

The Historiography of the Frame: Knowledge and Practice

JANET M. BROOKE

In 1975, when I joined the curatorial team at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, frames, let alone frame scholarship, were not on the radar screen. Looking back even further, to my student days, I am quite certain that frames were never mentioned by a single professor. Those of you who are of my generation will remember slide lectures in darkened classrooms and standard texts like the then-current edition of H.W. Janson's *History of Art*, where the word "frame" does not appear in the index. Not a single frame is included in its illustrations of the corpus of objects canonical within the "pyramids to Picasso" narrative then holding sway in art history course work. Little wonder, then, that most of us began our careers with little or no knowledge of frames, and little or no impulse to take them into account. To this day, print and online reproductions of works of art rarely include frames, a notable exception being the auction literature – so often a trend-setter in cataloguing protocols – where paintings on offer are illustrated with their frames when the latter are deemed value-added components to the enterprise, a sales strategy often resulting in higher hammer prices.

But old ideas die hard, a good example being the Metropolitan Museum of Art's massive history painting, *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, by the German-born American painter Emanuel Leutze.¹ Painted in 1851 and acquired soon after by a New York collector for the then-stupendous sum of \$10,000, the work entered the Met's collection in 1897, where it would soon become a visitor favourite, remaining so for over a century. By the time it was donated, it had already lost its original frame, an elephantine construction custom-made for the painting, boasting iconographical accretions and an inspiring inscription elaborating the romantic historical narrative intended by the artist. In 2007, in anticipation of the opening of its renovated American Wing, the Met invested a reported half-million dollars to replicate the frame, long lost to the vagaries of time and indifference and known only from archival photographs.² The painting, now reframed to its full visual impact and layers of meaning, is a centerpiece of the museum's new installations (Fig. 1). Yet on its collection website, the painting continues to appear frame-less, orphaned from the richly laden and very expensive "packaging"



1 | Emanuel Leutze, *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, in its replicated original frame on view in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's American Wing, New York, 2014. (Photo: Adrian Iorgu)

it was always meant to have. Closer to home, at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA), Gabriel Max's 1878 *The Raising of Jairus' Daughter*, another public favourite, regularly appears frame-less in the museum's publications and website, cropped from its elaborate and iconographically hefty Arts-and-Crafts oak frame, complete with Hebrew inscription, that has graced it since at least 1888, commissioned by its first owner, the Montreal collector Sir George A. Drummond (Fig. 2).³

Back to the mid-1970s: as curators and directors we are catapulted into all manner of unpredictable directions, requiring us to come to terms with unexpected challenges in the process of researching and presenting the collections we steward. Frames became one such direction for me, so that by circumstance, I came to be engaged with the subject in several different ways. I wish I could say that on arrival at the MMFA, I was already well acquainted with the Kantian philosophical critique that defines frames as a distracting form of extraneous ornament. In truth, I could boast no such enlightenment, and in my defence I doubt most other curators were any more aware of such



2 | Gabriel Max, *The Raising of Jairus' Daughter*, in its original frame, on view in the European Galleries of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 2014. (Photo: author)

ideological underpinnings to our thinking than I was. Curators tend to be a pragmatic lot, coping with the daily necessities of collections care, exhibition, and object research. But certainly, our thinking at the time was Kantian, insofar as frames were generally regarded as merely a means of attaching paintings to walls and protecting their edges from grubby fingers (which they indeed do). Certainly, frames were no more understood, valued, cared for, or regarded by anyone else I worked with and hoped to learn from. Frames were simply *there*. Around the pictures in my care, yes – usually – but also not, and thus requiring a solution if I were to exhibit them. When damaged beyond practical use, I was encouraged to have them removed and replaced by plain, new, so-called “travelling frames” that I was assured would make everyone’s life easier, including the paintings’. Some frames seemed utterly inappropriate to their paintings, even to my as-yet untrained eye. At the same time, I observed empty frames of all sorts and sizes lurking about the building in odd

places – basement corridors, under stairways, rarely in the painting vaults – in various states of disrepair that spoke to me of decades of *ad hoc* practices and indifference about their place in the institution, quite typical of many museums at the time. Today I wish I had pictures of some of that sad frame detritus residing hither and yon, as I think they would speak volumes, but perhaps the absence of such documentation says just as much about what our thinking was back then. It seemed, therefore, that picture frames were both transposable and disposable, used and abused, subject to the whims of taste and expediency. Certainly they got no respect, and I cringe in recollection of the sight of technicians ramming yet another screw-eye into the back of some old gilded frame, chewing yet another hole into ancient wood already scarred by years of similar crude handling.

