HISTOIRE DE L'HISTOIRE DE L'ART DE VASARI À NOS JOURS  by Germain Bazin
Review by: Max Marmor
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Extensive notes follow the text along with an extremely useful appendix of plans, elevations and sections, selected bibliog- 
raphy and detailed index. There is no separate list of illus-
trations but numbers in italics in the index refer to the pages.

Mainstone has succeeded in bringing together a book that 
will appeal to both the specialist and the generalist who 
wants to gain some understanding of this building which still 
astounds despite the passage of more than 1400 years. Some 
of the discussion is very detailed and must be read slowly 
and even reread for understanding, but the time invested 
repays the reader with an understanding of this great build-

It is unfortunate that there are some technical flaws which 
detract from the book's utility. There are problems with the 
quality of reproduction of the photographs. Kahler's book, 
though much more modest, has vastly superior pho-

tographic plates. One can only presume that Mainstone had 
to choose between a separate section of plates on higher-
quality paper and having the plates in proximity to the text 
which the plates help to clarify. Unfortunately, the reproduc-
tions are excessively grainy and lack clarity. Furthermore, 
several of the plates are bled to the page gutter. The iso-
metric views are actually bled across facing pages. Even 
when the book is newly published some of the detail is 
lost at the gutter of the pages. There are also problems in 
that references to plates are in the margins of the double 
column text. Aside from the problems with the quality of 
the photographic plates, the isometric views and photographs 
bleed to and across page gutters and the marginal references 
to plates are not a major problem as long as the book re-

main in the publisher's binding. However, when the book is 
rebound, after the heavy use it is likely to receive, references 
along the inner margin of the double-text columns will be 
lost because the inner margins are too narrow and the de-
dtails on the isometric views and the photographs bled to 
the gutter will be lost as well. This reviewer found only one plate 
to be misidentified.

Despite the shortcomings, this monograph is a valuable 
addition to the literature on Hagia Sophia. Mainstone has 
attempted a Herculean task in summarizing the vast literature 
on Hagia Sophia. To this summary, he has added his own 
detailed observations and critical examination of the fabric 
of the church and his conclusions are very compelling. This 
book is a potential purchase for every art history and archi-
tecture library as well as for most humanities collections.

Thomas Jacoby
University of Connecticut, Storrs


Current debates over the methodological foundations of art 
history have in their train a revival of interest in the 
pioneers of the discipline, many of whom were deeply 
concerned with theoretical issues. Until now, librarians and 
scholars wishing an overview of "the history of art history"
have had to make do with Udo Kultermann's German volume 
of that title. The inadequacies of Kultermann's Geschichte der Kunstgeschichte: Der Weg einer Wissenschaft (Vienna and 
Düsseldorf: Econ-Verlag, 1966; paperback ed. 1981) were 
promptly retailed by L. D. Ettlinger, whose devastating review (Architectural Review 142 [Nov. 1967]: 331) is uncharitable 
but just. It is only fair to add that, while Kultermann's chatty 
volume is (as Ettlinger has shown) superficial, derivative, 
 anecdotal and occasionally unreliable, it had and still has its 
uses. If nothing else, Kultermann's Geschichte has served for 
20 years as a handy if provisional "who's who" of art histo-

ry (something we sorely need), and it is therefore 
regrettable that Abaris Book's announced English version 
never materialized.

Happily, we finally have in Germain Bazin's new book an 
intelligent, well-written history of the discipline of 

art history "from Vasari to the present." This volume super-

sedes Kultermann in almost every respect and should be 
translated into English. (Hacker Books has entertained the idea of issuing an English version and should be encouraged to 
do so.)

Germain Bazin, formerly chief curator of paintings at the 
Louvre and professor at various universities in France, 
Brussels and Canada, is in a position to do justice to both the 
museological and the academic traditions of art history. Un-
like Kultermann, Bazin displays an enviable firsthand com-
mand of the original sources, not only the canonical texts but 
also the major and minor arcana of the genre. He is also able 
to draw upon prolonged personal acquaintance with many of 
the most remarkable art historians of our time. This personal 
dimension lends his epic narrative a lively immediacy that, 
admittedly, occasionally descends to the anecdotal.

