer in a single artefact, has been a repeated theme in the literature. We have seen it said of and by Metzinger. Robert Rosenblum suggests that 'in place of earlier perspective systems that determined the precise locations of discrete objects in illusory depth, Cubism offered an unstable structure of dismembered planes in indeterminate spatial positions' (1976 p. 13). Speaking of Picasso's works from 1909, Clark sums up conventional interpretations of a work as allowing: 'a multiplication or unfixing of a point of view, a kind of moving of the eye round or behind the side of a solid, so as to take in what the observer knows is there, even if it is out of sight' (1999 p. 197). Though such a position is put under pressure in the best recent scholarship, it is never wholly repudiated.[15] It is still the received view in less exacting scholarship; i.e., in one of the most recent additions to the literature, Arne Glimcher leadingly suggests that Picasso 'had created a compound image that simultaneously revealed all the subject's properties through multiple "camera angles" and then edited them into a single non-static image' (in Rose and Gunning 2007 p. 7).

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14 As Yve-Alain Bois notes, 'Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, his *Nude with Drapery* (summer 1907), Braque's series of landscapes painted at L'Estaque in the summer of 1908, Picasso's *Three Women* of a few months later, and finally his extraordinary production at Horta during the summer of 1909 – each has been posited as *the* point of origin' (1992 p. 169). Bois offers the polemical date of autumn 1912 (1992 p. 169).

15 To summarise such complexity in this way feels very problematic, given that challenging this issue has been at the heart of the finest scholarship on Picasso of the past forty years. Yet, whilst Leo Steinberg majestically attacked the view that Cubism sought to give *tangibility* to the depicted object, his theorising of Picasso establishing an energised, shallow space doesn't preclude the understanding of Cubism Clark adumbrates. Understandably, Clark's own reading is perhaps the one which most requires repudiation of the view he interprets as the norm. Clark sees Cubism's epoch as challenging the 'presence' which linear perspective conjured. For Clark, 'presence in painting depends on part of presence being necessarily absent to the eye. And this, it seems to me, is the notion of representation which the "hidden shoulder" motif [Clark is discussing *Woman with Pears* (1909)] is meant to put in doubt – as opposed to the villain of the piece usually brought on in this connection, poor old one point perspective' (p. 204). Clark shifts the meaning of Cubism, and in some measure challenges the idea of 'a multiplication or unfixing of a point of view'. Yet his reading is still predicated on Cubism drawing together depictions of an object which wouldn't conventionally co-exist on the same plane.

Clearly, the analysis and re-assembly of multiple interpretations of an object into something greater is something shared between Rosso's complex works and Cubism. Cubism and the complex work are, in some real measure, opposing (spatial vs. temporal) responses to the same pressing concerns. That they were never seen as engaged with the same questions is unsurprising, not least due to Rosso's interpretation of his works, which he expounded so publicly. However, both were responses to the accelerated proliferation of visual representations which characterised their age. Both were highly influenced by what photography does to perception – and to the perception of one's work.[16] And both respond to the most dramatic development in the photography of their day, that is, the moving image – an issue which is instructive is drawing out similarities between Cubism and the complex work.[17]

As Arne Glimcher's above comment suggests, there is a superficial similarity between the function of a Cubist painting and early film.[18] However, the engagement with time is entirely different. Cinema constructs and controls one's relationship to the temporal progression of the image. Its power lies in its editing; in its imposed duration and orchestrated sequence. It offered time at somewhere between sixteen and twenty-four frames per second. Whereas, conversely, Clark is surely right to note of the experience of viewing Picasso's works of 1910: 'This is the sort of attention, I feel – moving over the picture surface, piece by piece, paradox by paradox – that Cubism was designed to elicit' (1999 p. 173). Duration and sequence are suggested by the painting, but negotiated by the viewer. Likewise, Rosso is explicit about the importance of the individual's unique apperception of time and their structuring of temporal progression. Referring to the Italian watch-maker Longines, Rosso notes in the 1923 Ambrosini interview: 'We are Longines, because we breath, and with different rhythms' (p. 182).[19] If Cubism is the unfolding of the single image into

16 As Anne Baldassari notes, from 1901 onwards Picasso recorded works as they developed, and: 'from that moment onwards, the photographic observation of works in progress probably helped him free his painting of pointlessly "added" colour; this allowed him, as he would explain to Zervos, to get back to basics – "I see light and shade"' (1997 p. 22). Needless to say, the exact contemporaneity of the intervention of photography in Rosso's and Picasso's working methods, allied with their shared suppression of 'unnecessary' colour, is of interest.

17 The appreciation and direct engagements with motion images were very different. As Bernice Rose demonstrates (2013), Picasso and Braque were frequent cinema attendees in the first decade of the century. Rosso, in a 1923 interview, notes: 'I have always felt a great deal of disappointment on the rare occasions I have gone to the cinematograph. It is good for people who like photography. That is also objectivism' (p. 181).

18 This connection is first dealt with explicitly in Standish Lawder's *The Cubist Cinema* (1975), and given fuller exposition in the lengthy publication *Picasso, Braque and Early Film in Cubism* (Rose and Gunning 2013).

19 These comments are made in the same interview Rosso opens by opining: 'nothing is material in space, because everything is space and therefore everything is relative. I did not need the philosophy of Professor Einstein, I said it before '83' (p. 179). The idea that we are all watches recalls Einstein's popular exposition of 1916's general theory of relativity, which Kern summarises: 'he contrasted the older mechanics, which used only one clock, with his theory which required that we imagine "as many clocks as we like"' (2003 p. 19). Clearly the

a temporally complex duration, then the complex work is the collapsing of many images into a single moment of vision. Although pursued by opposed means, Cubism and the complex work both prioritise the human ordering of time and the crucial importance of remembrance, standing apart from the imposed duration and tempo of film.

The complex work and its legacy

One cannot claim much for Rosso's influence on the development of Western art, and far less about the influence of that hidden core of his enterprise, here dubbed the complex work. Art-historical studies overlook many aspects of Rosso's practice, aspects which today seem fascinating and highly prescient; but these were latencies – rich seams whose appreciation required the light cast by subsequent artistic developments. His novel approach to the question of how to bring temporal complexity to the increasingly transient transmission and consumption of images, although as timely as Cubism's, lacked the latter's overt formal radicalness and suggestiveness. Cubism would prepare the ground for so many pictorial developments in twentieth-century art. It is hard to argue that Rosso's works, a fortiori the richness of the complex works, had noteworthy descendants.[20]

However, strains of Rosso's project do echo through important passages of twentieth-century art. It is as well to consider these, not least in how they coincide with periods when interest in Rosso's works was renewed.

In the early 'sixties Rosso's works underwent an apparent *rinascimento* in the English-speaking world, specifically the United States, beginning with 1958's accurately titled *The First Exhibition in America of Sculpture by Medardo Rosso* (Peridot Gallery, New York), and culminating in 1963's retrospective exhibition at MoMA, New York.[21] This show was accompanied by a monographic study authored by the exhibition organiser, Margaret Scolari Barr. In this she notes that, whereas five years earlier not a single Rosso was held

older, mechanistic view of time is understood by Rosso to find parallels in cinema and sound recording, both of which were 'objectivising' technologies.

20 We have noted that Jean Selz believed that Rosso's oeuvre 'had no direct influence on other artists … Picasso's earliest busts are the only sculptures related to Rosso's' (1963 p. 125). Brancusi's formal debt to Rosso is sometimes suggested, which, given the similarity between Rosso's *Madame X* and e.g. *Sleeping Muse*, isn't surprising. But it is a very superficial connection. Similarities run deeper in Brancusi's use of photography (see Mola 2006), but whether the older artist's influence was felt is uncertain.

21 This dissertation has been consistent in its gratuitous quotation from literary sources. As a parting gesture, I cannot resist giving in full a poem by Frank O'Hara, who, in 1963, was Assistant Curator of Painting and Sculpture Exhibitions at MoMA, also directing major touring shows such as *Modern Sculpture: U.S.A.* (O'Hara 1995 p. xiv). I find it both pertinent and moving that a man who would write this poem and be so involved with contemporary art would have some involvement with a Rosso show.

in a US collection, by 1963 there were 'some twenty' (1963 p. 8). It is worth dwelling upon these five years, on this rebirth of interest and its timing, given that it coincides with one of the most significant periods of twentieth-century art history, centred around New York.

In 1959 Frank Stella made his Black Paintings, e.g. *Die Fahne Hoch!*, four of which were exhibited that year in *Sixteen Americans*, MoMA. On one level these works, as Rosso's for sculpture, acknowledge and emphasise those materials and processes of painting typically attended to in the preliminary stage of making a work, yet ignored in the resulting painting: the thickness of the stretcher bars is increased and this dimension is taken as the thickness of line articulating the formal design of the work – stripes diverging from the horizontal and vertical mid-points of the canvas's face. However, despite the form the material takes being pre-established, the painting is very much a painting, not a pattern: whilst the determining structure suggests something replicable, any notion of the multiple is repudiated in the handling of the paint, the subtleties of surface, and Stella's commitment to the material: that it 'look as good on the canvas as in the can'. 1960 saw the aluminium and copper paintings, such as *Luis Miguel Dominguin*, which, through shaping the canvas by removing/adding a stretcher bar width of material symmetrically to a section of each vertical side, further

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'Having a Coke with You'

is even more fun than going to San Sebastian, Irún, Hendaye, Biarritz, Bayonne
or being sick to my stomach on the Travesera de Gracia in Barcelona
partly because in your orange shirt you look like a better happier St. Sebastian
partly because of my love for you, partly because of your love for yoghurt
partly because of the fluorescent orange tulips around the birches
partly because of the secrecy our smiles take on before people and statuary
it is hard to believe when I'm with you that there can be anything as still
as solemn as unpleasantly definitive as statuary when right in front of it
in the warm New York 4 o'clock light we are drifting back and forth
between each other like a tree breathing through its spectacles

and the portrait show seems to have no faces in it at all, just paint
you suddenly wonder why in the world anyone ever did them

I look
at you and I would rather look at you than all the portraits in the world
except possibly for the *Polish Rider* occasionally and anyway it's in the Frick
which thank heavens you haven't gone to yet so we can go together the first time
and the fact that you move so beautifully more or less takes care of Futurism
just as at home I never think of the *Nude Descending a Staircase* or
at a rehearsal a single drawing of Leonardo or Michelangelo that used to wow me
and what good does all the research of the Impressionists do them
when they never got the right person to stand near the tree when the sun sank
or for that matter Marino Marini when he didn't pick the rider as carefully
as the horse

it seems they were all cheated of some marvelous experience
which is not going to go wasted on me which is why I am telling you about it

emphasise the role of the usually neglected technical aspects of constructing a painting. Like casting the same head in wax, plaster and bronze, Stella's alteration of materials – of colour and surface finish – produce very different phenomena from, effectively, the same generative form: the copper throwing its colour on the surrounding room; the reflective aluminium incriminating the viewing in the painting's space; the black quietly just there.