But somehow my curiosity was piqued. Surely these orphaned and abandoned frames had stories to tell me, and so they did. Examination of painting and frame versos reveals all manner of crucial information: the names of former owners and dealers, past exhibitions, and so on. Granted, such information is often fragmentary and opaque, requiring years of experience to decode. In the case of the Montreal Museum's orphaned frames, perhaps most eloquently, a number had the museum's own inventory sticker on the back, which told me they belonged to the paintings stolen in the spectacular 1972 heist of eighteen European paintings. The thieves, apparently seeing no interest in burdening themselves with the weight and size of frames in the execution of their crime, preferred to rip the paintings free of the inconvenience while they were ripping off the paintings themselves. So these frames became, at least for me, tragic placeholders for part of the collection that was no more. Were I still a curator at the Museum, I would be tempted to reserve a corner in my galleries to display them for that very reason: as witnesses to an event of great consequence both for the paintings and for the institution. Such ideas had little currency back then, but I can say that in my final years at the Museum, in the late 1980s, I undertook an unofficial salvage operation with a few like-minded colleagues. We created a modest storage space to gather all the frames we could find, in the hope that one day they might be properly catalogued, conserved, and – where possible – repatriated to the paintings to which they belonged.

At the core of my curiosity was my new-found interest in collecting history, then a methodology at the far edges of typical curatorial concerns. By the mid-1980s I was researching and reconstructing Montreal collections of European art formed before 1920, towards the exhibition and publication *Discerning Tastes*. Frames, like the one commissioned by Sir George A. Drummond for the Gabriel Max that I mentioned earlier, became an important dimension of my work.⁴ For frames, above everything else, through

their styles, physical states, markings, and so on, can tell us what happens to paintings *after* they are created, their trajectories through time, and therefore reveal as much about their afterlives as they do about the paintings themselves. Frames can tell us, or at least suggest, who may have once owned a painting, from whence he or she came, and the ways it might have been interpreted and valued over time. The indifference with which frame history was treated for most of the twentieth century was in fact helpful in one regard: there was a time, not so long ago, that one could pinpoint, in a loan exhibition of seventeenth-century Dutch painting, for example, whether a painting came from a European or North American source on the basis of its frame. The North American loans were almost invariably in the eighteenth-century French frames favoured by the dealers through whose hands they passed, and by the collectors who desired a more elaborate frame to accord with the opulent domestic settings of Fifth Avenue – or for that matter, of the Square Mile neighbourhood here in Montreal.

In the second edition of his *Critique of Aesthetic Judgement*, published in 1793, Immanuel Kant added picture frames to his examples of those elements that interfere with authentic aesthetic response, saying that the frame functions “merely to win approval of the picture by means of its charm, and is then called finery, and takes away from [the painting’s] genuine beauty.”⁵ In other words, frames are extraneous and interfere, diminish, or compete with, visual appreciation of paintings and their meanings as intended by their creators. By implication, it is those intentions, and only those, that count. In the early twentieth century, Kant’s notion indirectly found pure iteration when the first generation of abstract artists, such as the Russian Suprematists, themselves rejected the frame, scaling it back to a wooden strip to allow display, nothing more, or even hanging directly from the stretcher or panel. In the early 1980s, a similar approach famously found its ultimate and most influential *institutional* expression at New York’s Museum of Modern Art. Most of MoMA’s displayed collection, including its foundational late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century works, was reframed in simple baguettes and shadow boxes – a reductivist approach that claimed to return the paintings to their “pure aesthetic state,” but which in fact corralled them into the institution’s strict Modernist art historical narrative. The audacity – one might argue manipulation – inherent in MoMA’s installation strategy becomes clear when one compares it to the Cézannes, Matisses, and Picassos as seen in the homes of their first owners in the early twentieth century, typically in Old Master frames and likely the way they were acquired.⁶ Ironically, of course, MoMA’s new framing policy was not at all new. Princely and aristocratic collectors of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe similarly sought through so-called “house framing” to put their own stamps

of ownership and meaning on their pictures – whether in reality or ideally, as can be seen in any number of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century paintings recording such collections in situ. MOMA’s declared “pure” approach was thus no less laden with post-creation subtext and ideological accretion than that of its historical predecessors. On this subject, I recommend the insightful analysis of MOMA’s strategy by Reesa Greenberg, published in *Parachute* in 1986.⁷

