Aesthetic Experience, Accessibility, and Art Museums

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Such gliding wonders! Such sights and sounds!
Such joined unended links, each hooked to the next!
Each answering all—each sharing the earth with all.

WALT WHITMAN, "SALUT AU MONDE!"

Contents

Abstract

I argue that (a) some of what I term "non-traditional experiences" of artworks—in particular, experiences of artworks that take place by means of a sense modality (or modalities) not traditionally thought to be appropriate or correct for a given work—can count as valuable experiences of them, and that (b) given this (and given that certain further conditions are met), public art museums should provide means for disabled perceivers to have these non-traditional experiences. I focus on cases involving tactile access aids, or tactile renderings of visual works made for blind persons. I review a debate between Dominic McIver Lopes and Robert Hopkins about how best to explain empirical findings that suggest untutored blind perceivers can both draw in and perceive perspective via raised-line drawings. I suggest that, even if Hopkins is right that the explanation for this is not that certain contents of visual experience are also contents of tactile experience, we can still explain how tactile representations give rise to valuable experiences of visual works. I articulate and defend criteria that tactile access aids must meet in order to do so that make no reference to (i) modality specificity, or the idea that, for some artwork, there is a sense modality or modalities uniquely appropriate for perceiving it, or (ii) views about the specific contents experience via any particular sense modality. I then argue that, if the proposal is successful, public art museums are obligated, all else equal, to provide access aids for blind persons, since failing to do so would be to deny a class of members of the civic body something to which they have a right—namely, valuable aesthetic experiences of artworks. I argue, further, that what I call the substantive good (of valuable aesthetic experiences) that access aids make possible undergirds arguments for expressive goods, or goods that involve (e.g.) an institution's signaling a commitment to a value(s), rather than expressive arguments succeeding independently.

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1. Introduction: Disability and Nontraditional Experiences of Artworks

1.1 The Problem of Nontraditional Experiences

This is a thesis about what I'll call "nontraditional experiences" of artworks—experiences assumed not to be correct or adequate in some way. I provide a partial taxonomy of nontraditional experiences of artworks below, but the kind on which I'll focus involves experiencing an artwork via a sense modality thought not correct or adequate for the kind of artwork it is. One example, which I'll refer to often, involves engaging with a tactile model of Gustav Klimt's *The Kiss* held in the Upper Belvedere Museum in Vienna (Appendix, Figure 1).[1] Nontraditional experiences with artworks have received little attention in an analytic aesthetics. As far as I can tell, this is because they're assumed to be incapable of conveying aesthetic value, or aesthetic value of the right sort.[2] They've received some attention in other fields, including disability and museum studies. But there, the question of what makes these experiences valuable is often seen as already answered; the questions of interest are questions of implementation.[3]

I'm interested in the question of what makes some nontraditional experiences valuable, if and when they are. In particular, I ask whether nontraditional experiences with artworks can sometimes

[1] For additional images of the tactile access aid and a description of its creation, see Andreas Reichinger et al., "Pictures in Your Mind: Using Interactive Gesture-Controlled Reliefs to Explore Art," *ACM Transactions on Accessible Computing* 11, No. 1, Article 2 (March 2018): 1-39.

[2] Georgina Kleege aptly describes her encounters with these views—which may appear in analytic aesthetics as a manifestation of "commonsense" views—in her introduction to *More than Meets the Eye: What Blindness Brings to Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018): "When I tell people that I'm working on a book about blindness and visual art, I have come to expect a particular response. To put the words *blindness* and *visual art* in the same sentence may seem like the punchline to a tasteless joke or part of a simile denoting futility, as in, 'that makes about as much sense as a blind person in an art museum'" (2; emphasis in orig.).

furnish perceivers with valuable aesthetic experiences that, even if not *identical* with or *just as valuable as* traditional experiences, bear significant similarities to them with respect to content and value.

Articulating and defending a positive answer to this question is this thesis's first aim. Its second aim is to argue that, if my positive proposal is correct, this has implications for public art museums: given certain background assumptions, public art museums have (defeasible) obligations to provide disabled perceivers access to artworks by making possible certain nontraditional experiences. I argue, in my final chapter, that what I term the *substantive* goods of the aesthetic experiences that certain nontraditional experiences entail underwrites the meaningfulness of the *expressive* good of publicly signaling the inclusion of the disabled in museum spaces. Although the latter is often thought to be independent of the former, it is not.

[3] I suspect this has to do with the pervasive influence of the "social model" of disability in these fields. In part a product of British disability activists and theorists from the 1970s onward, the social model holds that disability is not a matter of physical, biological, or medical fact, but is socially created "all the way down"; remove social barriers to ability, and you remove disability. On one understanding of the view, the only interesting question(s) to ask about disability is how it can be socially remedied. In analytic philosophy, a view along these lines has recently been stated in an uncompromising form by Elizabeth Barnes in her book *The Minority Body: A Theory of Disability* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). According to Barnes, to be disabled is, as her title has it, to have a minority body—a body for which the structures most bodies exist within simply was not fashioned. But, so the view goes, there is nothing about disabled bodies that renders them inherently or essentially disabled, any more than a ten-story building that towers over a city of two-story buildings is inherently or essentially tall. The appeal of the social model is made clear by cases that spring immediately to mind. If, for instance, curb cuts enable wheelchair users to move freely across city blocks, and if without curb cuts they could not do this, then a city's failure to cut curbs when paving sidewalks amounts, on this view, to the disabling of wheelchair users and other persons who rely on curb cuts. There was an ability that these persons could have had that, in virtue of a fact about their socially-constructed environment and not about *them*, they now lack. See, e.g., Mike Oliver, "The social model of disability: thirty years on," *Disability & Society*, 28:7 (2013), 1024-1026, and "Crips Strike Back: The Rise of Disability Studies," by Lennard J. Davis, included in *Bending Over Backwards: Disability, Dismodernism, & Other Difficult Positions* (New York: NYU Press, 2002), especially p. 41.

Of course, the account of access aids (as facilitating one kind of nontraditional experience) on which this moral-political conclusion depends has to be evaluated on its own merits. And even if we accept the account, numerous practical issues having to do with implementation remain. But these practical issues don't show up as issues worth pursuing if we don't first have good reason to pursue them, which is what this thesis aims to provide.

1.2 A Road Map

Having set out the basic problem, I provide here a "road map" for the remainder of the thesis.

In the rest of this introduction, I first spell out my notion of nontraditional experiences with artworks. I then explain how I'm understanding the notions of aesthetic experience and value, since these figure centrally in my account. I then discuss the related but distinct doctrines of medium specificity and modality specificity.

In the second chapter, I review an exchange between Dominic M. McIver Lopes and Robert Hopkins about tactile pictures for the blind, artworks that consist of raised lines on flat surfaces. Lopes builds on the experimental findings of John M. Kennedy in *Drawing and the Blind: Pictures to Touch* to argue that the content of tactile experience includes features often thought to be included only in visual experience. Hopkins, however, denies this. If Hopkins is right, it would seem that, whatever tactile models like those of *The Kiss* (I'll call these "tactile access aids" henceforth, by which I'll mean tactile access aids that represent works of visual art) offer blind perceivers, it isn't the value of traditionally experiencing *The Kiss* via sight. In defense of Lopes's view, I offer my own rebuttal to Hopkins.

In my third chapter, I advance my positive proposal for how it could be that (a) tactile access aids provide experiences of the original works they represent, and (b) how the experiences these aids provide can bear to blind perceivers the value we associate with seeing an originally visual work like *The Kiss*. As a thumbnail sketch, I propose that, for some representation *R* (a tactile access aid, a print reproduction of a painting in a catalog, etc.) to give rise to an experience *E* that counts as an experience of a work *W*, *R* must give rise to an *E* that meets two conditions: *E* must be an experience *as of* something sufficiently structurally isomorphic to *W*, and *E* must be an experience *as of* something sufficiently fine-grained.

This proposal, crucially, makes no reference to sensory modalities. If it can go a fair way in explaining how experiences of representations that meet these conditions can count as aesthetically valuable experiences of what they represent or depict, then it becomes more plausible to maintain that at least part of what we value in aesthetic experience is not modality-specific. The proposal is more general in scope than the view Lopes defends; as such, it faces more issues, but also helps to explain why the experiential features that Lopes and I think link sight and touch play this linking role. I deal with some of the issues and objections the proposal faces.

In my fourth and final chapter, I consider the practical implications of the proposal's success. I argue that the proposal, in combination with plausible views about why funding the arts is permissible, generates the conclusion that public art museums should provide access aids that facilitate valuable nontraditional aesthetic experiences.

1.3 Nontraditional Experiences: Access Aids; Sight and Touch

There are many ways museums facilitate disabled persons' accessing their collections.[4] Some amount to forms of description and testimony that enable disabled persons to learn about the collections, such as Braille labels and descriptions. Others, like ramps and rails, help ensure that persons with mobility disabilities can enter and navigate museum spaces. Installations, setups, and interactive exhibits meant to facilitate nontraditional experiences form another category of means by which disabled persons can access the contents of museum collections. Regardless of whether one accepts the view I defend in this thesis or not, one can still accept that facilitating nontraditional experiences is a way of making museums and their collections more hospitable to the disabled—perhaps just in the sense of making them feel more welcome. I return to this point in my final section.

The designation "nontraditional" is not meant to imply any valuation of these forms of experience besides the fact that, historically, they haven't often been considered parts of legitimate practices of art appreciation. In order to get a sense of where engagements with tactile access aids are situated within the class of nontraditional experiences, however, it'll help to become familiar with a few other kinds of nontraditional experiences of artworks. Here are two:

1. Experiencing an artwork by means of some sense modality, or modalities, other than the one(s) traditionally thought to facilitate reception of the artwork's aesthetic value or otherwise be proper to its perception.
2. Experiencing an artwork by means of the sense modality traditionally thought to facilitate reception of the artwork's aesthetic value or otherwise be proper to its perception, but in a way (pre-theoretically) thought to be unusual, atypical, or deficient.

[4] For an extensive list of ways in which museums can provide access to persons with various disabilities, see Rebecca McGinnis, "The disabling society," in *The Educational Role of the Museum,* Second Edition, edited by Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (New York: Routledge, 1994), 280.

An example of the first kind would be touching a painting (rather than a tactile rendering of the painting). An example of the second would be looking at a painting, but in low-light conditions.[5]

I now want to discuss why I focus on blind persons and tactile access aids intended to represent works of visual art. One reason is practical. As disability awareness in the art world increases and new technologies emerge, more possibilities for experiencing and engaging with art are likewise emerging. It would simply take more space than I have here to discuss them all. Another reason has to do with the representative character of tactile access aids. Though some artists are developing new aesthetic programs that directly cater to disabled persons (see, e.g., the work of Andrew Myers, Appendix, Figures 2 and 3), we can still ask whether and how tactile access aids can enable blind persons to experience visual art of the past.

There are also historical reasons for my pairing of touch and sight. According to Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa, from the Renaissance onward,

> [T]he five senses were understood to form a hierarchical system from the highest sense of vision down to touch. The Renaissance system of the senses was related to the image of the cosmic body; vision was correlated to fire and light, hearing to air, smell to vapour, taste to water, and touch to earth.[6]

It's easy to speculate about why this might have come to be: the cultural and religious associations of sight with knowledge and touch with carnality, for one. My aim here is not to convince those skeptical

[5] Monroe C. Beardsley raises a question on the basis of a related example: "If you stood looking at the El Greco while twilight and darkness came on, it would gradually grow more indistinct, and finally you would see nothing. At what precise point do you cease to have the experience of seeing the El Greco?" See *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1958), 46.
[6] Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin* (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 18. See also Susan Stewart's account in *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002) and Martin Jay's in *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1993).

of this historical thesis. The point is rather that, given the cultural partitioning of sight from touch, if vision and touch have more in common than we might first think (at least when it comes to perceiving certain artworks), we might then have more reason to reinspect and revise our pre-theoretical assumptions about both. Comparing vision to touch raises the stakes of the argument for this reason, as well as for another. Sight and touch differ in a way that sight and audition, for instance, do not. Visual perception happens at a distance; physical contact with the object to be seen hinders, not aids, it.[7] But touch involves either direct contact with the object to be perceived or contact with it via a mediating apparatus (like a blind person's cane).[8] For this reason, too, if I can show that vision and touch are closer kin with respect to perceiving artworks despite this and other differences, so much the better.