Stella's subtle imbrication of process and raw material into the experience of the completed artwork found explicit counterpart in 1961, when Robert Morris produced the canonical *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making*. If Stella's work is historically fascinating because it straddled opposing artistic camps (it was held by Fried to embody a high point of Modernist painting, standing in opposition to the 'literalism' of Minimalism; it was also championed by early advocates of Minimalism), Morris's acts as a formal precursor of Minimalism (i.e. his *Mirror Cubes* (1965–72)) and, more importantly, as a thematic precursor of Conceptualism. It is, perhaps peculiarly, with Conceptualism and its legacy that Rosso's complex works resonate. This is not to claim that any Conceptualist's interrogation of what constitutes a 'work', and what constitutes 'art', fulfils the definition of complex work. Let alone is it to suggest that Rosso shared the sensibilities and desires which motivated Conceptual practices. Rather, in Conceptualism the hermeticism which set Rosso's complex works starkly at odds with those contemporaneous practices with which he is often conflated – i.e. Rodin's – returns again at the level of *work*, rather than *medium* – as a simplified reading of (Greenbergian) Modernism would highlight – or, as one finds in Rodin, oeuvre.

A certain self-cannibalising tendency is shared by the complex work and Conceptual works of the 'sixties (with Joseph Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs* (1965) a predictable and ever-tedious touchstone). The generation developing beyond the heyday of Conceptual art renewed links to the *techniques* Rosso exploited. Although their motives run counter, through manipulating prints and negatives and rephotographing them, Rosso's novel technique of making explicit that the photographic image presented is a photograph of a photograph, is one which returns in the 'postmodernism' of the 'Pictures' generation of the late seventies, i.e. Sherrie Levine's series *After Walker Evans* (1981) and *After Edward Weston* (1979), and Richard Prince's *Cowboys* (1980–) – the latter making more explicit the materiality of the source image.

Coinciding with renewed interest in Rosso, in 2013 artist Erin Shirreff produced *Medardo Rosso, Madame X, 1896*, in which a single Rosso photograph of the elusive *Madame X* is rephotographed under varied lighting conditions, these images being animated to merge into one another in the resulting video.

7. Concluding...

Hermeticism against Closure

Through highlighting the inwards-looking complexity of Rosso's approach to the 'work' this study has suggested that Rosso related to early twentieth-century culture in a manner fundamentally at odds with previous interpretations of the artist. The complex work can be understood as engaging with pressing issues which preoccupied literary and philosophical projects in those decades, just as Rosso's individual sculptures can be interpreted as singular yet timely participants in late nineteenth-century culture. The complex work's parallels with the contemporaneous concerns of Proust, Husserl and the development of Cubism extended Rosso's artistic vision beyond the scope of his theorising.

This study has stressed the fundamental importance of making as the means in which Rosso's works developed beyond what could have been envisaged. Rosso advocated and practised a clear, principled position on the fundamental creativity of making, which allowed his work to lead him beyond his conceptions. It was – at least in part – this insistent belief in materials, in making as revelation, which drove his work in a direction which ran counter to those artists with whom his works have been compared during his lifetime until today.

Contrasting Rosso's complex works and Rodin's open oeuvre draws out the profound conflict between two figures whose artworks have typically been read as the productions of rivals seeking and attaining similar ends. Rodin's promiscuous self-quotation, the extreme porosity of forms across entirely discrete works, establish relations on the level of oeuvre, in which every element of Rodin's practice seems to contain the potential to imbricate with others. In this sense, Rodin's life's work is analogous to Wittgenstein's thread: 'the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres' (1958 §. 67). As Penelope Curtis noted, Rodin 'drew upon and replenished his own inventory of forms and images. Understanding Rodin involved seeing him invent and reinvent,

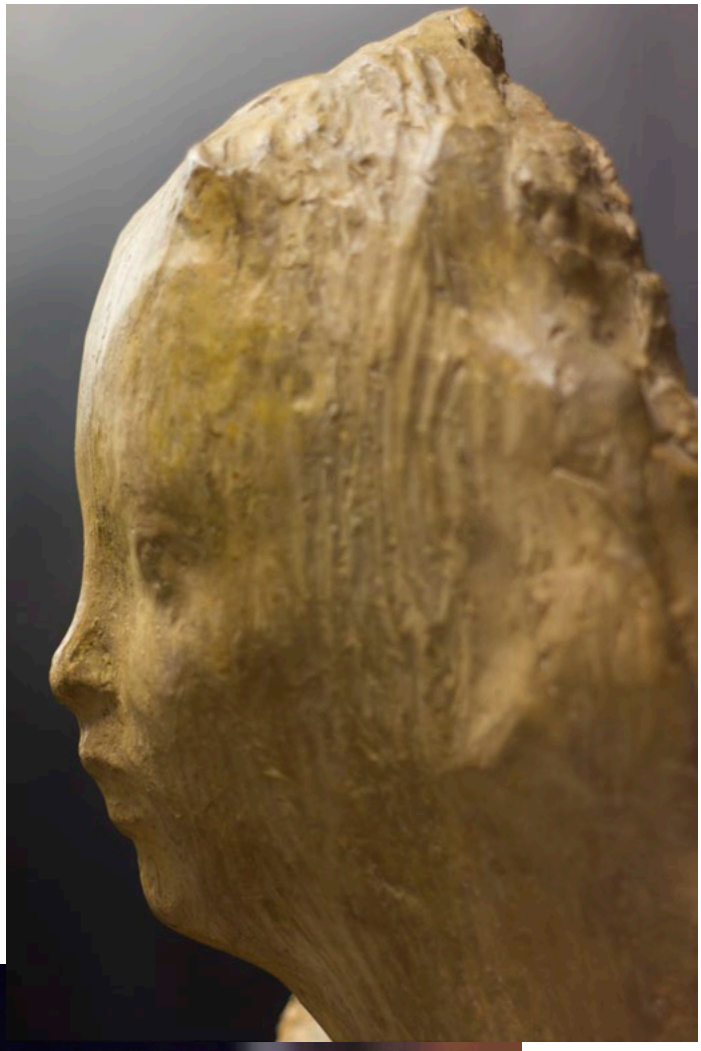
form and re-form' (1999 p. 108). In constrast, Rosso's complex works seek to articulate a space in which an individual work may become more than itself, whilst remaining very much itself, without bleeding into other works. Rather than dissolving the individual sculpture into the wealth of an oeuvre, Rosso brings internal intensity to the object through showing and reshowing what it is and what it can be. The complex work is symptomatic of wanting to appreciate something in its greatest richness. Symptomatic of the belief that art is the province of the mysterious and that this mystery can only emerge – become radiant but not grasped – through desiring to know it as fully as possible. Mysterious not because it is elusive, insincere or aloof, but because no matter how deeply one inquires of the object, if done with care, the inquiry is never exhaustive and the work never exhausted.