Like all curators dealing with diverse collections and the challenges of installation, I turned to the literature when faced with the mysteries of frames. In the 1970s, alas, there was very little. Other than the occasional article in journals such as *Apollo* and *Connoisseur*, aimed generally at collectors and mostly addressing questions of taste, decoration, and only to some degree historical accuracy, we had little to go on. A handful of scholarly articles had been published in France and Germany at the beginning of the century, notably by Wilhelm von Bode, addressing period-specific framing styles in the context of his innovative re-installation of the collection at the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin.⁸ The sparse monographic literature was supplied in fact by frame dealers, by then arguably the only true specialists in the field. Thus, in 1963, we had Henry Heydenryk’s *The Art and History of Frames*, and his more modest *The Right Frame* of 1964.⁹ In 1977, the German art historian Claus Grimm published a serious survey book, translated into English under the title *The Book of Picture Frames* in 1981.¹⁰ Providing a range of illustrations of historically-appropriate framed paintings, and including an in-depth historical overview, glossary of terms, and bibliography, Grimm’s monograph quickly became the standard reference work, and continues to be useful today.

From these few tools, it became clear that frames existed in a sort of grey area between the art work itself and the space it occupied. Historically, frame designers, carvers and gilders were more often than not furniture makers and other specialized artisans in the employ of architects and patrons. Before the late nineteenth century, artists themselves were infrequently involved in the process, although occasional evidence points to their efforts to control the framing destiny of their works. For example, a letter of 1639 from Nicolas Poussin to a patron evokes his concern to see his painting suitably framed, and likely stands as emblematic of contemporary attitudes otherwise undocumented.¹¹ The account books of Joseph Wright of Derby, in the 1760s, include payments to a frame-maker for several paintings, and again, he was likely not alone in his generation in collaborating with framers.¹² Notably, with the increasing independence of artists in the late nineteenth century as working professionals in a speculative marketplace, some artists themselves designed frames for their paintings – Whistler, Degas, and the

Pointillists being well-known examples – thus reclaiming the frame as part of the aesthetic of their works.¹³ At the same time (and for the first time), dealers such as Paul Durand-Ruel began framing their inventories in Old Master or pseudo-Old Master frames, usually – but not always – with the approval of his Impressionist artists, to make them more appealing to an expanding bourgeois clientele in what emerged as a wildly-successful and oft-copied promotional effort, particularly in the burgeoning North American marketplace.¹⁴ From these few examples I make the obvious point that frame history does not follow in lockstep with painting history. The idea of the “original” frame – that which first was attached to a given painting – is a moving target, and one that speaks not only to the intentions of the artist, but also to the social, economic, and cultural contexts in which the artwork was released into the world. Its existence through time, in the hands of owners, dealers and institutions, is often marked by changing frames that mirror its changing contexts of desire, perceived meaning, and status. The degree that these contexts are consequential to us as part of the story of works of art is the degree to which frames become important.

In 1978, French philosopher Jacques Derrida published his influential book *La vérité en peinture*, including the essay “Parergon” in which he challenged the Kantian idea of the picture frame as extraneous ornament, and proposed the existence of an integrated and dynamic relationship between paintings and their frames.¹⁵ Derrida claimed that each functions in an active and fluid condition with the other, and just as importantly with the physical and conceptual spaces they occupy, which themselves become frames for the works of art they house. Much ink has been spilled over Derrida’s argument since then, and his analysis has been embraced and parsed by semioticians, structuralists, deconstructionists, and others who find a great deal to say about the broader metaphor of the frame in literature, theatre, linguistics, and other disciplines. Through Derrida, “framing,” indeed, became a theoretical and ideological as well as a physical process, describing critical acts of interpretation, control, exclusion, focus, and so on. Artists themselves were already embracing the metaphorical idea of the frame in this vein: the Conceptual artist Hans Haacke, for example, playfully titled his 1975 record of site-specific, politically-charged museum stagings of the relationships of artworks to audiences, donors, and institutions *Framing and Being Framed*.¹⁶ Curatorially speaking, Immanuel Kant had us tolerating the frame as a distracting accretion; in Jacques Derrida, we found thoughtful philosophical confirmation of what we already understood in our daily practices: that decisions about frames are weighty and that frames carry deep implications, aesthetically and well beyond – for the paintings they embrace, for the framed paintings they may reside with, and in the physical environments they might