Although my argument is restricted to the case of blind persons' engaging with tactile access aids, the hope is that my conclusion will ramify, *mutatis mutandis,* to other cases.

[7] J. M. Loomis and S. J. Lederman note that this observation has led touch to be labeled a "proximal" sense and vision and audition to be labeled "distal" senses. See "Tactual perception," J. M. Loomis and S. J. Lederman, in the *Handbook of Perception and Human Performance, Vol. 2: Cognitive Processes and Performance*, edited by K. R. Boff, L. Kaufman, & J. P. Thomas, 1-41 (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 1986).

[8] The example of the blind person's cane is borrowed from Alva Noë: "There is no feeling at the end of the cane, yet it is with the end of the cane that the blind person makes contact with the world" (16). See *Action in Perception* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004). Alternatively, perhaps touch could involve haptic organs' direct contact with physical entities emanating from, or moved by, a source (as sound waves from a boombox might be felt).

1.4 Aesthetic Experience and Value

I now wish to shed some light on the notions of "aesthetic experience" and "value," since I mean certain (if still fairly general) things by these terms, and they play significant roles in my argument.

1.4.1 Aesthetic Experience

There is a massive literature on the nature of aesthetic experience, some of which is skeptical about the prospects of defining it as distinct from non-aesthetic experience.[9] The difficulty in delineating the two is compounded by a dominant view according to which something's aesthetic properties depend on its "lower-order" properties.[10]

To survey this literature would take me too far afield, but I think it's possible to sketch a rough but serviceable distinction between aesthetic experience and non-aesthetic experience. A paradigmatic aesthetic experience of something could involve experiencing it as beautiful. A paradigmatic non-

[9] For a sampling of contemporary views, see *Aesthetic Experience*, edited by Richard Shusterman and Adele Tomlin (New York: Routledge, 2008).

[10] Noël Carroll offers a representative instance of such a view: "Aesthetic properties emerge from these lower order properties; they are dispositions to promote impressions or effects on appropriately backgrounded creatures with our perceptual and imaginative capabilities" (91). See "Aesthetic Experience: A Question of Content," in *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art*, edited by Matthew Kieran (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 69-97. Alternatively, Bence Nanay (4-5) is skeptical of the idea that "aesthetic experience is the experience of aesthetic properties," aesthetic judgment the judgment of aesthetic properties, and so on (4-5). Nanay notes that there are important linkages between aesthetics and the philosophy of art, which he distinguishes, and the philosophy of perception; these linkages exist because aesthetics is often taken to be about experiences, and the philosophy of perception deals with experiences (6). Nanay adverts instead to talk of *aesthetically relevant properties*, which could be *any* property of an object or artwork, depending on the context (73). These properties may be spread across modalities (67). See *Aesthetics as Philosophy of Perception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

aesthetic experience of something might involve experiencing it as ten meters wide.[11] (Suppose all the experiences mentioned in this paragraph are veridical: the object truly has the properties it's experienced as having.) Things quickly become more complicated. Consider the experience of something as brooding, which seems to be an experience of an aesthetic property of the thing. When asked to say why it—let's suppose it's a painting—seems brooding, however, I might describe the dark blues and blacks of its paint. But in talking about its colors, am I talking about its aesthetic properties? Does the broodingness supervene, but remain distinct from, the colors of the paint; in experiencing the broodingness, am I attending to the painting in a different way than I am when I experience it as having blue and black paint? Similarly, the experience of something as ten meters wide might ground my experience of it as having other aesthetic properties, like being imposing and sublime, in a way that may make it difficult to tell with certainty which of its properties are aesthetic and which non-aesthetic.

Without downplaying the importance of these questions, I think that relying on paradigmatic cases of non-aesthetic and aesthetic experience is sufficient for my purposes. We have a grasp, I take it, on what it means to describe Van Gogh's *Irises* in terms of its technical specifications, on the one hand, or in terms of what we take to be its aesthetic properties, on the other—even if both are related, or even mutually constitutive. Whatever else it is or isn't, aesthetic experience can be understood as what we draw on and appeal to when giving the latter sort of description. What I propose can be understood as

[11] Without wading into the literature on aesthetic judgment, but for the sake of getting a grip on the contrast I'm trying to spell out, one could also appreciate the difference between the judgment "*x* is beautiful" and the judgment "*x* is ten meters wide."

a crude version of the "content-oriented approach" to aesthetic experience that Noël Carroll defends.[12] According to Carroll, an experience counts as *aesthetic* if it has specific contents, namely

> if it involves the apprehension/comprehension by an informed subject in the ways mandated (by the tradition, the object, and/or the artist) of the formal structures, aesthetic and/or expressive properties of the object, and/or the emergence of those features from the base properties of the work and/or of the manner in which those features interact with each other and/or address the cognitive, perceptual, emotive, and/or imaginative powers of the subject.[13]

As we'll see, this approach allows aesthetic experience and value to come apart.

1.4.2 Value

The notion of value at play in my argument is the most difficult to elaborate, in part because I take it as foundational that there is, out there in the realm of value (however we understand that), such a thing as specifically *aesthetic* value, and that we can experience it. To one who denies either claim, I have little to say—at least here.[14]

Still, I can attempt to clarify the *scope* of what I'm referring to as valuable, in the context of my argument. There are many reasons, presumably, why we value studying, appreciating, and learning about artworks. Artworks can provide pleasure and perhaps knowledge, and can tune us into the sentiments, beliefs, and dispositions of their makers. Furthermore, the activities of appreciating and

[12] Carroll, *op. cit.,* 89.
[13] Ibid. Monroe C. Beardsley's proposal for understanding aesthetic experience, which specifies it in terms of three characteristics (roughly put: complexity, unity, and intensity), may be understood as similar in spirit to Carroll's proposal, insofar as what gives rise to these necessary characteristics of aesthetic experience seems to be what Carroll includes in his proposal. See Beardsley, *op. cit.,* 527-528.
[14] It may be interesting to ask what one could say to persuade one who denies the possibility of aesthetic value, or denies that they derive aesthetic value from a paradigm case of it. For a defense of the idea that there is distinctively aesthetic value, see Beardsley, *op. cit.*, 502.

interpreting can be communal activities that give rise to further values. The acquisition of various kinds of social and historical knowledge or skill, and the establishment and reinforcement of community bonds, are important values connected with the appreciation of art in many accounts. One who holds a view about artistic or aesthetic value that traces it to many different sources may be said, following David Davies, to be a *pluralist* about such value.[15]

The kind of value I have in mind with respect to aesthetic experience is more restricted, however. It's the value that an individual perceiver is in touch with when they're present, so to speak, alone (although not necessarily so) before a work that has aesthetic value. As Davies notes, artistic value—which I here treat as interchangeable with aesthetic—and artistic appreciation seem closely related: artistic value may be what a perceiver can receive through an artwork's proper appreciation.[16]

As I noted earlier, there's a way in which, on my understandings of these notions, aesthetic experience and value can come apart. Following Carroll, one can attend to the features of objects in

[15] See David Davies, "Against Enlightened Empiricism," in *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art*, edited by Matthew Kieran (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 25-26. Davies points to a list of reasons we might non-instrumentally value art given by Jerrold Levinson: "...because one's cognitive faculties are notably exercised or enlarged; because one's eyes or ears are opened to certain spatial and temporal possibilities; because one is enabled to explore unusual realms of emotion; because one's consciousness is integrated to a degree out of the ordinary; because one is afforded a distinctive feeling of freedom or transcendence; because certain moral truths are made manifest to one in concrete dress; or because one is provided insight, in one way or another, into human nature" (18-19). See "Pleasure and the Value of Works of Art," in *The Pleasures of Aesthetics*, edited by Jerrold Levinson (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, ([1992] 1996), 11-24.

[16] Davies, *op. cit.*, 23. Graham McFee, making a related point, writes: "At the least, artistic appreciation is appreciation of that object (painting, dance, etc.) and artistic value is inhering in the artwork: so such appreciation minimally requires perceptual engagement with those works" (102). See "Wittgenstein, Performing Art and Action," in *Wittgenstein, Theory and the Arts*, edited by Richard Allen and Malcolm Turvey (New York: Routledge, 2001): 92-116.

the way required for having an aesthetic experience without finding that experience valuable.[17] So aesthetic experiences are not necessarily valuable. Another qualification is that, plausibly, beauty is not the only aesthetic value, or way that aesthetic value can manifest. Some modern and postmodern artworks have shown us that—if not how—works can have aesthetic value while not being classically beautiful or even while being ugly; examples might include Frida Kahlo's *My Birth,* Willem de Kooning's *Woman III,* and Oskar Kokoschka's *The Red Egg*.

Finally, one might ask, given that I've delimited aesthetic experience in this way, whether aesthetic value, when it occurs, is to be attributed *to the experience* or *to the artwork*. This is a difficult question, and I don't have the space to give it an adequate treatment here, though there are a few things I wish to say. I take it that both things and experiences can be valuable. Further, I take it that a thing's being valuable doesn't necessarily mean it gives rise to valuable experiences, nor that an experience's being valuable means that it must arise from some*thing* that is valuable. Some philosophers think that the value of art consists in its giving rise to valuable aesthetic experiences.[18] I think I can fairly remain neutral on this question, however. We can leave open whether it is *The Kiss* that is (in some sense) intrinsically valuable, and whose value we are put in touch with and partake of when we experience it, or whether *The Kiss* is instrumentally valuable because it gives rise to a valuable experience, while holding in a commonsense way that there are valuable experiences of it or engagements with it, as opposed to those that are relatively less valuable or not valuable at all.

[17] Carroll, *op. cit.,* 82.
[18] John Dewey, for instance, may hold this view. See *Art as Experience* (New York: Perigee Books, 1980), 4.

1.5 Medium Specificity and Modality Specificity

Finally, I want to introduce two related but distinct doctrines, those of medium specificity and modality specificity. My argument will target some version of the latter. The doctrine of medium specificity holds that the proper appreciation and evaluation of a work should take into account the potentials and limitations of its material (or other) substrates.[19] The doctrine of modality specificity holds that there's a specific sense modality, or modalities, through which it's correct to appreciate a particular work or kind of work. If a version of modality specificity is true about, say, painting, and paintings are only correctly perceived visually, then it seems that at least some versions of the claim I want to defend can't be true; blind perceivers who engage with tactile access aids won't be experiencing the paintings those access aids model.

It's important to distinguish different ways one could deny or qualify modality specificity. Bence Nanay argues that our experiences of artworks are often, in fact, multimodal (i.e., involving numerous sense modalities), and that it would be mistaken to screen off, for the purposes of evaluation, properties of artworks that aren't made available to us by the sense modality traditionally associated with the correct perception of that artwork.[20] But this claim, even if true (and I'm sympathetic), doesn't show that modality specificity couldn't remain true in a qualified form. Visual engagement might still be *required* to correctly perceive a painting *qua* painting; further, it might play

[19] See Noël Carroll, "Medium Specificity," in *The Palgrave Handbook of the Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures*, edited by Noël Carroll, Laura T. Di Summa, and Shawn Loht (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019): 29-47, and Noël Carroll, "The Specificity of Media in the Arts," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 19, No. 4 (Winter, 1985): 5-20.

[20] Bence Nanay, "The Multimodal Experience of Art," *British Journal of Aesthetics,* Vol. 52, Number 4 (October 2012): 353–363.

some central role in aesthetic experiences of paintings, even if other sense modalities also figure into these.

2. The Contents of Visual and Tactile Experience

I aim to show that tactile access aids can provide valuable aesthetic experiences of the visual artworks that they, in a sense to be further specified, represent or depict. But what if visual and tactile experience have different contents—in particular, what if tactile experience doesn't, or can't, share parts of visual experience close to the heart of what makes such experience *visual*?