"Art history has its heroes." Bazin writes apropos the 
mysterious death of American medievalist Arthur Kingsley Porter 
(p. 260). But the superiority of his tome resides largely in the 
fact that, unlike Kultermann's, it is not merely a biographical 
compendium. To be sure, Bazin does paint scores of memo-
orable portraits. Those of the eminent medievalist Emile Mâle, 
the historicist point and his romantic polymath Salomon Reinach, 
and maverick Joseph Strzygowski are especially noteworthy.

But far from reducing historiography to biography, Bazin suc-

cessfully wed biografty, historical narrative and the sys-
tematic discussion of key issues.

Bazin's text is divided into four main sections. The first, 
"Prologomena" (pp. 11–120), offers an extended survey 

of developments from the dawn of the Renaissance to the 18th 
century. With the second section, "From the History of Art to 
The Sciences of Art" (pp. 121–370), we are introduced to 
the founding fathers of modern art history, the cardinal 
questions. Individual chapters are devoted to: "the seductions 
of determinism," the Vienna school, iconography and iconology, connoisseurship, psychology and psychoanalysis. An important central chapter canvases se-

veral enduring "disenchanting" questions about the elusive 

nature of Roman art, the origins of Gothic, Giotto's role 
at Assisi, and the enigma of Caravaggio. Bazin also traces 
the repercussions of these disputes down to the present day.

Bazin notes at one point that "what characterizes twentieth 
century art history is its resemblance to a jungle" (p. 257). In 
his third main section, "Ways and Means" 
(pp. 371–416), he ventures a map of this tangled terrain. One 
chapter, on "encyclopedic knowledge," surveys the standard 
multivolume art historical surveys and encyclopedias. An-
other offers a crisp, too-crisp discussion of indexing and ab-
tracting services. The brevity of this discussion (a mere four 

pages) is out of all proportion to the importance of the sub-
ject; nor is it wholly reliable. We are told, for example, that 
that unlike the Répertoire, the Art Index "only concerns Anglo-
American literature" (p. 374). A chapter comparing "the world of images" provides an instructive history of art 
historical illustration, including profiles of the great pho-

tographic archives and some critical comments on present 
practices. A brief chapter on "the support of science" exam-
ines the introduction and role of scientific methods and mod-
ern technology in art historical studies.

The fourth and final main section of the book, which bears 
the title "Territories" (pp. 417–552), offers chronological pro-
files of the major national traditions of art historical scholar-
ship. Some of these profiles (France, Italy, Spain, Portugal 
and Latin America) are more authoritative than others. 
Bazin's treatment of the English tradition leaves something 
to be desired, while the chapter on the United States, which 
devolves to Alfonz Lengyel, is cursory and breathless. But 
these two chapters are by no means representative of the 
book as a whole, and Bazin's accounts of international de-
velopments are generally appreciative, sympathetic and well-
informad. A brief (15-page) conclusion offers the author's per-
sonal reflections upon the state of art history at our own 
fin de siècle.

Editorially, the book is inadequate. The index is neither 

exhaustive nor completely reliable. The notes, too, present 
problems. In more than one place the author speaks of "pre-
cious lost notes," often notes of contemporary histo-
rians than the texts themselves" (p. 484). But his own end-
notes, in which personal names and titles in languages other

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than French are almost systematically misspelled, are symptomatic of Bazin's abhorrence. Helene Bazin's informative notes take the place of a full-fledged bibliography. For the earlier period, of course, he is able to direct the reader to Schlosser et al. But a systematic bibliography of the literature by and about the art historians of the modern period is badly needed. We do not find it here, where it surely belongs. Admittedly, this criticism is somewhat unfair: Bazin has not sought to produce a textbook; in every way his work is closer to an extended essay. But if a translation is undertaken, the publisher should consider commissioning a bibliography, too.

There are significant omissions from Bazin's survey. At one point he laments the omission of Waldemar Deonna from Kultermann's Geschichte, "which claims to be a survey of art history" (p. 180). But Bazin, too, consigns several notable art historians to oblivion. To cite just four examples: Herbert Horne, whose Botticelli (1908) has been called (by John Pope-Hennessey among others) the greatest artist monograph ever penned; Belgian art historian Jacques Mesnil, friend of Aby Warburg and author of several significant works on Renaissance art; the versatile Oswald Siren; and Harvard's F. J. Mather—none are omitted.