occupy. Their very presence (or absence) has much to say about how paintings have been received and understood over time. They are cultural statements: shifting signs of patronage, possession, understanding, the marketplace, institutional ideologies, that over time add inevitable and indissoluble layers and traces of meaning onto the pictures they live with. The act of hanging framed paintings on a wall in a room involves a series of decisions and therefore makes a statement that irrevocably interacts with the paintings themselves. In other words, this suggests that frames, and more broadly, the installation practices implicit in their use, are a language, to be spoken well or badly, but the voices of frames can most certainly be heard. Grimm and Heydenrich, with their one-off sequenced illustrations of framed paintings, could help us learn the vocabulary, but only perhaps in the sense that we could order a meal in Italian without necessarily conversing easily with the waiter or with the couple at the next table.

Happily, help was at hand. Thanks no doubt in part to Derrida's influential text, frame studies blossomed in the 1980s and 1990s. Philosophy aside, what we needed was information – etymological dictionaries and grammars if you will – and for the next twenty years an explosion of monographs, exhibition catalogues, standing collection catalogues, and specialized articles came to the rescue. In 1992, in a graduate course I gave at York University, I assigned a student the task of building an annotated bibliography of frame studies, and she located no less than 165 references, the majority of which had been published within the previous decade. Museums themselves began inventorying their frames as part of their collections, including here at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, where in the early nineties Sacha Marie Levay adopted those orphaned frames I mentioned earlier, catalogued them, and ensured their proper storage and care, all the while developing the considerable expertise in frame history and conservation methods for which she is known today. In 1984, the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam published its groundbreaking exhibition catalogue on seventeenth-century Dutch framing practices, which, particularly following its English translation in 1995 as *Framing in the Golden Age*, became a worldwide game-changer in the field.¹⁷ *The Grove Dictionary of Art*, first launched in its multi-volume printed form in 1996, devoted no less than 125 pages to its entry on frames, written by British frame expert and dealer Paul Mitchell and his collaborator Lynn Roberts. By way of comparison, *Grove's* entry on Florence is 43 pages long; Rembrandt, a mere 26. Their monographs, published the same year, now take their place among the standard reference tools on the subject.¹⁸ The 165 bibliographic references painstakingly assembled by my student in 1992 would easily triple today, and are further augmented by an ever-evolving plethora of credible and



3 | View of the installation of the Art Gallery of Ontario's Italian Baroque collection in the E.R. Wood Gallery, 1992. (Photo: AGO)

not-so-credible online resources. Frame studies, indeed, have gone from the proverbial zero to sixty in record time.¹⁹

By 1990 I was Curator of Old Master Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, then mid-way through a massive building expansion project. My first order of business was a complete reconsideration of the European collections towards their re-installation in newly-restored galleries I was designing at the same time. Frames and framing were very much on my mind, especially as some of the works I planned to include in my galleries were poorly framed. I began looking around for just the kind of abandoned corpus of frames that I had assembled in Montreal, in the hopes of repatriating some of them to their paintings. No such luck: the AGO had not a single orphaned frame in its building, and I wondered what had become of surely damaged or unwanted frames removed from paintings in the collection. It seemed that in its recent past the AGO may have been influenced by MOMA's Modernist attitude towards frames, and curatorially my intention was to create a more historically evocative context for the collections in my care (Fig. 3). Framing had become a bit of an obsession with me, and I found a ready ear for my