In this chapter, I consider an argument by Robert Hopkins to this effect. The argument is drawn from an exchange between Dominic M. McIver Lopes and Hopkins on the phenomenon of "tactile pictures," drawings for and by the blind that employ raised lines to represent shapes—a phenomenon studied extensively by John M. Kennedy.[21] Hopkins, while not denying that tactile depiction is possible, nonetheless maintains that "[w]e cannot understand the value of pictorial art, and in particular its distinctive value as pictorial... without making use of the idea that pictures are especially *visual* representations."[22] This is because a central feature of visual experience, namely *outline shape*, has no analogue in tactile experience; rather, tactile experience grounds perceivers' constructing outline shape(s) by means of what Hopkins calls *tactile beliefs.* If Hopkins is right, then the suggestion that tactile access aids can facilitate valuable aesthetic experiences that partake of the "distinctive value" of pictorial depiction seems in poor shape. Tactile pictures and access aids would

[21] Dominic M. M. Lopes, "Art Media and the Sense Modalities: Tactile Pictures," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 47, No. 189 (October 1997): 425-440; Robert Hopkins, "Touching Pictures," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 40, No. 1 (January 2000): 149-167; Dominic M. McIver Lopes, "Vision, Touch, and the Value of Pictures," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 42, No. 2 (April 2002): 191-201.
[22] Hopkins, "Touching Pictures," 149; emphasis in orig.

allow blind perceivers to form beliefs that are *inferred* from tactile experience, and so (one might think) would be more like written descriptions of artworks than means to experience them.

I argue, contra Hopkins, that outline shape *is* represented in tactile experience. Even if my argument fails, however, I suggest we can accept Hopkins's view and still revert to Lopes's idea that tactile beliefs about outline shape, even if not strictly part of tactile experience, may be closely-enough associated with it to remain relevantly different from written descriptions.

My response to Hopkins is an intervention into a specific debate (about whether depiction is essentially visual) that falls within the scope of my general concern in the thesis (whether valuable aesthetic experiences had in one sensory modality can also be had in others). In the following chapter, I introduce my own positive proposal for how aesthetic content, and the value of that content, may be experienced across separate sense modalities.

2.1 Kennedy's *Drawing and the Blind: Pictures to Touch*

John M. Kennedy's 1993 book *Drawing and the Blind: Pictures to Touch* provides the body of empirical research on which Lopes and Hopkins draw.[23] Kennedy, characterizing the results of numerous experiments, relates that "raised drawings [i.e., tactile pictures] by blind people sketching pictures for the first time are much like drawings made by sighted people who are also novices at drawing. And blind people can often identify a raised picture without any instruction in how to do so."[24] The reason for this, Kennedy conjectures, is that "spatial properties of surfaces are accessible by

[23] John M. Kennedy, *Drawing and the Blind: Pictures to Touch* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).
[24] Ibid., vii.

touch as well as by vision."[25] If this is so, he continues, "then it is reasonable to conjecture that the tactile and visual perceptual systems share many of the same operating principles for perceiving the shape of our surroundings."[26]

2.2 Lopes on Tactile Pictures

Lopes, in "Art Media and the Sense Modalities: Tactile Pictures," notes that pictures "are widely viewed as essentially and paradigmatically visual representations" such that the blind cannot appreciate them (and hence cannot derive aesthetic value from experiences of them).[27] Surveying several debates, Lopes identifies a main reason that vision is thought to be different from touch: because of its perspectival content. As Lopes puts the view, "[v]ision, unlike touch, affords us… an experience of the world as projected on to the two-dimensional visual field."[28] Touch, according to this explanation, isn't perspectival; for example, a coin always feels round to the hand, no matter how it is oriented.[29]

But this explanation, Lopes claims, is defeated by the empirical evidence Kennedy cites. If the explanation were correct, then untrained blind persons should be unable to draw in perspective or understand perspective as manifested in raised-line drawings. But, as Kennedy shows, they can in fact do these things. So something has gone wrong. Lopes's suggestion is that vision isn't uniquely

[25] Ibid., 2.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Lopes, "Art Media and the Sense Modalities," 427-428.
[28] Ibid., 436. The visual field is, essentially, what is manifested in vision minus the third dimension, depth.
[29] Ibid.

perspectival. Thus, if pictures are essentially artworks that make use of perspective, pictures aren't essentially visual; and if they aren't essentially visual, it may not be incorrect to experience or engage with them via senses other than sight.

2.3 Hopkins's Reply

Robert Hopkins, in "Touching Pictures," aims to find a difference between how blind and sighted persons engage with depictions—a difference, in particular, that has implications for the aesthetics of pictures. Hopkins's argument has two parts. He first locates the relevant difference between sight and touch as consisting in the fact that what he calls *outline shape* features in visual, but not tactile, experience. He then argues that this makes it the case that tactile experience cannot manifest a phenomenon, which he calls *Borrowing*, that he takes to be central to our experience of visual depiction. Due to space considerations, I won't discuss Hopkins's treatment of *Borrowing*, focusing instead on his arguments about outline shape—on which, at any rate, his arguments about *Borrowing* depend.

Outline shape, for Hopkins, tracks how things appear on the two-dimensional visual field Lopes mentions.[30] Hopkins agrees with Lopes and Kennedy in understanding outline shape as "essentially a matter of the *directions*, from a given point, in which lie various parts of the object in

[30] Hopkins traces the genealogy of this idea to Thomas Reid, who uses the term "visible figure" to refer to what Hopkins refers to with "outline shape." See "The Speaking Image: Visual Communication and the Nature of Depiction," in *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art*, edited by Matthew Kieran (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 147.

question."[31] Although outline shape itself is "not a visual notion"—by which I take it he means that it can be described without reference to vision—he maintains that "our grasp of it is visual: we only perceive outline shapes, at least to any very determinate degree, in vision."[32]

Imported into a discussion of pictorial aesthetics, the outline shapes of objects depicted in perspective in paintings and the like "match" the outline shapes of the objects actually seen in perspective, "for all that their three-dimensional shapes differ."[33] But Hopkins thinks that tactile experience doesn't include experience of outline shape. On his account, "touch lets us work out the outline shapes of things, but only by going *beyond the contents of our tactile experience*" to form what he calls "Tactile Beliefs."[34] The postulation of tactile beliefs is, in turn, supposed to explain Kennedy's findings.

The explanation of Hopkins's view lies in his account of the criteria that must be met for a perceptual state to represent outline shape: (i) the state must represent, simultaneously, different parts of the object in question, and (ii) the state must represent the direction of the object's parts "from a single, reasonably focused point in the object's surroundings."[35] According to Hopkins, vision satisfies both of these criteria, but touch only satisfies the first. This is because either of two ways condition (i) could be met by touch would not also allow it to meet condition (ii). Hopkins suggests that there are two ways for tactile experience to meet the first condition: we can use touch (a) to perceive many parts

[31] Hopkins, "Touching Pictures," 155.
[32] Hopkins, "The Speaking Image," 158.
[33] Ibid., 154.
[34] Ibid., 156; my emphasis.
[35] Ibid.

of an object simultaneously, such as when we wrap our hands around it, or (b) to perceive many parts of it in succession. But in either case there is nothing to privilege any point of origin as being the one from which outline shape is perceived, whereas in the case of sight there is; touch therefore doesn't represent outline shape, and so doesn't contain the same experiential content as vision. Hopkins concludes that, "if tactile pictures at most connect to tactile beliefs, and not to tactile experience, they cannot parallel at all closely the phenomenon we have made central in the visual picture case. Visual pictures offer us aesthetic satisfactions available in visual *experience*."[36]

2.4 Replies to Hopkins: How Tactile Experience Can Represent Outline Shape

In response to Hopkins, I ask what exactly follows from the idea that there is nothing in tactile experience that *privileges* any particular point of origin. I have to be careful here, for there's something phenomenologically apt about Hopkins's claim: it attends to how there seems to be some difference in what seeing and touching are *like* for beings like us that has to do with the concepts of point of origin and perspectivality. When we look out at a landscape, our visual field is populated with outline shapes determined in part by the point of origin in our seeing. But it may not be immediately phenomenologically obvious what could play the role of point of origin in tactile experience.

Nonetheless, it seems that there are ways that tactile experience can contain perspectival information, and thus information about point of origin and outline shape. Take as an example my (exclusively) tactile experience of a cubic sculpture roughly a half-meter wide. From a fixed position, I

[36] Ibid., 166; emphasis in orig.

run my hands across the surfaces of the sculpture. I experience parts of it simultaneously, and others in succession. From my fixed position, if I were looking at the sculpture visually, the parts farther away from me would appear to "shrink" into perspective. It's certainly true that, tactilely, I don't experience the cube shrinking as I move my hands towards the edges farthest away from me. But it would seem wrong to say that nothing in tactile experience represents the qualities of nearness and farness *relative to my position* analogous to what perspectival vanishing represents in visual experience. To the contrary, supposing I stay in my fixed position, this seems part of the content of my tactile perception as I move my hands towards the farthest edge that *this* (closer) part of the table is further away from us than *that* (father) part. If we denied that relative location were part of what was perceived via touch, it would be hard to explain how exploring the various areas of an object successively with our hands could allow us to experience the object comprehensively, since what we would end up with was a collection of disparate, "patchy" tactile percepts, each unclearly spatially related to any other. Going further, I suggest that there is no tactile experience of the sculpture *as a whole* (rather than a series of patchy tactile perceptions) that involves it not being perspectivally oriented in some way or other towards me.

This is a speculative argument offered in conjunction with Kennedy's empirical findings, intended to show how one might explain those findings by appeal to something contained within tactile experience itself. But even if this argument isn't successful, there may still be ways to resist Hopkins's conclusion. One strategy is outlined by Lopes, who suggests that mental images (understood here as one way of cashing out what could play the role of Hopkins's tactile beliefs) of outline shape formed in sufficiently close connection with tactile experience could effectively count as

part of it. Such images, Lopes suggests, would be experienced simultaneously with what they represented and would be updated on the basis of what's perceived via touch.[37]

This idea is independently suggestive, but it gains some supplementary support from further considerations. One who holds Hopkins's view will need to explain how it is that Kennedy's untutored blind perceivers often made correct judgments about perspective in tactile drawings if they did so on the basis of information drawn *from* tactile experience, but not contained *in* that experience. But there's reason to think that providing this explanation will be difficult, insofar as it involves providing an account of what strictly falls inside, and what outside, of the contents of experience via a given sense modality. Part of what makes this undertaking difficult is that, in perception, "a great deal of information processing [goes on] at the subpersonal level… and the contents of experience can incorporate the fruits of this processing."[38]

2.5 Linking Visual and Tactile Experience

The aforementioned discussion helps to illustrate some of the difficulties involved in arguing that two experiences in different sense modalities have significant similarities (and so may be similarly conducive of aesthetic value) due to their sharing contents. The lessons are several. For one, if we can look for an account of what two experiences in different modalities share that doesn't rely on the idea that they strictly have the same content, so much the better. For another, as Lopes's reply to Hopkins

[37] Lopes says that the mental images would mediate "a confrontation with the world, closely tracking its properties," and would be counterfactually dependent on the contents of tactile experience *per se*. Ibid., 197.
[38] Ibid., 196.

suggests, we may be able to secure for the aesthetic experiences provided by tactile access aids a content that is at least *closer* to visual experience than to what can be gleaned from a textual description. This would be, for my purposes, enough.

Besides the debate about the content of experience, Hopkins's remarks about what may be especially visual about visual experience—the basis on which we value it *qua* visual experience—point up potentially irreconcilable differences between tactile and visual experience that may make problems for my argument. I'll return to objections that build on this after I introduce my positive proposal for what links tactile access aids to the artworks they represent.

3. Access Aids and Modality Specificity

I now want to spell out what I suspect must be true of an experience given rise to by a tactile access aid in order for it to count as an experience of the visual work the aid represents. I also want to show how such an experience, although nontraditional, partakes of the value of a traditional experience of the artwork in question. Whether it's valuable to the same extent remains an open question. But I could grant that it's slightly less valuable while still maintaining that it's still valuable *enough*, and valuable enough *in the right way*, that it should be considered closer to a traditional experience of the artwork than what would be involved in learning about it via a written description.