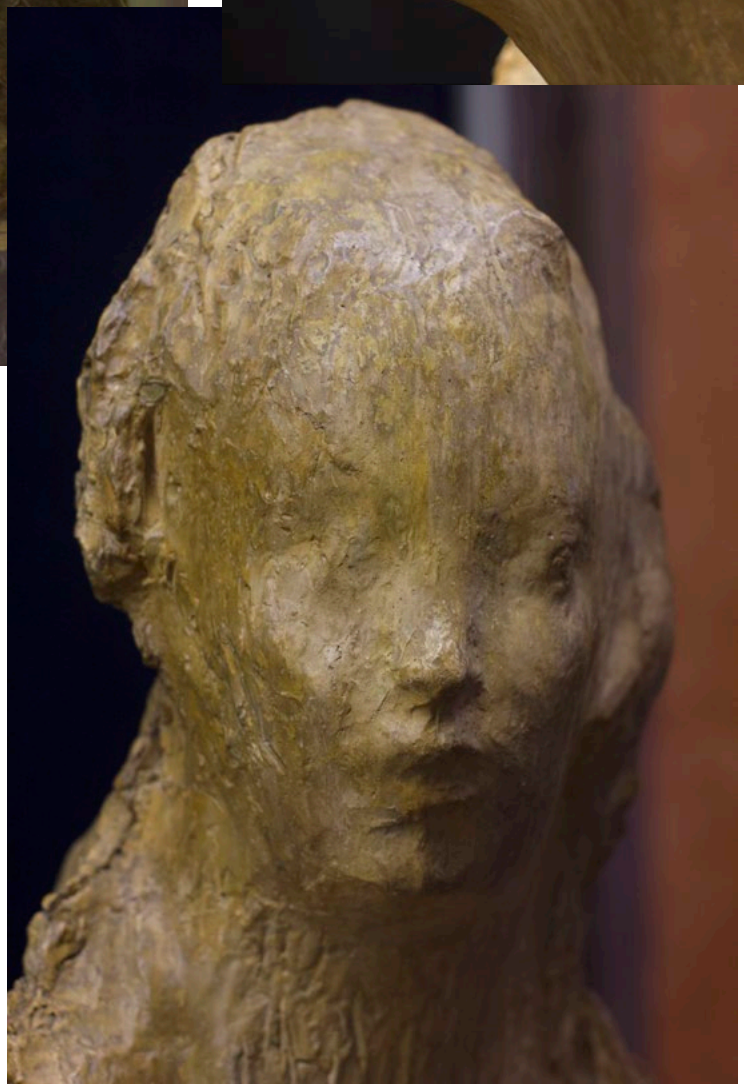
Rosso aggressively advocated that his works be compared with those he understood to be contemporary or historical rivals. However, beneath this outward posturing lies a contradictory and fundamentally richer, more caring project. The attenuation of each work into complex works isolates that work from all others in his oeuvre, and from the works of his peers. Paradoxically, the hermeticism of each complex work is also the foundation of its openness; of its refusal of finitude.[1] It has been suggested that for a new iteration to enter the work, whether a cast or a photograph, is in some respect a betrayal. In this sense the works are conclusive, closed; whereas Rodin's works can to this day be cast as authentic works of the master (albeit not as sought-after as those of his lifetime), with Rosso, even the earliest posthumous casts were qualitatively entirely different from those produced during his lifetime, certainly those he is believed to have cast himself. Enclosed in their own worlds each complex work radiates – vibrates – through memories and associations reaching across instances. The complex work refuses to enter into ready exchange with works

1 'Hermeticism' is here used simply to mean sealed. However, shades of its Gnostic and alchemical connotations are perhaps appropriate when considering Rosso. Although dating from the first centuries of the common era and most probably written in Greek, the works collected in the *Corpus Hermeticum* were, until the early seventeenth century, considered the works of the Egyptian Hermes Trismegistus and to date back to the time of Moses (see Yates 2002 pp. 1–20). Rosso was a champion of Egyptian sculpture, which he considered imbued with a 'grand unity' because of its 'play of light' (p. 141); the *Corpus Hermeticum* outlines 'how the Egyptians in their magical religion animated the statues of their gods by magic means, by drawing spirits into them' (Yates 2002 p. 9). Light, fire and the ongoing animation of nature characterise the alchemical inspirations derived from the *Corpus Hermeticum*, as they also characterise Rosso's practice. The epithet 'alchemist' is suggestive in relation to Rosso at his forge. It also asks something of a viewer's approach to the complex work today: 'If, to use a simile, one views the growing work as a burning funeral pyre, then the commentator stands before it like a chemist, the critic like an alchemist. Whereas, for the former, wood and ash remain the sole objects of his analysis, for the latter only the flame itself preserves an enigma: that of what is alive.' (Benjamin 1996 p. 298) This famous simile, appropriately enough from an essay on Goethe's *Elective Affinities*, highlights that what is alive today in the complex work is so in no small measure due to its intermedial complexity, which refuses resolution by highlighting the impermanence of fixed relationships.

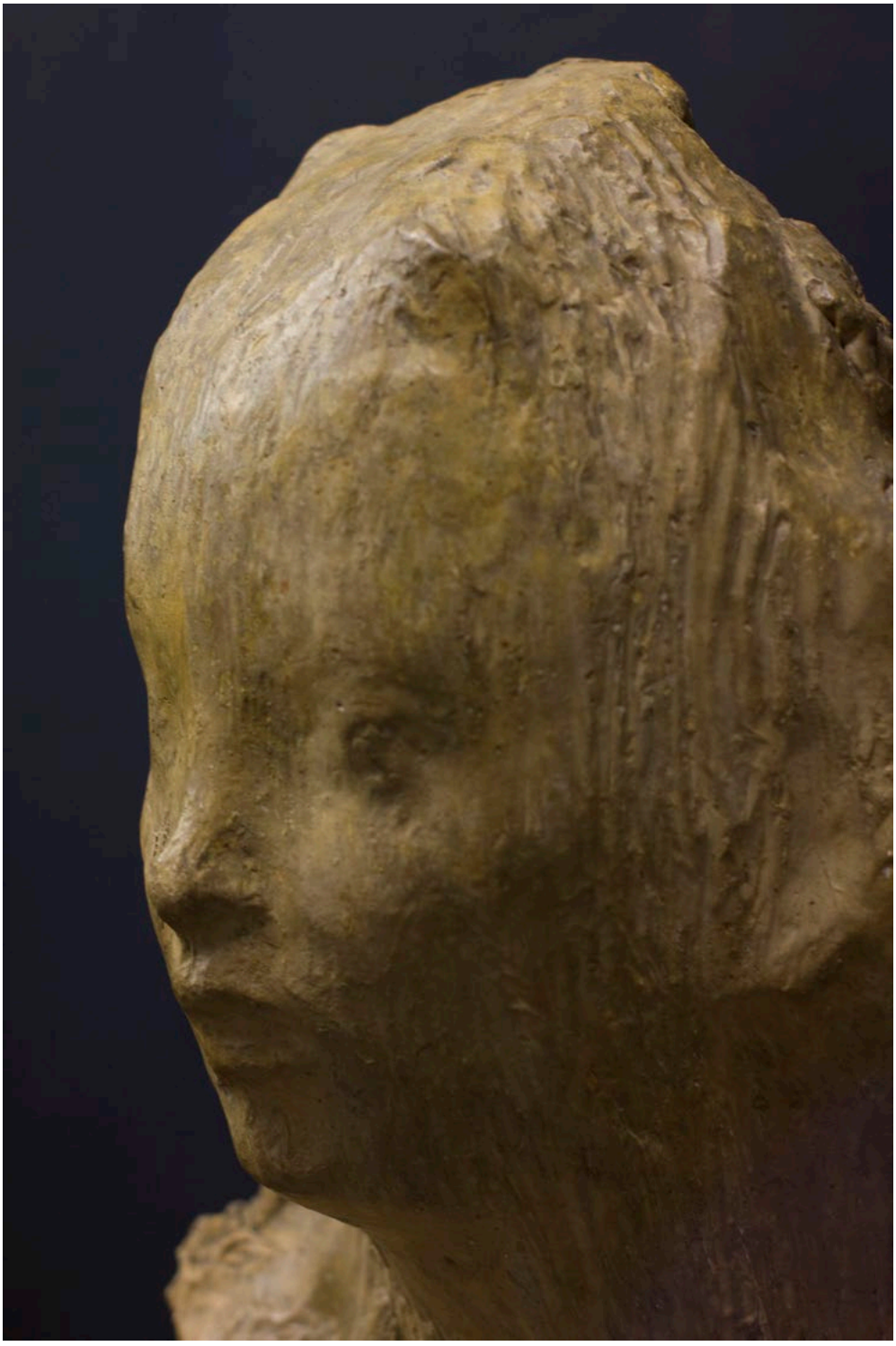
outside itself because its internal identity is ever deferred, always re-opening over time. Rosso's development from 1900 onwards makes clear that within what might typically be considered definitive lies the potential for it to be otherwise. Perhaps this potential resides in all works, to varying degrees. Rosso's uniqueness lay in attending to this latent richness through making: it was through Rosso's commitment to materials that the unexpected, the unknown, emerged; it was through this commitment that it emerged as something unthought and as something meaningful.