ruminations in my newly-arrived director, Glenn Lowry who (ironically enough) would later become director of MoMA. Curatorial life is full of surprises and unexpected turns of events. One day, we invited a prominent Torontonian to lunch, in the hope of beginning a donor relationship with him. Searching for something to say in what was a rather awkward first meeting, I began sharing my thoughts about frames, and to my great surprise he declared his own deep interest in the subject. Even better, he revealed that he had been collecting Old Master frames for years. From that lunch and serendipitous conversation, over the next year came the beginnings of a sustained affiliation, and the gift of his extraordinary frame holdings to the AGO, catapulting it to one of the most significant repositories of European frames in North America (Fig. 4). Around the time I was leaving the AGO, in 1995, I hastily developed a temporary installation of about one hundred of these frames in the Walker Court, to celebrate the donation; sadly it was not properly photographed, but I was pleased recently to come across a small black-and-white detail image in Paul Mitchell and Lynda Roberts's 1996 *A History of European Picture Frames*.²⁰ Already in 1986, the Art Institute of Chicago had published its frame collection in the exhibition catalogue *The Art of the Edge*.²¹ In 2007, frame dealer and maker Timothy Newbery published his authoritative catalogue of the 371 frames in the Robert Lehman Collection at the Metropolitan Museum, following on his exhibition catalogue of that collection's Italian frames in 1990, and a standing collection catalogue of the holdings at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.²² Of such permanent collection catalogues, I make an observation that I think is important to our understanding of the current state and direction of the literature on frames: by their very nature, frames are both objects in their own right, and works that belong to a far wider discourse. The methodologies applied in publications such as Newbery's favour the former at the expense of the latter, addressing frame techniques, materials, dating, and region of production through classic catalogue entries. On questions of purpose and provenance the authors are often silent, leaving us to wonder how, where, by whom, and for what these frames may have been used over time. One day, perhaps, the AGO will publish a scholarly treatment of its own spectacular frame holdings, not only for their considerable merits, but also because they too, by virtue of their location, have become part of the narrative of frames and framing in Canada. And if it does, I see an opportunity to broaden the methodology towards a more inclusive and holistic discussion of these works in terms of object, history, and evolving use.²³

You will have noted by now that, beyond the foundational philosophical texts of Kant and Derrida, I have not mentioned the literature that has emerged in the past forty years addressing the more ideological and



4 | Antique frames, Art Gallery of Ontario vault. (Photo: Carlo Catenazzi © 2015 Art Gallery of Ontario)

interdisciplinary debates around frames and framing, such as the influential studies by Pierre Bourdieu (*Distinction*), Louis Marin (*On Representation*), and their progeny. Suffice it to say that literature is copious and expanding, but perhaps immediately outside the theme of the symposium presentations on which this and the following papers are based, which seek to build specific knowledge around Canadian frames and framing. On that subject, the literature is sparse. We begin here the work of building knowledge and practice to align our understandings of the field in Canada with the considerable expertise that has emerged in European and American art history in the last generation. From 2002 to 2012, I was director of the Agnes Etherington Art Centre in Kingston, which holds extensive collections of Canadian and European painting. As it happens, it is a picture there that is the subject of one of the very few early specialized studies on Canadian frames: a short article, published in 1977 by Sybille Pantazzi, focussing on the artist-designed frame by J.E.H. MacDonald (1873–1932) that surrounds his *Wild Ducks* of 1917, and publishing his drawings for frames from a sketchbook then in a private collection and now at the National Gallery of Canada (Fig. 5).²⁴ From her essay we learn that James Wilson Morrice's (1865–1924) sketchbooks also include designs for frames. She also informs us that the Montreal dealer William R. Watson recorded in his memoirs that Maurice Cullen (1866–1934) had carved his own frames, and I will be glad to learn that someone has since further investigated his practice.²⁵ We know, of course, that William Kurelek (1927–1977), a trained frame maker, and Alex Coleville (1920–2013), among many others, designed and/or built their own frames.²⁶ We also know that we have yet to parse such intentions, for example, to differentiate between aesthetic conviction and economic necessity. And we have yet to understand the practices of frame artisans here, or of dealer framing, or of collectors' practices, or of the roles of public institutions in the Canadian story of frames. Nor have we considered framing as it pertains to photography, prints, and drawings and more conceptually to installation art. Again, it is Reesa Greenberg who made the first analytical foray into these subjects, or more exactly into the question of their absence in Canadian studies.²⁷ She noted that a comprehensive Canadian history of framing practices had yet to be written, and posited that such a study would have much to reveal about broader issues of Canadian identity as shaped over time by artists and institutions. Earlier still, in 1955, the magazine *Canadian Art* published three short essays under the intriguing title "A Symposium on Framing."²⁸ Was it really a symposium? The introduction to the modest essays by Montrealers – painter Jacques de Tonnancour (1917–2005), gallerist Agnès Lefort, and artist and frame maker Gabriel Filion (b. 1920) – makes no mention of location or date. But whatever its form, it would appear to be an early inkling in this



5 | J.E.H. MacDonald, *Wild Ducks*, 1917, oil on pressed board, 121.9 × 149.9 cm.
Kingston, Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, gift of the Queen's
University Art Foundation in appreciation of Robert Melville Smith, 1943 (00-096).
Detail view of artist-designed frame. (Photo: Alicia Boutilier)

country to situate the issue in print. A great deal has happened worldwide in the field since then, and the essays that follow in this volume bring the issue of frames and frame history squarely into the Canadian arena.