This proposal is more general than the view Lopes defends. It also explains, and is mutually bolstered by, certain of our aesthetic practices. First, generality: it's more general because it suggests how, if certain conditions are met (though not precluding that certain other conditions may need to be met), one can have valuable experiences of artworks across sense modalities. Second, regarding our aesthetic practices: what I have in mind here is the idea that we already take something like my proposal to be true in other scenarios, even if our doing so doesn't clinch a denial of modality specificity. We think (e.g.) that perceiving high-quality reproductions of paintings is a way to valuably engage with and experience the paintings reproduced. My proposal goes some way towards explaining how this could be so.

One complication that my discussion must deal with is that, unlike the tactile drawings discussed by Lopes and Hopkins, tactile access aids are essentially *interpretive*. They take as "inputs" some work of visual art and, drawing on the combined expertise of art historians, engineers, and blind

persons, "output" a work of tactile art; the hope is that, if all goes well, these tactile works provide a kind of "window" onto the original artwork for blind persons. Later, I'll address the worry that this character of access aids precludes their facilitating valuable experiences of original works.

3.1 A Positive Proposal for Access Aids

I propose that, for some representation *R* (a tactile access aid, a print reproduction of a painting, etc.) to give rise to an experience *E* that counts as an experience of a work *W*, *R* must (intentionally) give rise to an *E* that meets two conditions:

1. *E* must be an experience *as of* something sufficiently structurally isomorphic* to *W*, and
2. *E* must be an experience *as of* something sufficiently high-resolution.

*structural isomorphism $=_{df}$ A representation R_{SI} is structurally isomorphic to some target *T* iff the formal and internal relational features of *T* are preserved in R_{SI}.[39]

This proposal, crucially, makes no reference to sensory modalities or modality specificity. If it can go a fair way, as I think it can, in explaining how representations that meet these conditions can furnish aesthetically valuable experiences of what they represent without referring to sensory modalities or

[39] My proposed definition of isomorphism is clearly different from the mathematical notion of isomorphism; in somewhat more precise mathematical terms, what it picks out, with respect to any target artwork, is a class of homomorphisms up to and including isomorphism. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines "homomorphism" as "a special correspondence between the members (elements) of two algebraic systems, such as two groups, two rings, or two fields. Two homomorphic systems have the same basic structure, and, while their elements and operations may appear entirely different, results on one system often apply as well to the other system. ...A correspondence between members of two algebraic systems may be written as a function *f* from *G* to *H*, and one speaks of *f* as "mapping" *G* to *H*. The condition that *f* be a homomorphism of the group *G* to the group *H* may be expressed as the requirement that $f(g \oplus g') = f(g) \otimes f(g')$. ... An especially important homomorphism is an isomorphism, in which the homomorphism from *G* to *H* is both one-to-one and onto. In this last case, *G* and *H* are essentially the same system and differ only in the names of their elements" ("Homomorphism," n.p.).

modality specificity, then it becomes more plausible to hold that at least part of what we value in aesthetic experience is not sense modality-specific.

Why the "experience *as of* something" locution? The representation may itself possess the properties that give rise to the valuable aesthetic experience, but it also may not. Consider the case of an electronic glove, currently in development, that gives its wearer haptic sensations of touching a sculpture.[40] The most obvious candidate for what's isomorphically related to the original sculpture in this instance is, perhaps, the software on which the glove runs. But it's not clear in what sense the software's code is, or could be, isomorphic to the statue, even if it produces sensations that are isomorphic in the required way.[41] So I want to avoid the proposal's necessitating that the representation itself share the properties of the original object. Talking about experiencing certain features isomorphic to those of the original work, rather than being in touch with representations that *have* those features, seems a safer route.

The isomorphism and high-resolution (or, alternatively, fine-grainedness) requirements are importantly related, but different. The high-resolution requirement is intended to exclude cases where there *is* isomorphism between the access aid and the original artwork, but where it isn't sufficiently detailed to capture what's distinctive or valuable about that work. There's a sense, for instance, in which a tactile rendering of the two figures in *The Kiss* as two vertical, parallel lines is isomorphic to

[40] Gunnar Jansson, Massimo Bergamasco, and Antonio Frisoli, "A new option for the visually impaired to experience 3D art at museums: manual exploration of virtual copies," *Visual Impairment Research* 5:1 (2003), 1-12.

[41] If we said the software was isomorphic to the statue whose edges it produced sensations of, we might also want to say that a written description of the statue's edges, their locations relative to each other, etc. is isomorphic; but if it is, it is clearly not the right kind of isomorphism to give rise to something that is an experience of the artwork, since written descriptions are the contrast case against which experiences are defined.

their representation in the painting. But insofar as this tactile representation provides information about *The Kiss,* it doesn't seem to do so in a way sufficiently rich enough to be called an aesthetic representation of *The Kiss*; it would seem closer to a sign system.

What's central to the proposal, again, is that it makes no mention of modality specificity, but neither does it stipulate it away. This is so I can show much mileage we can get out of an account that doesn't appeal to it without (I hope) begging the question against it. Of course, it could still be true—a possibility I'll entertain—but, supposing we can go far enough without it, its truth might not be devastating for my case.

In order for the proposal to work, I need to establish linkages between three things: (a) structural or isomorphic resemblance between two things, (b) one thing's (a representation's) being able to give rise to an experience of another thing (the "target" or "source," i.e., the original work), and (c) the experience thus given rise to counting as a valuable experience of the target in the right way. In what follows, I consider and attempt to refute objections that deny linkages between some or all of these, as well as other aspects of the view.

3.2 Objections

3.2.1 Problems with the Appeal to Isomorphism

3.2.1.1 Neither Necessary nor Sufficient for Representation

The first objection I'll consider pertains to the role of isomorphism in my proposal. Structural isomorphism between the tactile features of an access aid and the visually perceptible features of a

painting is supposed to account for how the access aid represents (some) features of the painting. But some may doubt that isomorphism has much or anything to do with representation.

One charge is that isomorphism isn't sufficient for representation. Suppose we find what appears to be a portrait of a human face etched by wind in desert sand. According to the objection, although the etching in the sand *looks* like a portrait of a human face to us—indeed, it's isomorphic to one—it doesn't *represent* a human face. In order for it to represent a face, we'd have to have reason to think it was created intentionally. I'm not sure I accept this argument. Regardless, for an account of representation in art—where what we're discussing are *artifacts*—I don't see what it costs me to accept, as a background condition to my proposal, that the isomorphism of the access aid must be intentional, just as whatever the original artwork that the access aid depicts must also be intentional, in the broad sense of "created by a member of our species with aesthetic aims in mind," to show up as an artwork for us. Those who deny that isomorphism *as such* is sufficient for representation don't seem to thereby deny that, given such a background condition, it could be sufficient. And such a background condition is, I've suggested, probably already operative in a discussion of artworks. I've tried to anticipate this objection by building the qualifier "(intentionally)" into my proposal.

Another charge is that isomorphism isn't necessary for representation. The charge, as rehearsed by Steven French drawing on the work of Mauricio Suarez, points, at one limit, to works that supposedly represent too many things to plausibly stand in isomorphic relations to them, and, at another limit, to works that represent without being isomorphic to anything at all.[42] Picasso's

[42] Steven French, "A Model-Theoretic Account of Representation (Or, I Don't Know Much about Art . . . but I Know It Involves Isomorphism)," *Philosophy of Science* 70, No. 5 (*Proceedings of the 2002 Biennial Meeting of*

Guernica may serve as an example of the first kind of work. Per Suarez, it represents, among other things, the pain of the inhabitants of Guernica, but also the more abstract threat of fascism's rise. The idea seems to be that features or areas of the canvas can't be placed in one-to-one correspondence with these things that the painting represents, so it doesn't represent them via isomorphism with anything, which requires such correspondence. An example of the second kind of work could be a Mondrian—for instance, his 1930 *Composition with Red, Blue and Yellow*, which consists of black lines and red, blue, yellow, and white rectangles.

I have responses for both cases; both responses leverage the idea that the charge equivocates between different senses of "represent." It may be true that *Guernica* in some sense represents the pain of the inhabitants of Guernica. But this isn't the sense in which *Guernica* represents, among other things, a hanging lamp. The representation of the pain of the town's residents is, we might say, a higher-level property of the painting, one it genuinely has but which is dependent on its lower-level properties, in particular its formal properties: what shapes, marks, etc. are rendered on the canvas and where. Although the pain of the inhabitants of Guernica isn't represented by the painting in virtue of its representing isomorphically any feature the pain, as such, possesses (it indeed seems difficult to think of a feature of the pain that *could* be so represented), it does represent isomorphically (albeit "imperfectly," in a Cubist manner) the lower-level features of the scene, which in turn give rise to its

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The Philosophy of Science Association, Part I: Contributed Papers, edited by Sandra D. Mitchell), 2003: 1472-1483; Mauricio Suarez, "Theories, Models and Representations," in *Model-Based Reasoning in Scientific Discovery,* edited by L. Magnani, N. J. Nersessian, and P. Thagard (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1999), 75–83.

higher-level features and properties, like this pain and the property of "representing the rise of fascism in Europe." With respect to the case of the Mondrian, it's not clear that it's meaningful to talk of the painting as representing anything at all: perhaps we could say that it represents the very shapes it presents, but this would seem to be unnecessary, hence frequent categorizations of Mondrians as non-representational.[43]

It's important to distinguish between the question of how isomorphism could explain how representations represent and the question of how *tactile access aids* could represent the works to which they are aids in such a way that they provide valuable aesthetic experiences of these works. This is because we may not need to commit to any general or comprehensive account of representation between (representational) artworks and what they depict to explain what conditions tactile access aids must meet in order to facilitate access to artworks. So my responses to these objections about isomorphism as a condition of representation in general should be seen as salvos in defense of its figuring in various (general or specific) accounts of representation—in particular, my own—rather than as an attempt to establish a view about representation *tout court.* Still, motivating responses to these objections is important, for if they stood, one might well ask why isomorphism figures in even my more limited account of access aids.

Yet another view lurks in the background from which a deeper objection to my appeal to isomorphism may be launched, having to do with the nature of depiction, representation, and

[43] For just one description of Mondrian as a non-representational painter (along with Brancusi and Malevich), see Edward Levine, "Gravity and Anti-Gravity in the Critical Cosmos," *Thresholds* 30, Summer 2005: 94-96.

denotation. This is the view articulated by Nelson Goodman in his seminal *Languages of Art*.[44] I don't have the space to review the details of Goodman's rich and complex view here, but the threatening idea is essentially this. Pictorial systems allow for infinite possible symbols and possible referents for those symbols; anything in these systems can be made to stand for anything else. What distinguishes pictorial systems from linguistic systems is that any difference in a symbol, no matter how small, can affect what the symbol represents or refers to, whereas this isn't the case for linguistic marks.[45] Goodman's conception of pictorial representation is, we might say, communicative, emphasizing what he takes to be their unlimited capacity to refer. On such an account, formal isomorphism of the sort I'm relying on would be a more or less meaningless notion, since anything could be said to resemble, and hence refer to, any other thing.

As Robert Hopkins notes, however, such an account of pictorial systems seems to emphasize this communicative aspect at the expense of what is sensorily special, or "particularly visual," about pictorial systems.[46] I suggest that formal isomorphism with a target can manifest, in some representation, some of what Hopkins refers to when he invokes the "particularly visual." Furthermore, the fact that everything resembles everything else in some respect or other doesn't mean that there couldn't still be relative, and palpably different, degrees of formal isomorphism between a representation and its target. It just means that *some* isomorphism, construed in a very weak sense

[44] Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Indianapolis, IN: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1968; revised ed. 1976).
[45] I borrow part of my characterization of Goodman's view from Hopkins, "The Speaking Image," 155-156.
[46] Ibid., 155.

(where, for instance, any two existing things will resemble each other *qua* existing things), will obtain between any two relata.