8. Visual Matter: *Ecce Puers*

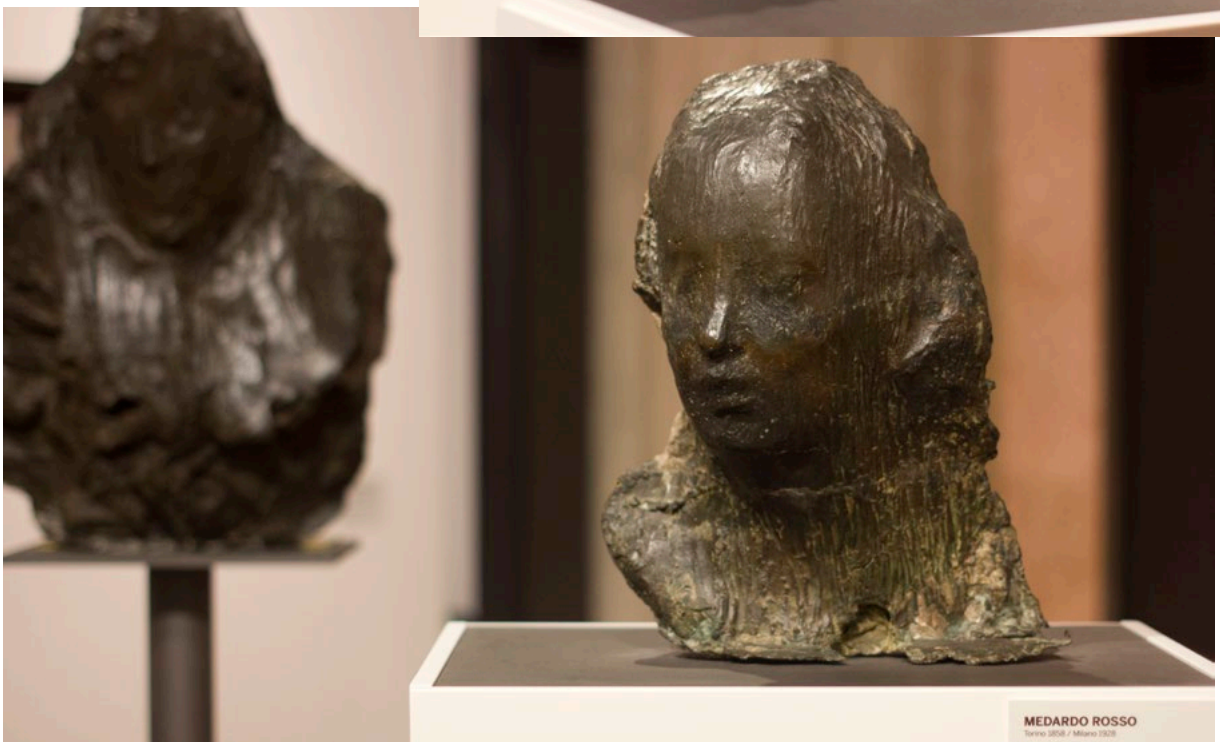


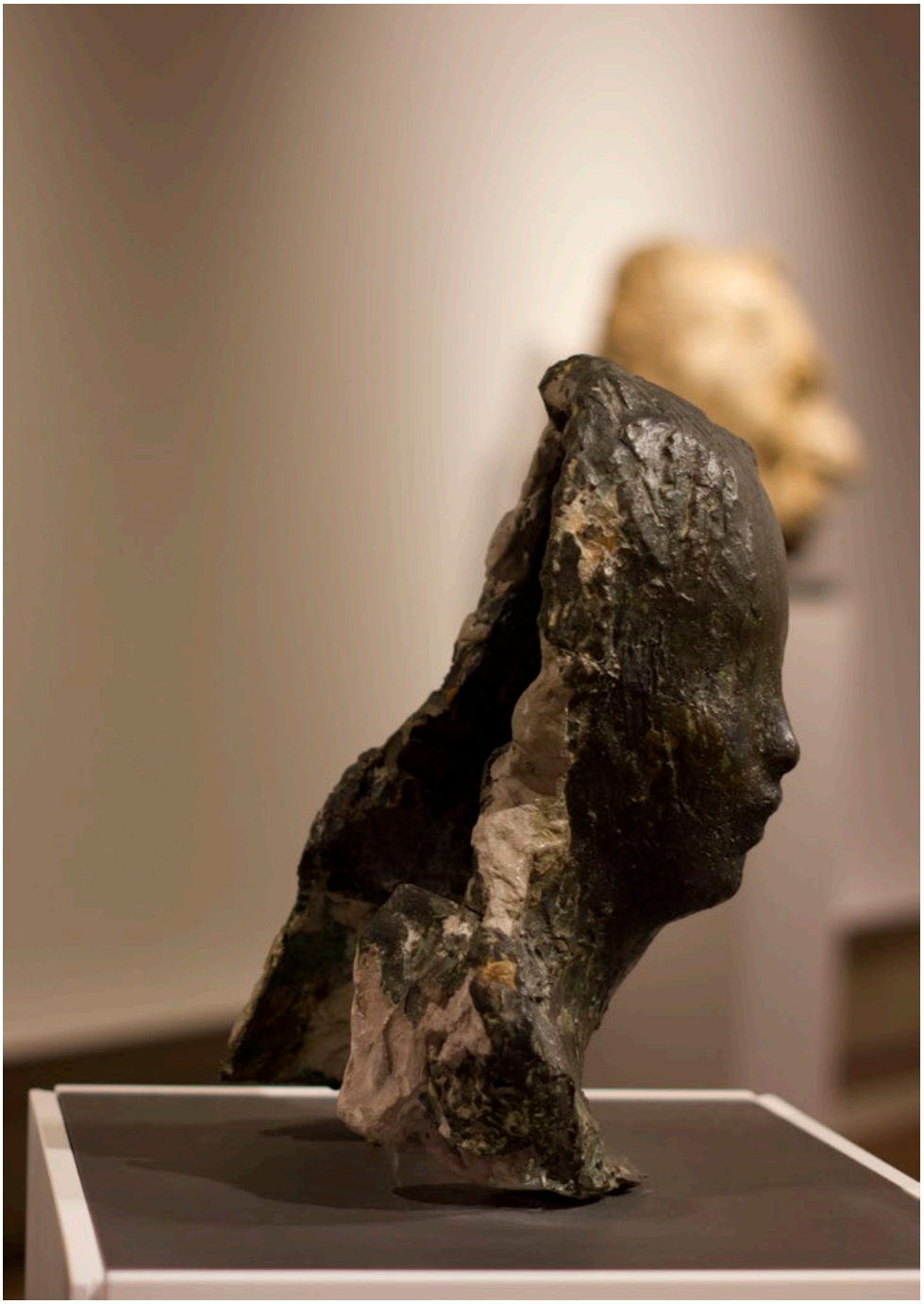


1906, Milan, Civica Galleria d'Arte Moderna (ep. a)



1908, Venice, Galleria Internazionale d'Art (ep. b)