NOTES

My thanks go to David Harris, Associate Professor at the School of Image Arts, Ryerson University, for the many excellent suggestions he made during his review of this paper as presented at the symposium.

- 1 Emanuel Leutze, *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, 1851, oil on canvas, 378.5 × 647.7 cm. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of John Stewart Kennedy, 1897 (9734).
- 2 The level of interest in the Met's reframing project can be gauged by the press coverage it received; see for example Glenn COLLINS, "What Surrounds a Legend? A 3,000-Pound Gilt Frame," *The New York Times*, 19 February 2007.
- 3 Gabriel Max, *The Raising of Jairus' Daughter*, 1878, oil on canvas, 123.3 × 180.4 cm. The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, gift of Lord Atholstan (1920.117). The inscription is taken from Mark 5:51 and Luke 8:54, in which Jesus commands "Child, I say to you, get up." For additional information on the painting and its frame, see: Janet M. BROOKE, *Discerning Tastes: Montreal Collectors 1880–1920* (Montreal: The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 1989), 124–26.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 "Even what is called ornamentation (*parerga*), i.e. what is only an adjunct, and not an intrinsic constituent in the complete representation of the object, in augmenting the delight of taste does so only by means of its form. Thus it is with the frames of pictures or the drapery of statues, or the colonnades of palaces. But if the ornamentation does not itself enter into the composition of the beautiful form, if it is introduced like a gold frame merely to win approval for the picture by means of its charm it is then called finery and takes away from the genuine beauty." Immanuel KANT, *The Critique of Aesthetic Judgement*, second edition 1793, trans. James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Clarendon, 1911), 68.
- 6 Excellent visual documentation of one such collection can be found in: Janet BISHOP, Cécile DEBRAY, and Rebecca RABINOW, eds., *The Steins Collect: Matisse, Picasso, and the Parisian Avant-Garde* (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011).
- 7 Reesa GREENBERG, "MOMA and Modernism: The Frame Game," *Parachute* (March–May 1986): 21–31. The author provides a detailed – and damning – analysis of MOMA's reframing scheme and its role in promulgating the institution's underlying Modernist vision.
- 8 See, for example: Wilhelm VON BODE, "Ausstellung der Gemälde in K. Fr. Museum mit alten Rahmen," *Amtliche Berichte der Berliner Museen* 33 (1912). Bode's pioneering approach is the subject of a recent exhibition and catalogue: Hannelore NÜTZMANN, *Schöne Rahmen: aus den Beständen der Berliner Gemäldegalerie* (Berlin: SMB Gemäldegalerie, 2002).
- 9 Henry HEYDENRYK, *The Art and History of Frames: An Inquiry into the Enhancement of Paintings* (New York: James H. Heineman, 1963), and Henry HEYDENRYK, *The Right Frame: A Consideration of the Right and Wrong Methods of Framing Pictures* (New York: James J. Heineman, 1964).
- 10 Claus GRIMM, *The Book of Picture Frames* (New York: Arabis Books, 1981), translated from the German edition, *Alte Bilderrahmen* (Munich: Verlag Georg D.W. Callwey, 1978).
- 11 "Quand vous aurez reçu le tableau, je vous supplie de l'orner d'un peu de corniche car il en a besoin afin que, en le considérant en toutes ses parties, les rayons de l'œil soient retenus et non point épars au-dehors en recevant les espèces des autres objets voisins qui venant pêle-mêle avec les choses dépeintes confondent le jour." Nicolas Poussin to Paul Fréart de Chantelou, 28 April 1639, likely referring to *The Israelites*