There may remain cases of works of art "translated" across media and sense modalities that we would intuitively reject as representing what they might be claimed to represent—cases where isomorphic representation seems to meet my conditions but nonetheless not suffice for representation. Consider the outlandish example of a sculptural representation of the notes of a symphony consisting of concrete pillars spaced miles apart—where the spacing between pillars is varied to account for rests, and the heights of the pillars vary according to the pitches of the notes. There's a clear sense in which this representation is isomorphic to the symphony's score (and let's suppose the score, and not only its performances, counts as the original work). It may also be high-resolution enough, if, for each feature of the score we want to account for, there's some correlate in the sculpture. But the sculpture couldn't plausibly provide anyone a tactile or visual analogue to the heard symphony. Perhaps this is because it violates an implicit condition on isomorphic representations of this sort—namely, that they be able to be perceived within similar spatiotemporal dimensions as the original work, which would ensure that beings like us would be able to process them.

One could see such examples as counterexamples to my proposal, but it's also possible to see them as indicating either (a) further implicit conditions that apply to it, or (b) the limits of the range within which it remains explanatory and illuminating, if it is. Finally, the world of art is so vast that there are certain to be examples that make trouble for any such proposal; but if the proposal can go some way towards explaining certain paradigm cases, like that of the tactile access aid for *The Kiss*, that may justify its retainment, up to a point, in the face of troublesome cases.

3.2.1.2 Isomorphism Represents, But Without Preserving Sameness of Experience or Value

I rest my case that isomorphism can at least partially explain representation: something that is sufficiently isomorphic to its target, at a sufficiently high resolution, can represent it. Should we then allow that, in some cases, at least part of what is represented isomorphically can thereby be experienced? If so, could this representation-facilitated experience put us in touch with what's valuable about what's represented?

With respect to the first question, in the case of tactile access aids, one might claim that the experience of the blind person who runs their hands over the access aid is an experience of the access aid, not *The Kiss*. Even if the blind person thereby learns about *The Kiss* in a manner different from reading a textual (or Braille) description, they aren't experiencing it. Part of the value of experience, not only aesthetically but epistemically, may be that it offers what Chris Ranalli has called "cognitive contact with reality," another epistemic good he claims we value in addition to truth.[47] The blind access aid user may be said to lack cognitive contact with the relevant portion of reality. Further, if, as Keith Lehrer argues, "[k]nowing what this painting is like, in the full particularity of experiencing it, is

[47] Chris Ranalli, "The Special Value of Experience," *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Mind* 1, edited by Uriah Kriegel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 131.

what is required for aesthetic appreciation," then one might also argue that the blind person can't appreciate *The Kiss.*[48]

The objection seems to get something right. But if the objection is that the experience isn't of *The Kiss* because it isn't an experience of the original painting (i.e., of something numerically identical with the original painting), this seems to preclude our entertaining any other notion of experience beyond that which gets cashed out in such terms. That might be the right way to go, but consider what's suggested by certain of our other aesthetic practices. As I've mentioned, we seem to take it that one can not only learn about, but experience, great works of visual art by inspecting and studying high-quality printed reproductions of them in books and *catalogues raisonnés*. There's a sense in which the experiences had via these representations aren't direct—a more direct (maximally so, even) experience would involve standing before the work in a museum. But there's clearly also another sense in which, intuitively, experiences facilitated via printed reproductions count as much more direct than merely reading written descriptions of the work. They are much closer to seeing the work in the flesh. I suggest that they are so because they meet the conditions of my proposal: their representations can be sufficiently isomorphic, and the isomorphism itself of sufficiently high-resolution, to give rise to an

[48] Keith Lehrer, "Knowing Content in the Visual Arts," in *Knowing Art: Essays in Aesthetics and Epistemology,* edited by Matthew Kieran and Dominic McIver Lopes (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2006), 1-2. Relatedly, acknowledging the primacy of "direct" (or, in my terms, genuine) aesthetic experience, Peter Goldie writes, "should not oblige us to put all kinds of direct experience of art works on a par, as contrasted with all kinds of indirect experience, also on a par, with the latter effectively dismissed as not only all equally indirect, but also all equally second best. To insist on a stark dividing line here is to fail to appreciate the manner and extent to which the psychological and cognitive effects of perception, of perceptual imagination, and of perceptual memory, when directed towards an art work, can vary from case to case." See "Charley's World: Narratives of Aesthetic Experience," in *Knowing Art: Essays in Aesthetics and Epistemology,* edited by Matthew Kieran and Dominic McIver Lopes (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2006), 94.

experience of the original artwork, if not something numerically identical with the original. Because these examples of printed reproductions of visual art take place within a single sense modality, they avoid the complications of the access aids I'm considering. My suggestion is that, because experience can be experience of the (multiply instantiable and representable-via-isomorphism) formal structure of a work, not (just) of the numerically identical work, my proposal explains both why we take high-quality printed reproductions of visual work to provide experiences of their originals *and* why we should take tactile access aid representations that satisfy my proposal to do so, too.

The objector may dig in their heels, however. They may say: We can make isomorphic models that represent all sorts of things, from house blueprints to three-dimensional models of the solar system, but we don't usually think that perceiving these models amounts to experiencing the things modeled.

My response is that the objection downplays the differences between models and propositional testimony—or what I'll refer to, at other points, as "written descriptions." I can say to you, "The distance between Neptune and the sun is 2.8 billion miles" and "The distance between Venus and the sun is 67 million miles," but a scaled-down model that isomorphically represents these distances gives us a *perceptual* grasp, I suggest, on the propositional content of these sentences.[49] The case of a model of the solar system is useful here because it involves a model-target relation whose relata possess some very different (from our perspective, anyway) properties. The solar system, for one thing,

[49] "Neptune," NASA Science Solar System Exploration, https://solarsystem.nasa.gov/planets/neptune/in-depth/, accessed May 15, 2022; and Phil Davis, "How Big is the Solar System?," NASA Science Solar System Exploration, https://solarsystem.nasa.gov/news/1164/how-big-is-the-solar-system, accessed May 15, 2022.

is so large relative to a human perceiver that it's unclear that we have any notion of what it could mean to experience it. And yet to speak of the model of the solar system as making some of the object's structure (insofar as we can call the solar system an "object") perceptible seems to make sense.

I suspect that some of what's driving the objection pertains to the fact that the terms "representation" and "model" may denote anything from a very high-resolution representation of a target to an almost unrecognizable simplification of it. This is where the notion of *sufficiently high resolution* in my proposal is doing important work. Jerrold Levinson suggests that Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 played on three tin whistles wouldn't count as a performance of it.[50] Levinson's explanation is to say that the performance means are inadequate. My explanation is related but different: setting aside my differences with Levinson regarding the essentiality of specific means of performance to individuating works, the problem with the tin whistle rendition is that, while it may be isomorphic to Symphony No. 9, it isn't high-resolution enough. As the resolution of an isomorphic model increases, so does its capacity to put us in touch with the aesthetically-relevant properties of the target, the properties in which its aesthetic value plausibly consists (if we want to say the value inheres in the object). There are certain facts of scale that may escape modelling; the most painstakingly precise desktop model of the Eiffel Tower simply isn't going to produce in one a sense of being dwarfed by a feat of engineering, if that's an important property of the actual Tower.[51]

[50] Jerrold Levinson, "What a Musical Work Is, Again," in *Music, Art, and Metaphysics: Essays in Philosophical Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 235.

[51] Similarly for Barnett Newman's *Stations of the Cross: Lema Sabachthani,* 1958 (see Appendix, Figure 5) or Ellsworth Kelly's 1978 *Color Panels for a Large Wall* (Appendix, Figure 6). These are works some of whose formal and relational qualities—the spatial distribution of canvases in Kelly's work, the use of hard lines and contrast in Newman's series—lend themselves readily to tactile modeling, but it hard to imagine how one could perceive their *scale* except visually.

An illuminating example of a model that combines textual testimony, "low-resolution" isomorphic modelling, and "high-resolution" isomorphic modelling can be found in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, in an access aid for Bruegel's *The Fight Between Carnival and Lent* (Appendix, Figure 4). Two smaller, black-and-white reproductions of the painting are affixed to a panel; one presents information about the *Bildaufbau*, or composition, and the other about the *Position der Figuren,* or the position of the painting's figures. The aid also provides information about the painting in Braille. Neither of the smaller reproductions attempts to reproduce the frenzied chaos of this plaza scene, but drastically simplifies it to provide information about the composition that is nonetheless not reducible to textual or verbal testimony. The first shows, by means of raised lines, how the houses on the left side, the church on the right side, and the fountain in the painting's center orient and unify the composition. The second shows, again by raised lines, the placement of several figures in relation to these compositional aspects of the painting. Aside these reproductions, curators have placed large three-dimensional models of a shoe and a vessel for coins that appear only two-dimensionally in the painting—a highly interpretive feature of this access aid that probably doesn't count as (only) a model, but an interpretive addition.[52] The entire access aid is quite different in its goals from the tactile model of *The Kiss* (Appendix, Figure 1), which renders haptically shapes and textures that would be perceived visually. Even if the "low-resolution" quality of the Bruegel access aid trends towards testimony, it nonetheless allows blind persons to *perceptually* apprehend the general placement of structures in the scene—something that an untrained sighted viewer might not appreciate.

[52] It's a separate but interesting question how access aids that do not (merely) model but *add to* or *modify* the work in some way can be pedagogically useful, as they seem in practice to be.

3.2.1.3 Isomorphism: Wrapping Up

To recap: a sufficient degree of isomorphism at a sufficiently high resolution explains how a tactile access aid can represent a visual work, and how it can offer an experience of that work—in particular, of the work's formal structure, which can be manifested isomorphically in the tactile features of the access aid. I've thus linked the first two components that need linking. What about the third component—value?

One might point out that the fact that a tactile access aid meets my conditions and tactilely represents, isomorphically and in high resolution, the formal features of a visual work doesn't mean that the tactile representation of the work will give rise to any of the higher-level properties of the visual work when seen visually (e.g., "feels wistful," "feels foreboding," etc.). And perhaps the higher-level properties are the only, or the main, reasons why the work is valued. I see no way around this objection: it could be that the contingencies of human psychology are such that some visual works, when represented tactilely according to my proposal, don't retain their higher-level properties. But insofar as formal features individuate works, and insofar as higher-level properties depend on lower-level, formal properties—two plausible views—it seems a safe bet, in advance of experimental results, to rely on these lower-level formal properties as a guide to what makes a work the particular work that it is, and hence a particular valuable work the particular valuable work that it is. Furthermore, as Ludwig Wittgenstein observed, some aesthetic concepts—or concepts that figure in art- or genre-specific terminology, such as his examples of the designations "major" and "minor" in music—do double duty as both (a) having what he calls "emotive value" while also (b) being capable of use "solely

to describe a perceived structure."[53] For certain kinds of ceramics, for instance, the concept referred to by the term "symmetrical" may play both a descriptive and evaluative role. In cases where the term's applied, it seems difficult to cleave apart the structural description from the value inherent in the obtaining of what's described, which suggests that sometimes structure may directly "link to" or "give rise to" value just by constituting it.

Someone might deny that the formal features or properties of a work (in visual art, features of the two-dimensional surface: which marks are where, in what relation to one another, and so on) are what individuate it. Perhaps they might say that paintings are to be individuated by some or all of their higher-level properties—for instance, the *specific feelings* they respectively give rise to in human perceivers. But absent further argument, one might worry that this view, if it weakens or severs the connection between lower-level and higher-level properties, could have unwelcome consequences. Firstly, two works that had very different lower-level or formal properties that gave rise to the same individuating higher-level properties would, on this account, be the same work. Secondly, the view could allow for an intuitively unacceptable amount of change to be made to the lower-level properties of a work while preserving its identity, so long as the higher-level properties remained unchanged.

[53] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophy of Psychology—A Fragment xi*, in *Philosophical Investigations,* translated by G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker, and Joachim Schulte; revised fourth edition by P. M. S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte (Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009): §226.