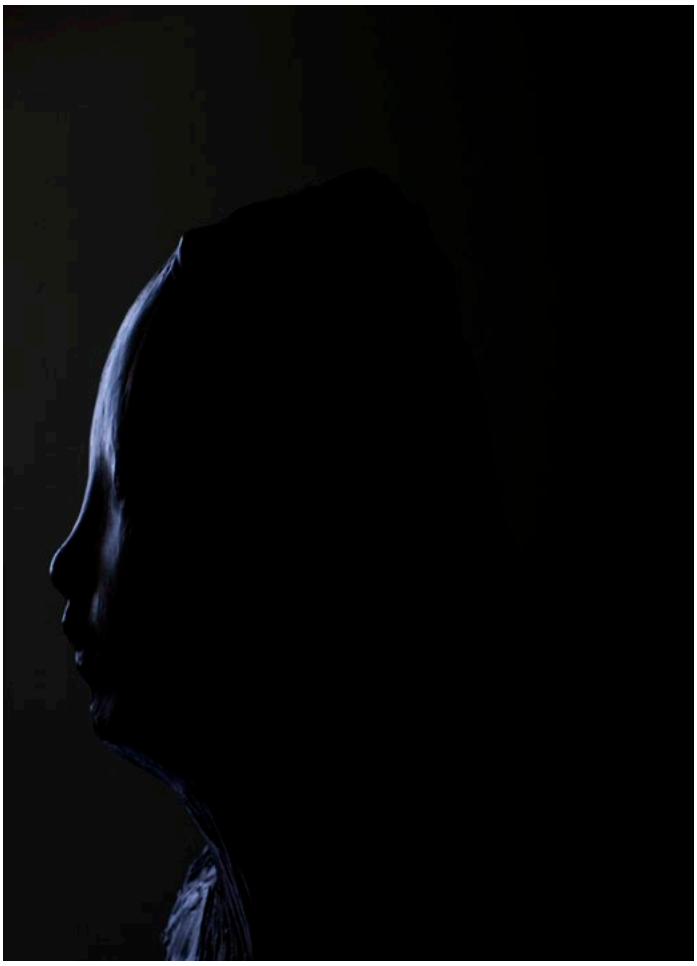


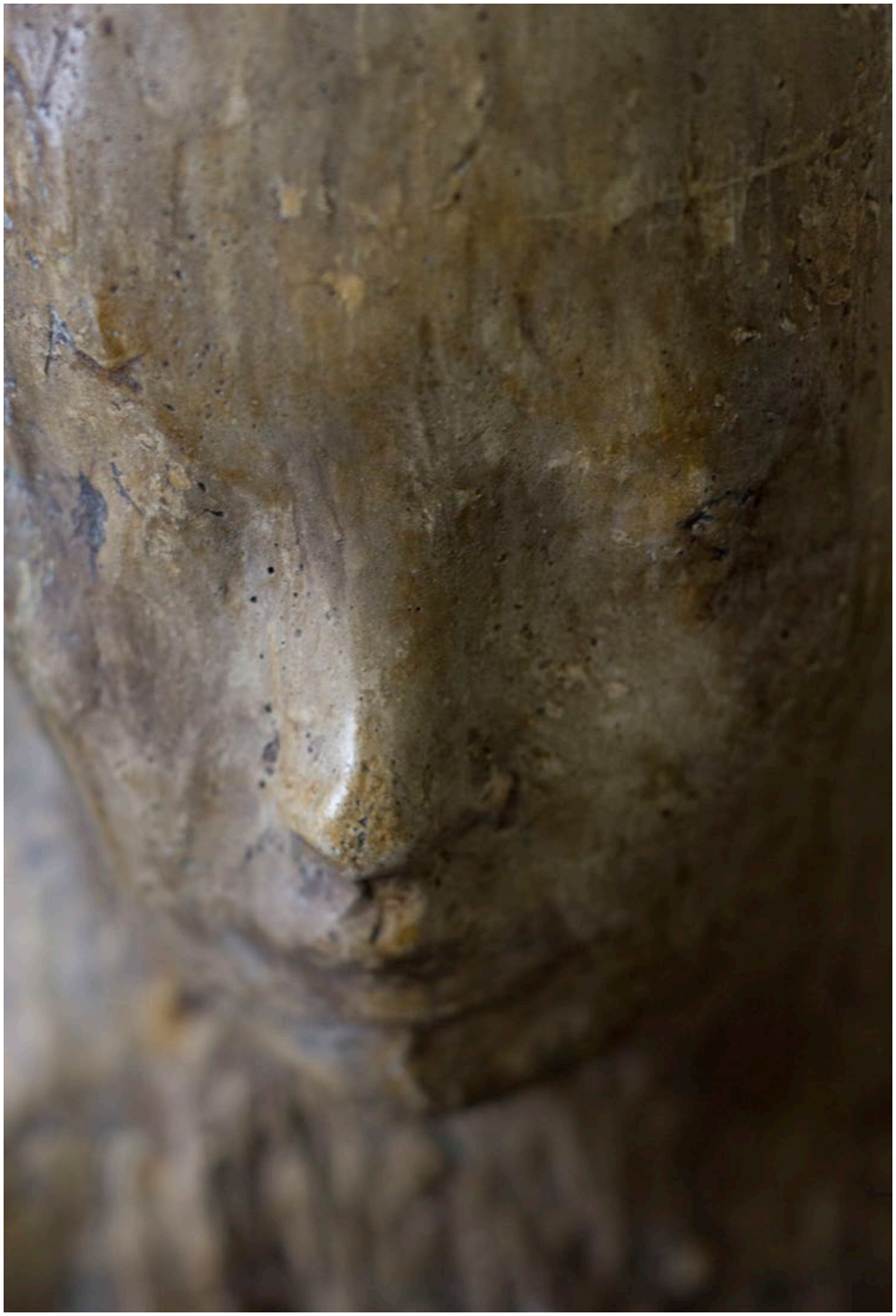

a ti Ricci
to Rosso

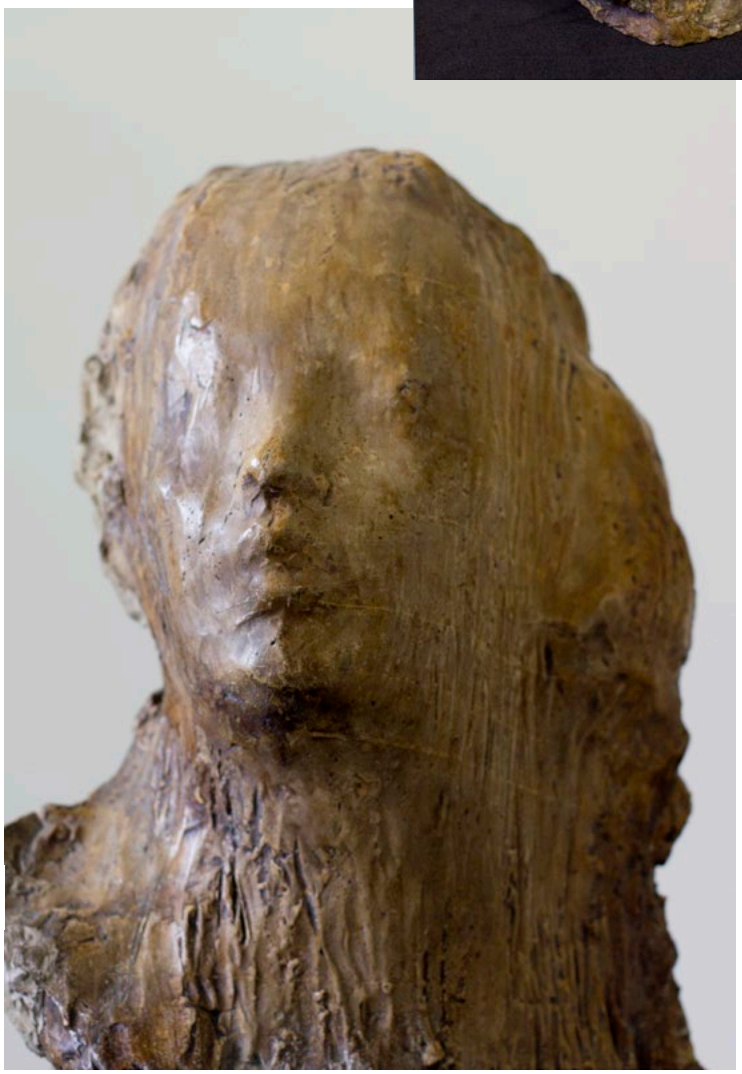
1917–26, Piacenza, Galleria d'Arte Moderna Ricci Oddi (ep. c)

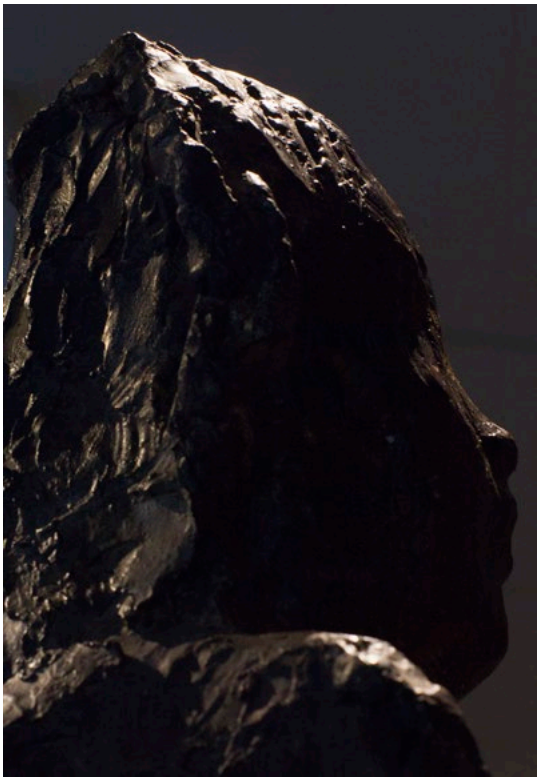
Facing: I would like to thank again Ambra Visconti of Galleria Ricci Oddi for taking the photographs as directed by my crude line drawings.

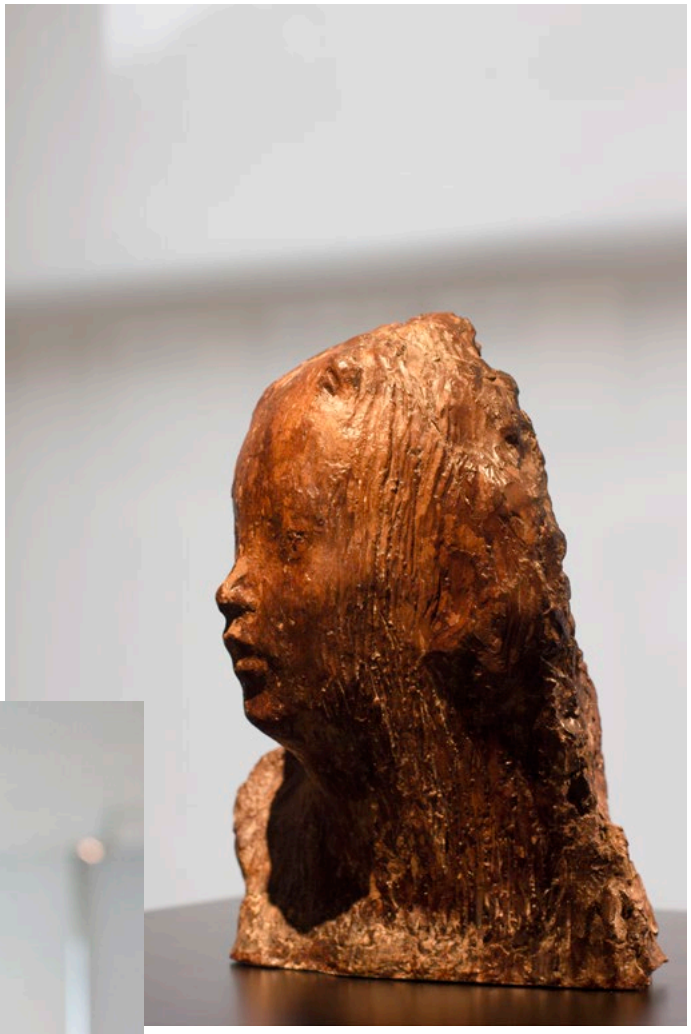
c. 1920, Edinburgh, National Galleries of Scotland (ep. d)