- Gathering Manna in the Desert* (Paris, Musée du Louvre). Nicolas POUSSIN, *Lettres et propos sur l'art*, ed. Anthony Blunt (Paris: Hermann, 1964), 35–36.
- 12 Wright's work with the framer John Dubourg and his collaboration in frame design for his later paintings are published in Paul MITCHELL, "Wright's Picture Frames," in *Wright of Derby*, ed. Judy Egerton (London: The Tate Gallery, 1990), 273–88.
 - 13 On the subject of nineteenth-century frames in general, and on artist-designed frames in particular, see: Eva MENDGEN, *In Perfect Harmony: Picture + Frame, 1850–1920* (Amsterdam/Zwolle: Van Gogh Museum/Waanders, 1995). Degas's sketchbook containing several pages of designs for frame profiles is at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, département des estampes et photographies, Carnet 23.
 - 14 Durand-Ruel's marketing practices are the subject of a recent exhibition and publication: Sylvie PATRY, ed., *Paul Durand-Ruel, le pari de l'impressionnisme* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2014).
 - 15 "May we attach the third example to this [Kant's] series of examples, to the question which they raise? The third is in fact the first – I have proceeded in reverse . . . It is the frames of paintings. The frame: *parergon* like the others . . . The incomprehensibility of the border, at the border, appears not only at the inner limit, between the frame and the painting . . . but also at its outer limit. *Parerga* have a thickness, a surface which separates them not only, as Kant would have it, from the body of the *ergon* itself, but also from the outside, from the wall on which the painting is hung . . . as well as from the entire historic, economic, and political field of inscription in which the drive of the signature arises (an analogous problem, as we will see later). No "theory," no "practice," no "theoretical practice" can be effective here if it does not rest on the frame, the invisible limit of (between) the interiority of meaning (protected by the entire hermeneutic, semiotic, phenomenological, and formalist tradition) and (of) all the extrinsic empiricals. . . ." Jacques DERRIDA, "The *Parergon*," trans. Craig Owens, *October* 9 (Summer 1979): 24.
 - 16 Hans HAACKE, *Framing and Being Framed: 7 Works 1970–75* (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design/New York: New York University Press, 1975).
 - 17 Pieter J.J. VAN THIEL and C.J. DE BRUYN KOPS, *Framing in the Golden Age: Picture and Frame in 17th-century Holland*, trans. Andrew P. McCormick (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum/Zwolle: Waanders, 1995); Dutch edition *Prijs de Lijst: De Hollandse schillerijlijst in de zeventiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum/The Hague: Staatsuitgeverij, 1984).
 - 18 Paul MITCHELL and Lynn ROBERTS, *Frameworks: Form, Function and Ornament in European Portrait Frames* (London: Paul Mitchell Ltd/Merrell Holberton, 1996); *A History of European Picture Frames* (London: Paul Mitchell Ltd/Merrell Holberton, 1996). The same year, a study of English portrait frames was published by Jacob SIMON, *The Art of the Picture Frame: Artists, Patrons and the Framing of Portraits in Britain* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 1996).
 - 19 The growing interest has been such that the subject has also become worthy of museum publications aimed at the general public, such as Nicolas PENNY, *Frames*, The Pocket Guide Series (London: National Gallery Publications, 1997).
 - 20 Paul MITCHELL and Lynn ROBERTS, *A History of European Picture Frames* (note 18 above), 8.
 - 21 Richard R. BRETTELL, *The Art of the Edge: European Frames 1300–1600* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1986).

- 22 Timothy NEWBERY, *The Robert Lehman Collection, XIII: Frames* (New York/Princeton: The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Princeton University Press, 2007); Timothy NEWBERY, George BISACCA, and Laurence B. KATNER, *Italian Renaissance Frames* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1990); Timothy NEWBERY, *Frames and Framings in the Ashmolean Museum* (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, 2002).
- 23 Since this paper was presented, a fine example of such an approach has been published: Nicholas PENNY, Peter SCHADE, and Harriet O'NEILL, *The Sansovino Frame* (London: National Gallery, 2015).
- 24 J.E.H. MacDonald, *Wild Ducks*, 1917, oil on pressed board, 121.9 × 149.9 cm. Kingston, Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, gift of the Queen's University Art Foundation in appreciation of Robert Melville Smith, 1943 (00-096). Sybille PANTAZZI, "A Picture Frame by J.E.H. MacDonald," *RACAR* 4:1 (1977): 32-35. Since the appearance of Pantazzi's article, a facsimile edition of the sketchbook has been published: J.E.H. MACDONALD, *Sketchbook, 1915-1922: A Facsimile Edition* (Newcastle, ON: Penumbra Press, 1979). MacDonald's design for the frame on *Wild Ducks*, and several variations, appear on plate LXVI.
- 25 William R. WATSON, *Retrospective: Recollections of a Montreal Art Dealer* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 34, where the author recalls his preparations for a 1922 exhibition in his gallery: "Cullen disliked the ornate, solid frames that were seen on European paintings at the time, and began to carve his own frames out of chestnut wood. I finally persuaded him to stop doing this, as it seemed he was spending as much time on the frames as on the paintings. I soon found a woodworker to make the frames to his specifications."
- 26 Beyond designing and building his own frames, Kurelek worked as a framer at the Isaacs Gallery, Toronto, starting in 1960; thus at least some paintings by others that passed through that dealer have – or had – frames built by him. See Brian DEDORA, "The Necessary Frame: William Kurelek as Picture Framer," in *William Kurelek: The Messenger*, eds. Tobi Bruce, Mary Jo Hughes, and Andrew Kear (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery; Hamilton: Art Gallery of Hamilton; Victoria: Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, 2011), 179-83.
- 27 Reesa GREENBERG, "Unframing the Canadian Frame," *Vanguard* 13:1 (February 1984): 34-36.
- 28 Jacques DE TONNANCOUR, Agnès LEFORT, and Gabriel FILION, "A Symposium on Framing," *Canadian Art* 13:1 (Autumn 1955): 205-209.