3.2.2 The Irreducible Phenomenal Qualities of Sense Modalities

I now take up the objection that there is *just something it is like*—something irreducible, special, phenomenally unique, etc.—to *see* visual works rather than to experience them some other way. Because of what's special about seeing, tactile access aids are, at best, a far cry from seeing the original visual works they represent. Hopkins draws on an idea along these lines when he refers to a notion of "*distinctive* [visual] experience."[54]

The objection sounds a bit foot-stompy, and perhaps it is. But it has, I take it, very strong intuitive pull, and I think most people accept it (or would, if asked) rather than some version of my view. The challenge is to articulate it precisely and to give it some substance.

One way the objection could proceed without simply denying my thesis would be to say that, while access aids do facilitate experiences of aesthetic value, it's not the same *kind* of value as that provided by the original work. Call this the "non-overlapping value" claim. One version of the claim allows that the aesthetic experience given rise to by the access aid is an experience of the work the aid depicts, but asserts that the nature of the experience (and hence of the aesthetic value experienced) is *fundamentally different* from a traditional experience of the work, perhaps because it's given rise to via a different sense modality than that with which the work is traditionally perceived. Aesthetically valuable experiences of a given work are thus individuated by sense modality, so the objection relies on some version of modality specificity.[55]

[54] Hopkins, "Touching Pictures," 161; emphasis in orig.

[55] Some kinds of work will have multiple modalities that can give rise to valuable experiences of them (sculpture comes to mind); some kinds of work will just have one (painting, as traditionally understood).

I envision at least two replies to this line of thought. The first is to ask how plausible it is to maintain simultaneously that (a) the experience given rise to by the tactile access aid is an aesthetically valuable experience of the original work, but that (b) that value is just of a *fundamentally different* sort than that given rise to by a traditional engagement. Both the traditional and nontraditional engagements, after all, are causally related either to (i) the original work or (ii) a representation of it that meets the conditions of my proposal. One might think: given that even on the objector's view both experiences are *of* the same work, why think what's valuable about them radically differs from one case to the other; and in the nontraditional case, where would the value come from, if the explanation from the traditional case is precluded? The idea here is to put pressure on the pairing of (a) and (b): if one wishes to assert (b), perhaps one should modify (a) to deny that the experience involved is one of the original work.

The second reply attempts to attack some version of modality specificity more directly. It asks: are sense modalities the only means by which correct, valuable experiences of works can be individuated? Could it make sense—from the standpoint of our intuitions and practices—to take the class of "correct" experiences of a work to, in some cases, cut across sense modalities? Could it be that a thorough tactile experience of the access aid for *The Kiss* that meets the conditions of my proposal has more in common with a "typical" human visual experience of *The Kiss* than either does with the visual experience of *The Kiss* had by a being whose visual acuity is 100 times greater than that of the typical human? Although I don't have the space to defend this last suggestion, I suspect it's the case, on the grounds that this being's visual experience of *The Kiss*'s structure could be so radically different from

that of human perceivers, despite being a visual experience, than two human experiences of comparable acuity in different sense modalities.[56]

Finally, I suggest that, even if there is some uncapturable "thus-ness" to, e.g., seeing a painting rather than perceiving it haptically, it's implausible to deny that the formal features we attend to in paintings, which have been my go-to candidates for features that can stand in isomorphic relationships to tactile manifestations in access aids, make up at least a significant part of what we care about experiencing when we experience paintings. (And similarly for other art forms.) So even if the objector wants to hold onto the claim that there is something irreducibly unique or valuable about *seeing The Kiss*, it can still be true that access aids are (a) valuable to a comparable extent to that which traditional experiences of it are, and (b) more like traditional experiences of *The Kiss* than written descriptions of it.

3.2.2.1 Medium-Specific Properties

Another objection, related to the preceding one, has to do with qualities that tactile access aids might not be thought able to represent at all. While I take it we have a relatively clear idea of what it means for a raised line in an access aid to be isomorphic to a drawn line in a painting (and similarly for shapes), it's less clear what it could mean for the *colors* of a painting to be isomorphic to something in a tactile rendering. But this doesn't mean that nothing could be. Perhaps colors could be isomorphic to

[56] I'm helping myself to the idea of comparable acuity across sense modalities in the absence of a view about what differentiates the sense modalities and/or their contents, but I think the intuitive idea—that human senses, despite their differences, could operate at a similar "resolution," one much different from the resolution of the senses of this super-perceptive being—is clear.

textures, or even heat or coolness. What's important, according to my proposal, is that the gradations in whatever's presented to the perceiver by the access aid—whether texture or temperature—are isomorphic to the gradations in whatever they represent.

Still, perhaps there's something irreducibly phenomenally special about *seeing* color, something no isomorphic, high-resolution tactile representation of color variance can capture. It's also hard to imagine how the distinct features of *trompe l'oeil* and anamorphic painting—two subgenres of visual depiction that could be classified as optical illusions—could be appreciated *as optical illusions* or even *as illusions* tactilely, even if their formal structures could be appreciated tactilely, via isomorphic representation.

I grant that there may be irreducible phenomenal features of sensory modalities that, even if represented isomorphically in forms intelligible to other sensory modalities, would nonetheless fail to be, in some sense, *adequately* represented. Perhaps we could explain instances of these as failures of the isomorphic representation to preserve value: the images in question just aren't striking, impressive, etc. when perceived haptically. These may be differences that can't be captured via representations that meet the conditions of my proposal, differences that thus track the ways in which the contents of the various sense modalities may themselves be genuinely different. Still, this doesn't rule out cases where much of the formal features that give rise to what is valued in an experience of an original work *are* captured adequately via a representation that gives rise to an experience that meets the conditions of my proposal. It only means that, sometimes, such nontraditional experiences will not be *as* valuable as their corresponding traditional experiences for lacking this special, irreducible aspect or component. They will still be more like traditional experiences than reading written descriptions.

3.2.3 Objections from Intention

3.2.3.1 Intention as Entailing Modality Specificity

I deal here with the objection that artists may insist their work is to be perceived by means of a certain sense modality only: what then?

My main reply to this objection is borrowed from Monroe C. Beardsley, who points out that it seems to be our practice that if the work contradicts something the creator or author says they intended, we tend to treat the work as decisive.[57] This is a simplification, of course, and it's not supposed to suggest that the work is the *only* legitimate source of information about its own analysis. But I think Beardsley's point is fairly effective, and that framing my reply this way helps me to avoid getting too bogged down in the extensive literature about intention.[58] Of course, I need to massage the approach slightly, for Beardsley imagines cases where an artist says (e.g.), "I meant to draw a blue whale" where what they've drawn is a sperm whale, and I'm imagining a case where, e.g., an author says, "This poem is to be read in Esperanto only; any translation into another language has no value and nothing to do with the original," or a painter says, "No tactile model of my painting has anything to do with my painting." Maybe such declarations would be interesting to us culturally and historically, but if my account is correct, I don't see what's troublesome about saying, as we'd be

[57] See Beardsley, *op cit.*, 20.

[58] For a useful overview of debates about intention in art, see Paisley Livingston, "Intention in Art," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, edited by Jerrold Levinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 275-290.

inclined to say in the blue whale/sperm whale case, that the author or artist is just wrong in this specific regard.

More strongly, one might wish to accord to artists the ability to determine, as a matter of artistic freedom or license, how their works are properly perceived. Such an objector might say that ignoring an artist's wishes about these matters would be akin to ignoring the title of their work and calling it whatever we wanted. But this would be to confuse violating artistic integrity by changing a fact about the work itself—the work's title—with denying that the artist always knows, or can determine by fiat, the best or only ways to perceive the work, which is not obviously a fact about the work itself in the way that a title is. If facts about how the work is to be properly perceived are facts about the work itself because the artist said they were, then it's hard to see how to grant *those* declarations privileged status, but not anything else an artist says about their work—including such things as Beardsley cites as examples of declarations that, clearly, we should reject as being determinative with respect to questions about a work.

3.2.3.2 Intention as Violated (or Compounded) in Interpretation

As I've noted, access aids interpose something—namely, a representation—between a perceiver and an original artwork. In the case of tactile access aids, interpretive decisions have to be made about which features of the original visual work to manifest tactilely, and how. The objection holds that this amounts to an interjection of intentional choice that *adds* to the original work. This thus makes the access aid different from the original work, and also distorts or risks distorting the

intentions of the original work's creator (understood broadly as "what the creator achieved/hoped to achieve in the work").

My reply is that this is where discrimination and judgment come in, and where the qualification "sufficiently" is doing heavy lifting in my proposal. Although it's right to say that the maker of a tactile access aid will have to decide which features to represent tactilely and how, so will the printer who's rendering a Rembrandt via tricolor offset lithography for a catalog have to make choices about which colors to represent and how. But these choices, even if they're genuinely interpretive choices (and I think they are), don't necessarily prevent the Rembrandt, or some of its qualities and features, from being experienced in valuable ways. So we should say something similar about tactile access aids that meet my conditions.

Another thing to note is that it's plausible that interpretive choices about framing, situation, series, lighting, and display information also influence how we perceive works (perhaps not only what we notice in or about them, but what qualities we take them to have in some cases). But, barring unusual circumstances, these interpretive choices are not often thought to obscure the works in question. To the contrary, these interpretive activities, when done well, may *make possible* paradigm cases of valuable aesthetic experience of original works. What this suggests is that the presence of interpretive mediation need not prevent our calling an experience an experience of an original work.[59]

[59] Of course, in some cases it might. A curator who wanted to exhibit portraits by Titian under glaring red light would in some sense be making an artwork of her own.

3.2.3.3 Historical Context and Anti-Formalism

One might worry that my proposal either somehow covertly assumes, or otherwise illegitimately drives us into the arms of, some version of formalism or Platonism about artworks: very roughly, any of a family of views that says either that artworks are valued and individuated by reference to their formal features, or that what artworks really are are instantiations of abstract formal relations that can in theory be manifested in different media and at different times in history.[60] The objection I'm imagining wouldn't just make this accusation, but would suggest that the proposal commits us to an unacceptably unhistorical or ahistorical account of artworks—a charge often brought against, e.g., Platonism about musical works.[61]

There are different versions of the objection. One is that, supposing that knowing certain historical or cultural facts about a work is necessary to its proper appreciation, and supposing that a fact entailing modality specificity could be included among these, it's unacceptably ahistorical to ignore modality specificity.[62] Another version of the objection holds that because tactile access aids aren't mentioned in the historical conceptions that make the appreciation, interpretation, and

[60] See Jonathan Loesberg, "Aesthetic Formalism, the Form of Artworks, and Formalist Criticism," in *A Handbook of Modernism Studies*, edited by Jean-Michel Rabaté (Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons, 2013): 415-429; Deane W. Curtin, "Varieties of Aesthetic Formalism," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 40, No. 3 (Spring, 1982): 315-326; and Peter Kivy, "Platonism in Music: Another Kind of Defense," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 24, No. 3 (July 1987): 245-252.

[61] See, e.g., Levinson, "What a Musical Work Is, Again." I should note here that my use of the moniker "Platonist" is drawn from the literature and not intended to represent, on my part, a commitment to any particular view of Plato.

[62] The historical fact that supposedly entails some version of modality specificity could be a fact about the artist's intention, though it need not be.

evaluation of some kind of artwork possible for us, what's experienced by means of them can't (whether valuable or not) be said to be an experience of the original work.

Objections such as these take as their backdrops what can be termed broadly anti-formalist views in the ontology of art. An influential example is found in Kendall Walton's paper "Categories of Art," where Walton argues that not all properties of works relevant to their appreciation, interpretation, and evaluation are perceptible in the works themselves: some properties of works are determined by reference to historical categories.[63] Though I think there are reasons to resist Walton's conclusion, let me grant it.[64] It doesn't make trouble for my proposal unless some particular Waltonian category, in this sense, could or does build in modality specificity. That question aside, it seems perfectly possible for one who endorses my proposal to also hold that a blind perceiver engaging with *The Kiss*'s tactile access aid isn't having an experience of *The Kiss* unless she also knows certain things about its place in the history of painting, about Klimt, and about the proper criteria for evaluating paintings of its type—all things the anti-formalist might require her to know to appreciate the work.[65]

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[63] Kendall Walton, "Categories of Art," *The Philosophical Review* 79, No. 3 (July 1970): 334-367.