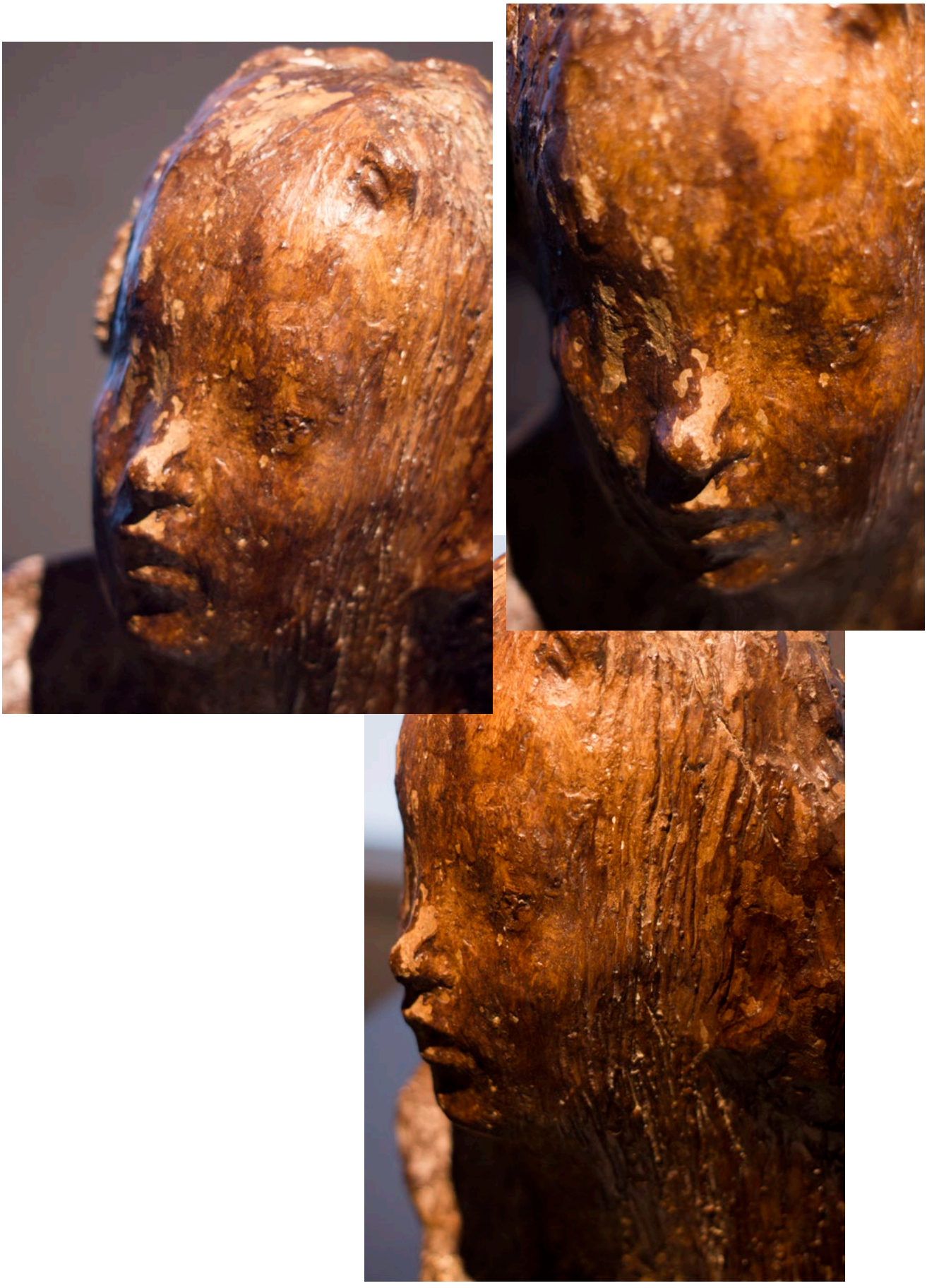


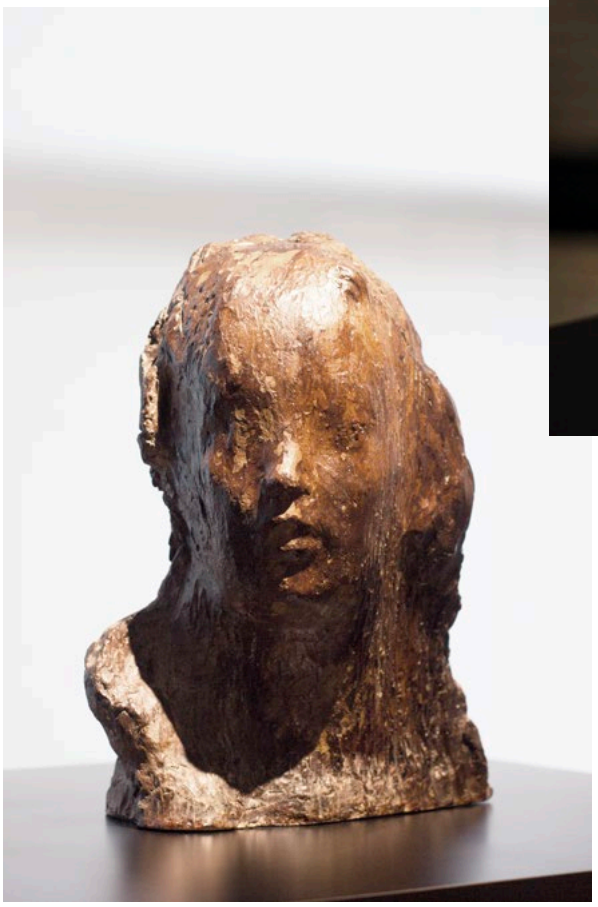


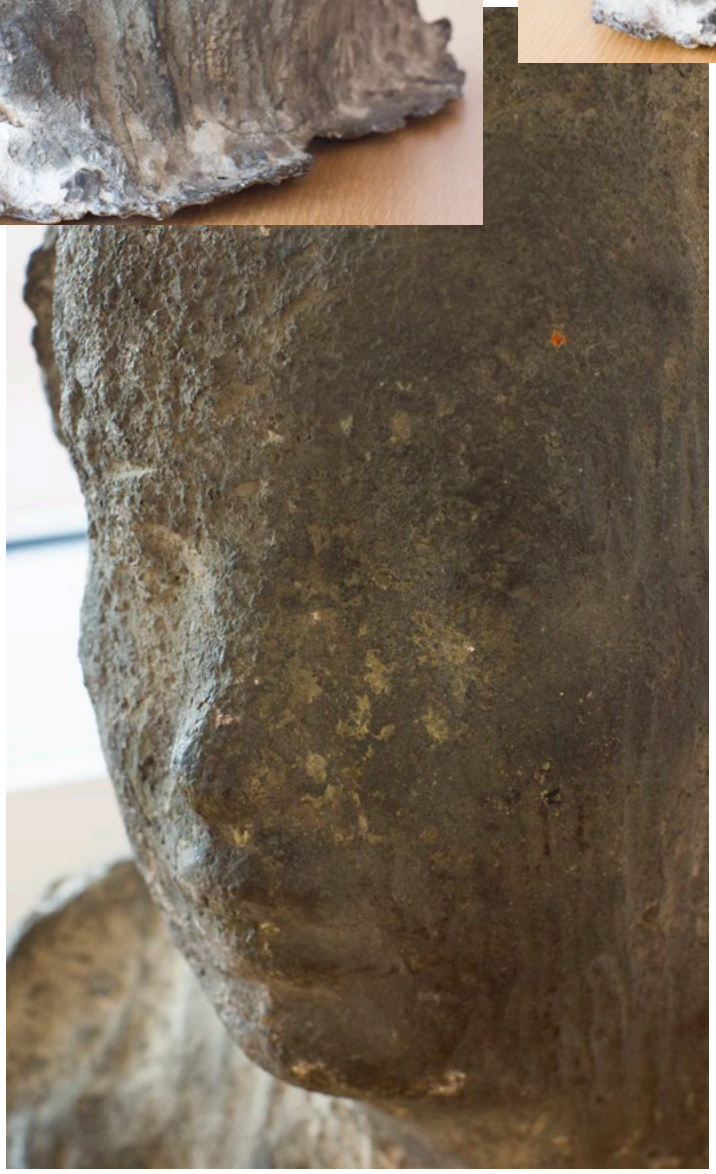




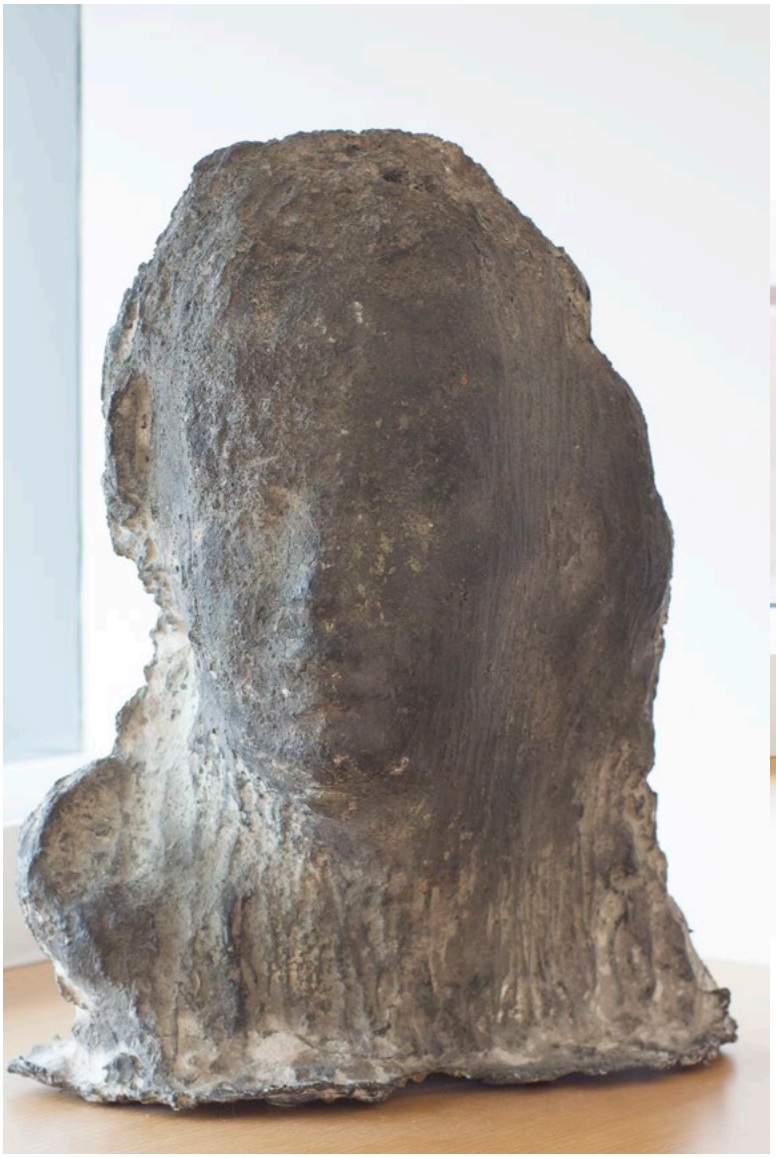
c. 1920, Barzio, Museo Medardo Rosso (ep. e)







Before 1923, private collection (ep. f)