Pour une historiographie du cadre : entre connaissance et pratique

JANET BROOKE

L'étude de l'encadrement – ainsi que de la « zone grise » complexe et fluide qu'il occupe entre l'œuvre d'art et son environnement – a connu un regain d'intérêt au cours des récentes décennies. Autrefois, les collectionneurs, les musées et les marchands d'art reconnaissaient rarement les « droits » et la signification du cadre, le considérant comme un objet remplaçable et sans importance, livré aux caprices du goût, des opportunités et du marché. Pourtant, il existe des preuves que, dès le début du XVII^e siècle, les artistes eux-mêmes avaient compris la valeur pratique, esthétique et économique du cadre pour leurs œuvres. Et durant les dernières décennies du XIX^e siècle, les artistes et les marchands d'art en sont effectivement venus à s'approprier l'encadrement des tableaux qu'ils mettaient sur le marché.

En vertu de la célèbre réponse du philosophe Jacques Derrida à la caractérisation, par Emmanuel Kant en 1793, du cadre comme un ornement extérieur (*parerga*), l'encadrement tient à présent une place essentielle dans l'histoire de l'art, des collections et des pratiques institutionnelles d'exposition qui communiquent un sens et imposent un contexte aux œuvres d'art accessibles au public. Les cadres donnent ainsi lieu à des décisions importantes, qui comportent de profondes implications, esthétiques et autres, pour les peintures qu'ils entourent, les œuvres qu'ils accompagnent et les emplacements physiques qu'ils occupent. Leur présence (ou absence) même est des plus éloquentes quant à la manière dont les œuvres ont été reçues et comprises au fil du temps. Ils constituent en fait des prises de position culturelles – témoignages changeants du mécénat, des désirs, des interprétations, du marché et des idéologies institutionnelles –, qui ajoutent des strates indispensables et des traces durables de sens aux images avec lesquelles ils vivent.

Les 24 et 25 octobre 2014, le Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal a accueilli le symposium *Encadrement et recadrage. Histoire et fonctions du cadre au Canada*. Coorganisé par Sacha Marie Levay et Laurier Lacroix, l'événement rassemblait un groupe impressionnant de conservateurs, de restaurateurs et d'historiens de l'art qui ont décrit leurs travaux durant une série de séances dirigées sur un thème jusqu'alors sous-représenté : l'histoire du cadre au

Canada. À titre d'introduction au symposium et de tribune pour les nouvelles recherches mises de l'avant par les conférenciers, l'auteure a partagé ses réflexions et observations sur l'évolution du statut du cadre en conservation. Pour ce faire, elle s'est basée sur ses 40 ans d'expérience de l'encadrement en tant que conservatrice au Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal et au Musée des beaux-arts de l'Ontario et comme directrice du Agnes Etherington Art Centre. Elle a également fourni un survol du développement de la littérature sur les cadres dans l'histoire de l'art européen pendant la même période, depuis les travaux fondateurs de Claus Grimm et Henry Heydenryk dans les années 1960 et 1970 jusqu'à l'émergence des véritables monographies et des catalogues publiés par un nombre croissant de spécialistes à partir des années 1990. Le présent article consiste en une transcription, accompagnée de révisions mineures, de ses propos.