[64] Daniel O. Nathan argues that "the determination of a work's correct category"—and so also, presumably, the conditions in and by which it's correctly perceived—"is logically independent of specification of the artist's intentions and other historical facts" (541). See "Categories and Intentions," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 31, No. 4 (1973): 539-541.

[65] For Walton (*op. cit.*), proper appreciation and evaluation of some work *W* will take into account which features are *standard, contra-standard,* and *variable* for the kind of work *W* is. But knowledge of the division of features relevant to some category into which a work falls must be learned through, e.g., art-historical training and exposure; it cannot be "read off" of the object itself. Features are standard with respect to a category if they are required of some object for inclusion in the category but not the targets of aesthetic evaluation; contra-standard if an object's possessing them precludes its membership in the category; and variable if an object's possessing them doesn't bear on its inclusion in the category but does bear on its evaluation. If *W* is a painting, for instance, then a standard feature of *W*—one relevant to its aesthetic appreciation and evaluation, but, again, *not* one whose standardness can be read of the painting artifact itself—is its two-dimensionality, perhaps its being framed, etc. (features that don't figure into an appreciation or evaluation of any painting, but rather are

And it seems an upside of my proposal that it can afford to remain neutral, to some extent, on debates about the ontology of art. One reason it can stay tight-lipped is, as Carroll notes, that even anti-formalists like Walton accept that formal features at least important *parts* of artworks and hence of their analysis, and it's these features on which the proposal relies.[66]

Finally, perhaps one could object that my proposal is unacceptably ahistorical because it follows from it that an identical copy of a famous work would provide an identical aesthetic experience (and one just as valuable) as an experience of the original work. After all, an identical copy of a famous work will be maximally isomorphic with it along every axis, and will match its resolution or fine-grainedness. I accept this consequence. While it's true that museumgoers who found that they were looking at (truly) identical replicas of famous paintings rather than the originals might feel cheated, they couldn't feel cheated, I argue, because of any valuable *aesthetic*, as opposed to cultural or historical, experience they'd be missing out on.

part of the reason why objects *show up for us* as paintings); a contra-standard feature would (traditionally, anyway) be its incorporation of some three-dimensional element, since this would make it a sculpture; and a variable feature would be the particular arrangement of markings on its two-dimensional surface, since *this* would make it the particular painting it was, and this would be grounds for its appreciation and evaluation as the particular work it is.

[66] Carroll, "Aesthetic Experience," 78.

4. Public Art Museums and the Obligation to Provide Access Aids

So far, I've elaborated and defended a proposal explaining how tactile access aids can provide valuable aesthetic experiences of the visual works they depict or represent. The proposal can capture much of what access aids share with the original works without relying for its success on claims of the sort that Hopkins denies: that the sense modalities involved share the same, or some of the same, content.

I now turn to the question of what the proposal's success might mean for public art museums. I'll argue that public art museums have an obligation, all else equal, to provide access aids that meet the conditions I spell out. Because such aids provide experiences that are valuable for the some of the same reasons that experiences of the original works are valuable, not installing them in museums plausibly amounts to unjustly precluding a portion of the public—in this case, the blind—from having the valuable experiences that are one sake for which such museums are maintained.[67]

First, however, I provide as backdrop an argument from Ronald Dworkin intended to justify the appropriation of public funds for cultural and artistic projects, including public art museums. I then distinguish between two kinds of goods public institutions might achieve by making themselves accessible to the disabled, which I term *expressive*, or symbolic, and *substantive* goods. I suggest that the

[67] There may be other reasons that museums are maintained, such as for the preservation of cultural or historical artifacts and knowledge. J. Mark Davidson Schuster argues that the public interest in art museums is "two-fold," consisting of an interest in making a society's artifacts and ideas available to present but also future generations. But it seems uncontroversial to say that one key reason public art museums specifically are maintained is to provide citizens with valuable aesthetic experiences; perhaps Schuster means to include such experiences by referring to the artifacts of which they're experiences. See Schuster, "The Public Interest in the Art Museum's Public," in *Art In Museums (New Research in Museum Studies: An International Series, 5: Art in Museums),* edited by Susan Pearce (London & Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Athlone Press, 1995), 109.

goods public art museums provide are plausibly substantive goods, and that providing tactile access aids is a way to provide the disabled—in particular the blind—with these goods. Furthermore, I argue that the expressive goods achieved by including the disabled in museum settings are likely only defensibly pursued if there is some substantive good(s) such settings can provide them with. The chapter's overall argument thus shows not only that public art museums are (defeasibly) obligated to provide access aids, but that museums' capacities to provide substantive goods for disabled persons underwrite whatever expressive goods are achieved by signaling their inclusion of the disabled.

4.1 Motivating Museums: A Dworkinian Picture

Why there should be public museums or public funding for the arts in situations of resource scarcity is a difficult question, one I can't fully answer here. Still, I want to take on—as one antecedent of my conditional, so to speak—a view from Ronald Dworkin that defends public funding for the arts and which I find philosophically attractive for several reasons.

Dworkin argues that such funding can be justified most promisingly if we understand what the arts provide a society not as any particular good among goods, but as the preservation and enrichment of a "rich cultural structure" that "multiplies distinct possibilities or opportunities of value..."[68] At the center of this structure, Dworkin holds, is a community's "shared language," which is

[68] Ronald Dworkin et al., "II. Panel Discussion: Art as a Public Good" [panel discussion], *Columbia-VLA Art and the Law* 9, No. 2 (1984-1985): 153. Dworkin's portion of the discussion is reprinted largely or entirely unchanged in *A Matter of Principle*, "Can a Liberal State Support Art?" (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1985), 221-233.

neither a private nor public good, but "inherently social…"[69] Dworkin arrives at this proposal after considering and rejecting two other approaches, which he calls the "economic" and the "lofty."[70] The lofty approach asks how much funding should be allocated to the arts for the purposes of making a society's culture excellent. Dworkin rejects this approach as too paternalistic. The economic approach, on the other hand, is vexed by numerous technical difficulties—among them that of even beginning to specify what benefits the arts provide, who these accrue to, and on what schedule. But the final nail in its coffin is also the clue that leads Dworkin to his positive view. For the economic approach, he suggests, errs in thinking of the cultural goods the arts provide as analogous to just any other good about which we might argue. Instead, these cultural goods are intimately bound up with a society's very frameworks of thought that make asking questions about trade-offs between other goods and values possible.

Government funding of the arts is thus justified by appeal to the idea that it preserves and enriches this cultural language, elaborating more possible choices—templates for good lives, for instance—rather than fewer. Included among these possibilities may be what Kwame Anthony Appiah describes as various collective identities that, he notes, provide narrative "scripts" that citizens can use to shape their life plans.[71] Supposing Dworkin's justification for public arts funding holds water, there may be a way to understand it that satisfies John Rawls's stipulation, in *A Theory of Justice*,

[69] Dworkin, "Art as a Public Good," 153. See also Susana Mesquita and Maria João Carneiro's discussion of museums as increasing "cultural literacy" among visitors in "Accessibility of European museums to visitors with visual impairments," *Disability & Society* 31, No. 3 (2016), 374.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Kwame Anthony Appiah and Amy Gutmann, *Color Conscious: The Political Morality of Race* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 97.

that public arts funding can only be justified if it promotes "the social conditions that secure the equal liberties and as advancing in an appropriate way the long-term interests of the least advantaged."[72] If we understand the preservation and enrichment of the cultural language as capable of serving these goals, then perhaps even anti-perfectionists could approve. Granted, there may be a weak sense in which seeking to furnish citizens with more possibilities is paternalistic. But it's hard to see how the pursuit could be charged with perfectionism, since (a) no choice among these possibilities is itself favored (at any rate, this seems an implicit condition of Dworkin's proposal) and (b) the fewer choices a citizen has about how to live, the more their situation resembles one in which a decision about the best way to live is paternalistically imposed on them.[73] Even if Dworkin's argument fails for one reason or another, however, he provides a promising template for an answer to how public funding for the arts might be defended—one that doesn't appeal to either of two other common, but problem-riddled, approaches. If one finds unattractive the idea of a cultural language, or of such a language's being a good that could permissibly be supported by public funding, there may yet be another variable to plug into the argument in its place.

A few final comments on Dworkin's view. Firstly, it's worth noting that, although the view seems to treat the arts as only instrumentally valuable, it's not inconsistent with holding that some art is valuable non-instrumentally. Secondly, perhaps it's possible to learn about the rich cultural structure

[72] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice: Revised Edition* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1999), 292.
[73] Maybe the resemblance is merely superficial. But I think not: it would seem to make little difference to me whether the fact that I have no choice in what life I can pursue is due to (a) the government's paternalistically imposing that way of life on me or (b) its failure to ensure, by structuring the social world in certain ways, that citizens like me have such a choice.

that the arts articulate, preserve, and proliferate by other means than engaging with art, and so without publicly funding the arts. But presumably, if this were so, then Dworkin would take his argument to need further commitments. So perhaps his view is best understood as relying on the idea that there's something special about the arts in this regard that justifies their funding (rather than the funding of, e.g., written descriptions of possible artworks).

4.2 Expressive and Substantive Goods

With Dworkin's picture on the table, I want to introduce a further distinction, that between *expressive*, or symbolic, and *substantive* goods. These are two kinds of goods that might be achieved by the inclusion of disabled persons in public museum contexts. The distinction, and the dependence of the former on the latter, matters for my claim that museums are in some cases obligated to provide access aids.

Véronique Munoz-Dardé suggests that paradigms of successful public institutions, including museums, furnish goods over and above the benefits they distribute or make available to individuals. These further benefits, or "social goods," are collectively shared, and their fulfillment may be described as the fulfillment of "plural needs."[74] The distinction roughly tracks the one I wish to make between substantive and expressive goods. Substantive goods are best understood as analogous with (and often constituted by) material benefits enjoyed by individuals or groups. A pleasurable experience or knowledge of an artist's oeuvre are examples of substantive goods that a museum might provide.

[74] Véronique Munoz-Dardé, "In the Face of Austerity: The Puzzle of Museums and Universities," The Journal of Political Philosophy 21, No. 2 (2013): 221, 236, 241.

Expressive goods are less readily specified in such terms; they may include goods distributed across a society and that signal commitments to certain values or projects. Examples might include (a) a society's funding a museum as a reflection of its values, and (b) a museum's making its collections accessible to the blind for the sake of broadcasting its commitment to inclusion.[75] Whether expressive goods are ultimately also goods because, in the long run, they accrue substantive goods to individuals or groups, or whether they can amount to goods "in themselves," I leave open; it could also be that expressive goods signal commitments to pursuing certain (sometimes to-be-determined) substantive goods.

The distinction tracks two kinds of justification one can give for the claim that public institutions like museums should provide access, however understood, to disabled persons. Justifications that appeal to substantive goods take something like the following form: *G* is a substantive good to which all members of a civic body are entitled; disabled members can't access *G* without accommodations; so accommodations should be provided so that disabled members can

[75] As John Wilson and Franziska Felder separately point out, "inclusion" may seem too vague to do any moral or even normative work. Nonetheless, Felder argues that the concept of inclusion can be clarified, and that both phenomena to which she holds it refers—social inclusion of a general sort, and inclusion in specific communities—are bound up with the good human life (and not just the good *disabled* human life). "A good human life, as I understand it, consists of inclusion in society as well as communities. Moreover, inclusion is not only a necessary precondition for a *good* human life, it is also a crucial part of basic human thriving at all, at least at the very beginning of one's life and sometimes also in between and at the end of a human life" (319; emphasis in orig.). Felder's argument thus suggests a sense in which inclusion may count as a substantive good, given my distinction. See Franziska Felder, "Inclusion and the Good Human Life," in *Disability and the Good Human Life*, edited by Jerome E. Bickenbach, Franziska Felder, and Barbara Schmitz, 300-322 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

access *G*.[76] Justifications that appeal to expressive goods take a slightly different form: *G* is an expressive good that isn't achieved unless disabled persons are included in some context *C*; some range of accommodations is necessary for the inclusion of disabled persons in *C*; we should provide these accommodations so that we can achieve *G*.