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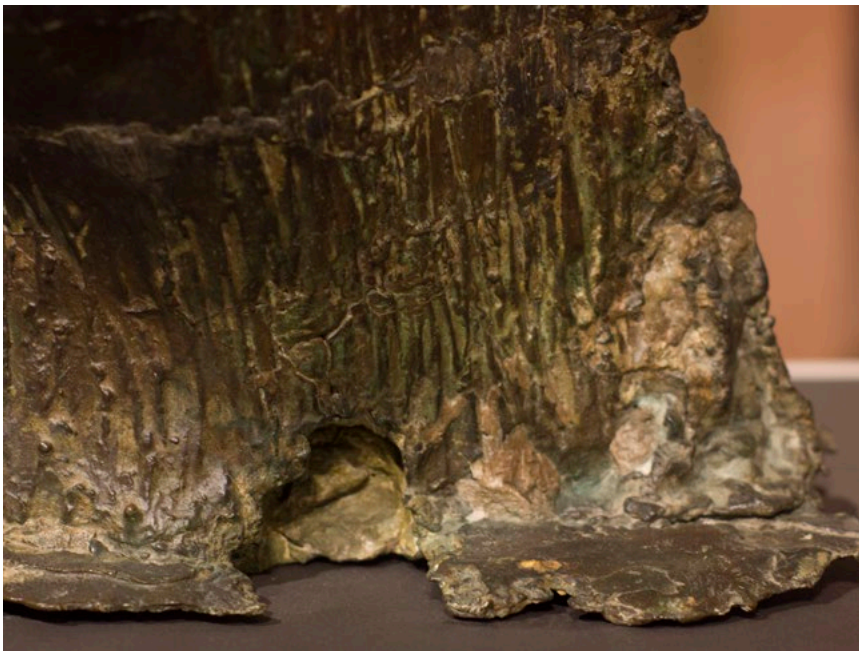

Five Necks

Facing: top, ep. a; middle, ep. b; bottom, ep. d
Above: top, ep. e; bottom, ep.f.

IX. Afterword

Friends, Some Thread, Two Maps: Notes on Method

On separation – some old acquaintances

The foreword offered brief acknowledgement of the separation of 'thesis' and 'dissertation' as problematic but potentially productive. For a deeper understanding of the relation of parts of differing temporality and medium we can return to Merleau-Ponty's late understanding of 'flesh', extending the explication it received in the chapter on phenomenology by reference to the dissertation's ensuing discussion of 'real friendships'. This return to Merleau-Ponty also offers fuller explication of the relationship of touch and vision and the problems this posed in Rosso's accounts of perception.

In *The Visible and the Invisible* 'flesh' holds a polyvalent position as a medium, confusion or 'lining' between inside and outside, subject and object, seer and seen. The term first emerges in Merleau-Ponty's working notes, as quoted in the chapter on phenomenology; it develops as he grapples with the relationship of discrete parts which draw into themselves a world – how a 'visible' is more than a sense impression (1968 pp. 217–8). In the resolved manuscript it is through consideration of touch that these views find their initial articulation:

> I do not look at a chaos but at things – so that finally one cannot say if it is the look or if it is the things that command. What is this prepossession of the visible, this art of interrogating it according to its own wishes, this inspired exegesis? We would perhaps find the answer in the tactile palpation where the questioner and the questioned are closer, and of which, after all, the palpation of the eye is a remarkable variant. (1968 p. 133)

Throughout this study Rosso's theories of perception have been interpreted as suggestively paralleling Merleau-Ponty's. Given Rosso's repeated hostility to

'touch' when understood as a surrogate or supplement of looking, Merleau-Ponty's apparent conflation in the above of the visible and the tactile, the eye and the hand, is problematic. However, the analogy is but a first step in a richer account of embodied perception:

> Between my movements and what I touch, there must exist some relationship by principle, some kinship … This can happen only if my hand, while it is felt from within, is also accessible from without, itself tangible, for my other hand, for example … it is no different for the vision – except, it is said, that here the exploration and the information it gathers do not belong "to the same sense." But this delimitation of the senses is crude … There is double and crossed situating of the visible in the tangible and of the tangible in the visible; the two maps are complete, and yet they do not merge into one. The two parts are total parts and yet are not superposable. (pp. 133–4)

The first half of this quotation emphasises through the parallel of touch that fundamental to vision is the reversibility of seeing and seen; one's vision isn't autocratic, mastering, etc., but fundamentally in a confused indivisibility with being visible. The second half draws on Merleau-Ponty's mereology to stress that, although both vision and touch are expressions or exegeses of a shared world (hence the crudeness of their delimitation), they are also insuperably different. Each map is complete, yet their differences are parts derived from a shared being. This begins to approach how I envisage the relationship of dissertation and visual work in this doctorate. However, establishing the insuperable *difference* of related 'complete maps' is not Merleau-Ponty's final position in his exposition of flesh. What is important to Merleau-Ponty is not simply the non-identity of maps, but that the internal reversibility characteristic of each map is necessarily non-coincident and ever *deferred*:

> To begin with, we spoke summarily of a reversibility of the seeing and the visible, of the touching and the touched. It is time to emphasize that it is a reversibility always imminent and never realized in fact. My left hand is always touching my right hand touching the things, but I never reach coincidence; the coincidence always eclipses at the moment of realization, and one of two things always occurs: either my right hand really passes over into the rank of the touched, but then its hold on the world is interrupted; or it retains its hold on the world, but then I do not really touch *it.* (pp. 146–7)

The discrete instantiations of *Ecce Puer* share identity with one another within memory, yet this identity is ever-deferred and ever-undoing. So too Merleau-Ponty offers an understanding of being, of life, existing in the slippage or deferred reciprocity between subject and object, seer and seen, touching and touched – 'when the spark of the sensing/sensible is lit, when the fire starts to burn that will not cease until some accident befalls the body' (Merleau-Ponty 1993 p. 125). It is this difference within identity, this intrinsic deferral of identity, which gives *Ecce Puer* life, which makes it resonate – vibrate.

This raises something of a dilemma in the presentation of a thesis. The connections between text and image, between what I do in the studio and what happens in the dissertation are, on the one hand, ineliminable: it would have been inconceivable for me to have produced either part in recognisably the same form, reaching the same 'conclusion', without also producing the other 'part'. I would expect this mutual inflection to translate into the experience of reading and viewing them: a different picture of one will emerge in the light of the other and this won't be arbitrary illumination but, it is hoped, true friendship (with all the difficulties and incomprehensibilities these entail). Yet the experience of one medium, of one mode of thought, cannot translate comprehensibly into another and those of studio practice are not translatable into a 'positive' language. This is fundamental to Merleau-Ponty's late thought and he expresses it well:

> Literature, music, the passions, but also the experience of the visible world are – no less than is the science of Lavoisier and Ampère – the exploration of an invisible and the disclosure of a universe of ideas. The difference is simply that this invisible, these ideas, unlike those of that science, cannot be detached from the sensible appearances and erected into a second positivity. The musical idea, the literary idea, the dialectic of love, and also the articulations of the light, the modes of exhibition of sound and of touch speak to us, have their logic … But it is as though the secrecy wherein they lie and whence the literary expression draws them were their proper mode of existence. (1968 p. 149)[1]

Both maps are complete and of the same terrain, yet they are not identical. They do not fully overlap and neither is pleonastic; the secrecy wherein they lie is no less meaningful than the secrecy our smiles take on before people and statuary.

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1 Musil articulates the impossibility of a 'second positivity' of artistic questioning equally well, and more amusingly: 'Nothing is more revealing, by the way, than one's involuntary experience of learned and sensible efforts [… to] extract some "content" from the motion of those who were moved: but about as much remains of this as of the delicately opalescent body of a jellyfish when one lifts it out of the water and lays it on the sand … It would be regrettable if these descriptions were to evoke an impression of mystery, or of a kind of music in which harp notes and sighing glissandi predominate' (1997 pp. 273–4).

Slow revelation, per arsin et thesin

The above suggests that a counterpoint between insuperably non-identical approaches to a theme – different 'maps' – may characterise a productive approach to artistic research. This position sits uneasily with a definition of thesis which amounts to it being 'a proposition laid down or stated, esp. as a theme to be discussed and proved, or to be maintained against attack' (OED). The non-propositional nature of artworks, their refusal of a 'second positivity' and their material recalcitrance, place them outside ready assimilation into a 'proposition laid down or stated'. As such, it may initially appear that the only theses to be drawn from this doctorate (beyond those expressed fully in the dissertation alone), are on a meta-level.

Artistic practice may be capable of directing the production of a thesis, but the concrete products of that practice (if in accord with Merleau-Ponty's examples) cannot form a part of the thesis if a thesis is a proposition and the practice is non-propositional. That said, practice can still 'lead' the research. For instance: I noticed that I made works in which forms migrated across mediums. I started researching an artist whose works migrated across mediums. The artist made albumen prints. I made some albumen prints. Through making these I understood what the artist did – what their work was – differently. The next day I made an omelette. In it was one egg white, six egg yolks, spring onions and cheddar cheese. I thought of the artist differently: what did Rosso do with his yolks? This thought didn't force some immediate revelation, but it made me think longer and more variously about the artist. My practice directed the *quality* of time I spent researching something, something which in itself was reducible to an analogous proposition: Rosso's commitment to doing things himself prompted a fundamentally different relationship with the work than if he hadn't done them himself. My practice wasn't explicit in the articulation of the proposition, but it directed, indeed it led, the research's development. The initial desire to research an area of artistic production resulted from my studio work and the manner in which that research was conducted was suggested and ever-inflected by studio work and both were changed by this (in this light, consider Marcel's friend Robert Saint-Loup and his noble passage over and around seated eaters).