Bazin has his own methodological bias. He is a pragmatist and noticeably impatient with theory. Several times he laments "the tyranny of metaphysical speculations that became a passion in Germany after Kant and Hegel and ultimately erected a wall between thought and the plastic reality of the work of art" (p. 156). Bazin is aware that his own stance reflects the abiding tension between the pragmatic French school of art history and the more theoretically inclined German school, a tension he traces all the way back to the Comte de Caylus and Winckelmann. Yet he goes out of his way to do justice to the immense German contribution to the field, and readily acknowledges that "for a long time French art history developed in isolation, ignoring or pretending to ignore developments elsewhere" (p. 493).

Still, because of Bazin's methodological stance, even this admirable "history of art history" may fail to satisfy contemporary scholars engaged in methodological questions. There is work still to be done. But with this volume, German Bazin has made a magisterial contribution to a timely debate—and to the literature of art history.

Max Marmor
Columbia University

BRIEF NOTICES


This original, very accessible study is based largely on a series of lectures given at Bryn Mawr College in 1985. In four brief but skillfully written chapters, Alpers (professor of art history at UC—Berkeley) examines Rembrandt's anachronistic method of handling paint in his later works, focusing on the manner in which he painted hands; she looks at his painted figures, arguing that they are presented to the viewer in theatrical terms; she discusses the importance of the studio to the painter, calling it the stage that he directs; and she examines how Rembrandt utilized the marketplace, making his art a unique commodity by avoiding the usual dependence on patrons. While the footnotes are extensive and useful, the remaining reference matter could be improved. The index lists only names of individuals and inexcusably excludes titles of paintings. Black-and-white reproductions are grouped in four sections and, while numerous, are poorly printed and often not dated (curiously, in some cases the same image appears as often as three times). The 12 colored plates, mostly details, are very well printed but not numbered, making them awkward to use. Despite the editorial flaws, Alpers' study helps explain why many of Rembrandt's paintings are now "dissociated" by the Rembrandt Research Project: mainly because of his painting technique and studio practice.

James H. Carmin
University of Oregon


In 1914 Louis Comfort Tiffany's children commissioned a book about his painting, stained and blown glass, jewelry and decorating. Only 502 numbered copies were produced and distributed to relatives, friends, museums and libraries. This is a facsimile of that rare volume with a new foreword by Alastair Duncan. Duncan tells us that the book was written by Charles de Kay. The emphasis is on Tiffany the artist. The chapter on stained glass emphasizes Tiffany's sensitive awareness of color and his experiments in producing glass. Duncan attributes the lack of mention of lamps and pottery to the fact that these items were mass produced.

Tiffany's story is told in stilted prose. The art historical aspects are based more on romantic generalities than on documented specifics. The colored plates have a very soft quality. The book is an artifact primarily of interest to Tiffany scholars.

Helene H. Weis
Willett Stained Glass Studio


Overshadowed by French painting for many decades, late 19th- and early 20th-century Scandinavian painting has recently become the subject of numerous studies. While this title may appear to be the latest, in actuality it is the most recently revised because it owes its origins to the important catalogue that accompanied the 1982 Brooklyn Museum exhibition, Northern Light: Realism and Symbolism in Scandinavian Painting, 1880-1920. Varnedoe has revised only slightly his essay that appeared in the earlier catalogue, while the six other essays from that source have now been omitted. The useful biographies and entries that appeared earlier, written by the author's students from the Institute of Fine Arts, are virtually unrevised (including two entries that discuss two completely different paintings than were shown in Brooklyn, although of the same subject). The excellent quality of the reproductions in this most recent book, almost all in color, is the major improvement over the earlier publication, along with the inclusion of more than 40 additional paintings, many by artists not seen at the exhibition. The comprehensive bibliography, seen before, retains some minor misspellings; there is no index, and few footnotes. As Varnedoe noted, this book was designed for a general audience, and with this goal in mind it succeeds. Despite this caveat, most art libraries should obtain Northern Light for its improvements, but most readers will wish that the author and publisher would have done more with this.

James H. Carmin
University of Oregon


Unrevised paper edition of 1986 catalogue accompanying the exhibition of the same name at the Whitney Museum of