

Meaning derived from Differing Perspectives on Salient Identity Markers

“Meaning is not internal, it is between parts.” Gregory Bateson, anthropologist.

CONTROLLING IDEA: I am interested in exploring the categorical visual differences of two classes of viewers who photograph historically significant sculptures, namely, the images of trained professional photographers, and contrastingly, the photographs of ordinary tourists or amateurs.

In addition to their differences in personal vision, both the purpose and the photographic tools of the two classes contribute to their often markedly different representations of the same sculptural object. It has been my observation that images produced by professional photographers, whose work is intended for reproduction in art books, have a decidedly different essence than those photos taken by ordinary tourists who just want to preserve their personal views of the well-known sculptures they have seen during their travels.

Tourists have been photographing the sights of Rome to share the works of art that they have seen in person with family and friends. Yet, when they confront the actual sculptures in-situ, they often experience a sense of disorientation or bewilderment because the artwork they *remember* seeing reproduced in books is dramatically different from those they are observing in real life. It may be that a work appears larger or smaller, more or less brilliantly colored, or has a surprising variety of textures that seem to distort its familiarity. It is as if the flat and static reality of the *photographic image* has a greater credibility than that of the actual three-dimensional piece they are experiencing directly.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCESS: In my project I want to photograph historically significant sculptures such as the Laocoon; Apollo Belvedere; Doryphorus; Dying Gaul; Discobolus; Apollo and Daphne, and Pluto and Persephone, both by Bernini; with a regular iPhone camera which tourists use to take snapshots of famous art works. The photos I plan to take will use existing lighting and be shot at available angles just like the shots of ordinary tourists, as opposed to doing the professional photo shoot using auxiliary lights and masked backgrounds.

In the studio, I will project the iPhone image of the sculpture onto a large grid made of postcard sized sheets of paper. Then I will paint each of the individual postcards and mail them back to my studio in Dallas, just as tourists send postcards home as “trophy” from their trip. Once all of the postcards have been delivered, I will re-construct the image of the whole statue by arranging the postcards in their proper order. I expect that these “postcards” will evidence the normal wear and tear of their journey and reiterate the normal time-worn, and sometimes fragmentary, state of the actual sculpture.

ANTICIPATED VALUE: This is a preliminary inquiry into the revelation of multiple realities associated with a seemingly objective, singular work. The viewer will be able to recognize the original sculpture by noting its salient aspects in the assembled postcard images *in combination with* their remembered image of the sculptures from Art History texts and guidebooks. Through this process, they will acquire an enhanced knowledge of famous artworks from the combined postcard images and their art historical/guidebook knowledge, which *together* enrich their meaning, in keeping with anthropologist Gregory Bateson’s insightful observation: “Meaning is not internal, it is between parts.”