The dissertation supports a thesis which suggests that between an artist's theories and their work can develop meaningful and resonant relationships. These relationships are characterised by an intrinsic reciprocity of influence, but also by a necessary deferral of identity or unity. From study of Rosso suggestions begin to emerge pertaining to this project's initial question; of how meaningful relationships across works develop through making. However, it has also offered historical and philosophical support for the idea that this meaningfulness is necessarily revealed slowly: to return to Heidegger, 'we have

no right whatsoever to expect that there where the danger is we should be able to lay hold of the saving power immediately and without preparation' (1977 pp. 28–9). The proof of the 'theme to be discussed and proved' is deferred, if not indefinitely then at least immediately. This is what Rosso's works offer: the interplay of the instant – the 'impression', the striking revelation – with the genuine begetting of a slow and on-going birth. These two modes interact, the latter ever-inflecting, thus maintaining, the former in a counterpoint of ideas, speeds, and revelations. It is hoped that the relationship of dissertation and studio work is not remote from such a sustaining exchange.

Something of the truth of the doctorate should be deferred and *untimely* – 'that is to say, acting counter to our time and thereby acting on our time and, let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come' (Nietzsche 1997 p. 60). As such, it would fall outside the above definition of 'thesis'. Given that this is a doctorate and probably needs a thesis, perhaps a somewhat Procrustean solution is permissible.

Within the word 'thesis' there lies a confusion of temporalities and of focus. In prosody a thesis was 'originally and properly, according to ancient writers, the setting down of the foot or lowering of the hand in beating time, and hence (as marked by this) the stress or *ictus*'. However, 'by later Latin writers', it was 'used for the lowering of the voice on an unstressed syllable, thus practically reversing the original meaning.' Developing from these meanings, in Renaissance and Baroque music '*thesis*', alongside its historical counterpart, '*arsis*', denoted the complex intertwining of themes in an inverse-fugue: '*per arsin et thesin*: used of a fugue, canon, etc. in which the subject or melody is inverted, so that the rising parts correspond to the falling ones in the original subject and vice versâ: the same as by inversion.' (OED) Rosso's comparison of *Ecce Puer* with a Bach prelude was always incomplete; it always desired satisfaction in the fugue.[2] A compelling, ever-changing whole formed from opposing yet related themes; threads woven across one another into an unravelable, pulsating richness. A thesis emerges in the cloth even as it merges with it, is veiled by it: 'like the weaver, the writer works on the wrong side of his material. He has to do only with language, and it is thus that he suddenly finds himself surrounded by meaning … the writer's act of expression is not very different from the painter's' (Merleau-Ponty 1964 p. 45). By busily working with materials Rosso's art has emerged as enduringly compelling in an age in which the nature of materiality is, once more, dramatically in flux.

2 Recall that Etha Fles promised to play for Rosso 'Bach's VIII prelude'; Grove's *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians* singles-out the eighth fugue of the first book of the *Well-tempered Clavier* as a 'magnificent instance' of inversion in a fugue (Grove ed. 1880 v. 2, p. 16).

List of Images

Ecce Puer

ep. a. Medardo Rosso, *Ecce Puer* (1906), varnished plaster, 52 × 43 × 39 cm. Milan, Civica Galleria d'Arte Moderna.

ep. b. Medardo Rosso, *Ecce Puer* (1908), bronze and plaster investment, 45 × 34 × 24 cm. Venice, Galleria Internazionale d'Arte Moderna.

ep. c. Medardo Rosso, *Ecce Puer* (1917–19), wax on plaster, 49 × 28 × 33 cm. Piacenza, Galleria d'Arte Moderna Ricci Oddi.

ep. d. Medardo Rosso, *Ecce Puer* (c. 1920), varnished plaster, 50 × 33 × 39 cm. Edinburgh, National Galleries of Scotland.

ep. e. Medardo Rosso, *Ecce Puer* (c. 1920), polychromed plaster, 50 × 33 × 39 cm. Barzio, Museo Medardo Rosso.

ep. f. Medardo Rosso, *Ecce Puer* (pre-1923), bronze and plaster investment, height 44 cm. Private collection.

Figures

1. Medardo Rosso, *Rosso's studio in Milan, 1883* (c. 1883), photograph, unknown photographer.

2. Medardo Rosso, *Yvette Guilbert* (1895), photograph, Osvaldo Böhm. Moure ed. 1996 p. 194.

3. Medardo Rosso, *Yvette Guilbert* (1895), artist's photograph (undated).

4. Medardo Rosso, annotated documentation of Salon d'Automne, 1904 (undated).

5. Medardo Rosso, re-assemblage of examples from Salon d'Automne, 1904 (undated). Rosso 1906 (unpaginated).

6. Medardo Rosso, comparison with Michelangelo and Rodin (undated). Soffici 1909 (unpaginated).

7. Medardo Rosso, collage of elements from Salon d'Automne, 1904 (undated).

8. Sigismund Goetze, *Alfred William Mond* (c. 1907, detail).

9. Medardo Rosso, *Femme a la voilette* (1893), artist's photograph (undated).

10. Domenico Trentacoste, *Ritratto di Signora*, (c. 1900), wax, 43 × 45 × 25 cm. Galleria Ricci Oddi, Piacenza.

11. Medardo Rosso, *Dr Fles* (1900/1), artist's photograph (undated). Claris 1902 .

12. Medardo Rosso, *Dr Fles* (1900/1), artist's photograph (undated).

13. Medardo Rosso, *Paris la nuit* (1895–6), artist's photograph (undated).

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15. Medardo Rosso, *Paris la nuit* (1895–6) artist's photograph (undated).

16. Medardo Rosso, *Ecce Puer* (1906), detail of artist's photograph (undated). Rosso 1923 (unpaginated).

17. Medardo Rosso, *Ecce Puer* (1906), artist's photographs (undated).

18. Medardo Rosso, *Ecce Puer* (1906), as reproducd in Borghi 1950 p. 53.

19. Auguste Rodin, *Monument à Balzac* (1898). Maillard 1899.

20. Auguste Rodin, *Monument à Balzac* (1898). Maillard 1899.

21. Auguste Rodin, *Monument à Balzac* (1898). Alexandre 1900.

22. Auguste Rodin, *Monument à Balzac* (1898). Mirbeau 1900.

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28. Auguste Rodin, *Monument à Balzac* (1898). Lawton 1906.

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31. Auguste Rodin, *Monument à Balzac* (1898). Grautoff 1908.

32. Auguste Rodin, *Monument à Balzac* (1898). Grautoff 1908.

33. Auguste Rodin, *Monument à Balzac* (1898). Rodin 1911.

34. Auguste Rodin, *Monument à Balzac* (1898). Rodin 1911.

35. Medardo Rosso, *Ecce Puer* (Milan) (1906), artist's photograph (undated). Rosso 1923.

36. Medardo Rosso, *Ecce Puer* (Milan) (1906), artist's photograph (undated). Fles 1922.

37. Medardo Rosso, *Impression d'omnibus* (c. 1883/4), artist's photograph (undated). Claris 1902.

38. Medardo Rosso, *Impression d'omnibus* (c. 1883/4), artist's photograph (undated).

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40. Medardo Rosso, *Ecce Puer* (ep. a) (1906), artist's photograph (undated). Soffici 1909.

41. Medardo Rosso, *Ecce Puer* (ep. a) (1906), artist's photograph (undated). Rosso 1923.

42. Medardo Rosso, *La portinaia* (1883), artist's photograph (undated). Rosso 1923.

43. Medardo Rosso, *Bambino ebreo* (1892–3), artist's photograph (undated). Rosso 1923.

44. Medardo Rosso, *Uomo che legge* (1894), artist's photograph (undated). Rosso 1923.

45. Hercules Segers, *River Valley with a Waterfall: Version II* (c. 1620), 15 × 19 cm. Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale de France.

46. Hercules Segers, *River Valley with a Waterfall: Version I* (c. 1620), 15 × 19 cm. Warsaw, Muzeum Narodowe.

47. Hercules Segers, *River Valley with a Waterfall: Version I* (c. 1620), 15 × 19 cm. Berlin, Staatliche Museen.

48. Hercules Segers, *River Valley with a Waterfall: Version I* (c. 1620), 15 × 19 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

49. Hercules Segers, *River Valley with a Waterfall: Version I* (c. 1620), 15 × 19 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

50. Hercules Segers, *River Valley with a Waterfall: Version II* (c. 1620), 15 × 19 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

51. Unknown cartographer, *Kaart van de landen rond de poolcirkel* (1598), 15 × 19 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

52. Hercules Segers, *River Valley with a Waterfall: Version II* (c. 1620), 15 × 19 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

53. Hercules Segers, *River Valley with a Waterfall: Version II* (c. 1620), 15 × 19 cm. London, British Museum.

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58. Hercules Segers, *River Valley with a Waterfall: Version II* (c. 1620), 15 × 19 cm. London, British Museum.

59. Hercules Segers, *River Valley with a Waterfall: Version II* (c. 1620), 15 × 19 cm. Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen.

60. Jacques-Louis David, *The Oath of the Horatii* (1784), oil on canvas, 330 × 420 cm. Paris, Louvre.

61. Jacques-Louis David, *Leonidas at Thermopylae* (1812–14), oil on canvas, 400 × 530 cm Paris, Louvre.

62. Gustave Courbet, *The Wheatsifters* (1854), oil on canvas, 131 × 167 cm. Nantes, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Nantes.

63. Medardo Rosso, *Aetas Aurea* (1886), wax over plaster, 40 × 42 × 37 cm. Milan, Civica Galleria d'Arte Moderne.

64. Medardo Rosso, *Grande rieuse* (1891), wax over plaster, 28 × 20 × 14 cm. Milan, Civica Galleria d'Arte Moderne.

65. Édouard Manet, *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1862–3), oil on canvas, 208 × 264 cm. Paris, Musée d'Orsay.

66. Édouard Manet, *Street Singer* (c. 1862), oil on canvas, 171 × 105 cm. Boston, MA., Museum of Fine Arts.

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