Museums' justifications for providing access to the disabled often proceed along expressive lines.[77] This may serve a strategic purpose: it may allow their administrations to justify making their museums more accessible without committing to controversial views about disability, or about the goods that various disabilities might preclude one from accessing. Yet, I suggest, there must be some substantive good to be furnished to the disabled by providing them access, on pain of the pursuit of the expressive good not being sufficiently motivated. The idea is that successful expressive arguments (arguments for the provision or achievement of some expressive good) may at least sometimes depend

[76] It's important to note that these kinds of justifications don't necessarily rely on the social model of disability. In other words, it is possible to think that public institutions should provide access to disabled persons without thinking that their failure to do so is what makes the disabled persons in question disabled. Cf. fn. 2.

[77] The Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery's *A Guide for Museums: Accessibility Toolkit*, for instance, appeals to accessibility and inclusion without explaining what these consist in, pointing instead to statements by the American Alliance of Museums that also contain unclarified uses of these terms (Freer-Sackler Museum Accessibility Toolkit, 9). The introduction to the Smithsonian Institution's publication *Inclusive Digital Interactives: Best Practices + Research* claims that the meaning of "Access" in "DEAI" (an acronym representing "Diversity, Equity, Access, and Inclusion") not only means that "museum buildings [must] meet physical accessibility standards, [that] programs provide sign language interpreters, and service animals [be] allowed into the facilities," but that the disabled should "feel welcomed…" (5). The introduction then states that "Inclusion for people with disabilities means giving individuals the chance to see [sic] and tell their own stories in museums as well as to access the stories of others"; the choice of the modality-specific verb "see" suggests a lack of reflection on what "giving" the disabled these opportunities would actually involve (5). Some of these goods clearly count as substantive, in the sense I'm using that term. But without further specification of what the value of, e.g., "social inclusion" and "equal opportunities" actually consist in—as they figure in a sentence like "There has been growing concern [in museum administrations] about the social inclusion of people with disabilities and equal opportunities for all"—one may suspect that they are being effectively *appealed to* as expressive goods, even if they could be given substantive content. (This last sentence is drawn from Mesquita and Carneiro, *op. cit.*, 374).

on the success of substantive arguments (arguments for the provision or achievement of some substantive good). I think this is true in the case of providing certain kinds of access, in particular aesthetic experiences made possible via access aids, in public art museums.

To see this, consider an example. Suppose a museum contains objects that a certain class of persons can't derive any value from whatsoever, directly or indirectly. Suppose also that the museum goes to great lengths to secure the expressive good of, say, inclusion by making its collections accessible to this class. If there's *nothing* that a member of the class could gain as a substantive good from the museum, then, all else equal, what's especially valuable or important about the expressive good obtained? I don't mean to denigrate the pursuit of expressive goods in all such cases, just to point out that there'd be no particular reason for such goods' pursuit in this case beyond the highly general one that it's good (if it is good) to signal inclusion of others, especially groups with histories of social exclusion and worse. Assuming that efforts designed to secure this expressive good involve the expenditure of scarce or limited public resources, why not expend those resources in ways that benefit that group substantively? In suggesting this, I'm not committing to the idea that there could never be any grounds to pursue an expressive good with respect to some group absent all connection to pursuing a substantive good—just that, in advance of particular cases, the grounds are hard to discern.

4.3 The Obligation to Provide Access Aids

I can now assemble my argument for the claim that public art museums are obligated to provide access aids. Public art museums educate citizens about what we might call the cultural language that they share, a language that enumerates and so helps to make available for pursuit various

possibilities, including possibilities for good lives. They may provide other goods, like pleasurable experiences and historical knowledge, but what makes them especially valuable *qua* publicly-funded institutions is this. Although, per Dworkin's argument, this good is different from other substantive goods—it's more abstract, for one thing—it's nonetheless relatively straightforward understood as a substantive good. A richer conception of possibilities for experience and ways of living is something one can have and be better off for having, even if it isn't like having a pantry full of food, or the way that makes one better off. A central way that public art museums provide this substantive good is by facilitating valuable aesthetic experiences. But textual or audio descriptions of artworks, of the sort the blind may use to learn about them, can't provide them with those experiences—however otherwise valuable they are.

There are reasons to think that access aids that meet the conditions of my proposal, however, can facilitate valuable nontraditional experiences of artworks—even in modalities other than those pre-theoretically thought correct for engaging with them, and even if they aren't *identical* with, or *just as valuable as*, traditional engagements. If this is so, then, if museums didn't provide these aids, disabled persons couldn't obtain the value offered by the engagements that the aids make possible. This would amount to a certain group's being deprived of a benefit that, by hypothesis, that group's labor and taxes go some way towards supporting and with respect to which they have strong *prima facie* claims of entitlement. Furthermore, if we want to pursue the inclusion of disabled persons in public spaces like museums as an expressive good, we should first locate a substantive good that their inclusion secures for them. In this case, the substantive good can be located in the value of the experiences the access aids facilitate.

One might argue that equal treatment, or even just the acknowledgment of equal entitlement, may be thought to not require the rectification of structural features of a space that effectively prevent some group of persons from using or enjoying it. The thought would be that there's nothing in principle preventing these persons from using the space; what prevents them are contingent facts about their physical constitutions, for which the state and its members aren't responsible. Even granting this last clause, I suspect that, while there may be some appropriations of public funds that are permissible despite disabled persons not being able to use what's funded, such appropriations aren't usually permissible. Though I lack the space to fully expand the argument here, consider an example. One might say that the state should (assuming certain other conditions are met) fund running trails and swimming pools. But if these trails and pools aren't such that, e.g., wheelchair users can use them, then—given the relative ease with which trails and pools can be made accessible—that fact would seem to ground a complaint from wheelchair users. Similarly, even if it's not the state's fault that a particular blind individual is blind, it's hard, all else equal, to imagine a reason that's a reason not to facilitate their experiencing the artworks in public museums that isn't *also* a reason not to make public transportation more accessible—a state-funded undertaking that I take to be both uncontroversial and clearly morally and politically required. Relying on a distinction between "natural" and "artificial" barriers to determine which to rectify seems of little help in these matters.[78]

[78] David Wasserman elaborates some of the difficulties with such accounts. See "Distributive Justice," in *Disability, Difference, and Discrimination: Perspectives on Justice in Bioethics and Public Policy* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), 182-183.

Finally, the question of whether to create and install tactile access aids in public art museums doesn't seem on its face to be a question of whether to make unreasonable or extensive revisions to current practices, thus mitigating objections that might arise from one debate about accommodations for the disabled.[79] Although the creation and installation of access aids no doubt involves money and time, what it needn't involve are major alterations to museum spaces, non-disabled visitors' experiences, or the original works themselves.

4.4 Conclusion: Access as a Good for All

In closing, I want to point out that there are reasons to think that providing additional means of access to museum contents benefits all visitors, not just disabled persons. This is in part because increased accessibility often means, in practice, increased interactivity between museum patrons and exhibits across multiple sensory modalities, and this interactivity may (a) seem subjectively more rewarding or pleasurable, or (b) actually reinforce learning. As Davidson et al. note in their review of the Boston Museum of Science's modification of one exhibit hall to make it more accessible following a 1985 audit, the changes made to the hall were "clearly of value for both the general public and special-needs groups" for these reasons.[80] Amanda Cachia suggests that museums' providing tactile experiences for both disabled and non-disabled visitors furnishes both audiences with "a new advantage, where they are empowered through haptic aesthetics and do need not to rely on discursive

[79] Ibid., 181.
[80] Betty Davidson, Candace Lee Heald, and George E. Hein, "Increased exhibit accessibility through multisensory interaction," in *The Educational Role of the Museum,* Second Edition, edited by Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (New York: Routledge, 1994), 223, 237.

or representational regimes in art history," innovating over traditional display techniques that, in Eilean Hooper-Greenhill's account (which echoes John Dewey's criticisms of modern museums), seem designed to isolate the past from the present.[81] If such changes increase the value that museums provide to both disabled and non-disabled audiences, then the reasons to make museums more accessible multiply—even, perhaps, to the extent of overdetermining the claim that, all else equal, museums should provide access aids, as one form of multisensory engagement with museum content among others. The tactile access aid developed for *The Kiss* includes, in addition to its tactile features, audio-descriptive components; when visitors touch specific areas of the aid, recordings by art historians play.[82] Although I've focused on the aid's tactile features, it embodies a multisensory approach that combines experience with description and testimony. Hilde Hein even speculates that information-rich simulations or representations of objects, "replete with information," are "likely to displace phenomenologically obtuse real things in museums as elsewhere."[83]

Lopes's endorsement of the "tactile aesthetics thesis"—the idea that further exploration of touch by philosophers and artists is likely to bear fruit even if Hopkins and others are correct that, e.g., space is not perceived in touch as in sight—can be understood along similar lines.[84] Perhaps aesthetic

[81] Amanda Cachia, "Sweet Gongs Vibrating: The politics of sensorial access," in *The Routledge Handbook of Disability Arts, Culture, and Media*, edited by Bree Hadley and Donna McDonald (New York: Routledge, 2019), 216; and Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, "Museums and cultural diversity in contemporary Britain," in *The Educational Role of the Museum,* edited by Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (New York: Routledge, 1994), 290. For Dewey's criticisms of "the museum conception of art" and modern museum protocols, see, e.g., Dewey, *op. cit.*, 6.

[82] Reichinger et al., *op. cit.,* 7.

[83] Hilde Hein, "Museums: From Object to Experience," in *Aesthetics: The Big Questions*, edited by Carolyn Korsmeyer (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 1998), 111.

[84] Lopes, "Vision, Touch, and the Value of Pictures," 193.

value, pleasure, and an increase in experiential richness can be made available even to those non-disabled who think they have little to gain from attending further to the sense modalities that, for centuries, have been demoted in favor of sight. And perhaps this will support philosophers, researchers, and artists in their construction of what Spence and Gallace call a "lexicon of touch," a shared set of terms for describing tactile sensations, the absence of which currently frustrates work on touch, let alone the prospects of comparing experiences across sense modalities.[85]

This thesis has moved from a question at the intersection of the philosophy of aesthetics and perception to a question in political philosophy. It was motivated by the desire to seek out what links aesthetic experiences not often assumed to have much, if anything, in common, as well as by the more general wish to understand what human perceivers of artworks mutually partake of despite differences in physical ability or sense acuity (within a single sense modality, or across multiple). Although I've gestured in the preceding paragraphs to evidence that suggests making museums more accessible benefits all visitors, not only the disabled, one might worry that I've made my argument for accessibility rely too heavily on the success of my account of access aids. But although I've cast my doubts on purely expressive arguments for accessibility, it's possible some could still be given that overcome my account's potential failure.

Even if my strategy raises worries, however, my linking of my defense of accessibility to access aids via the substantive goods I claim they provide seems to me in the right spirit. Too often what passes for respect for the disabled, in intellectual as well as ordinary life, is just another form of averting

[85] Charles Spence and Alberto Gallace, "Making Sense of Touch," in *Touch in Museums: Policy and Practice in Object Handling*, edited by Helen J. Chatterjee (New York: Routledge, 2020), 30.

one's gaze. But—and I speak here as a disabled philosopher, though "invisibly" so—though this philosophically noncommitted "respect" may seem unobjectionable or may even be shown to have downstream benefits in practice, it should not ultimately satisfy us. In order to fully appreciate the contributions of disabled experience—as diverse or disjunctive a category as that may be—to the project of assembling a complete picture of human experience, the former must be elaborated in all its particularity. This elaboration is messy business, phenomenologically and philosophically. It requires not only theoretical intrepidity, but careful attendance to the testimony of the disabled. While I've aspired to the former in this thesis, it lacks the latter, in part due to the nature of its project. Even Kennedy's admirable and groundbreaking empirical research does not, in my estimation, attend adequately to disabled persons' descriptions of their experiences and judgments. Of course, all this is work, and work where both the odds and consequences of missteps are significant; as I speculated earlier, I suspect that some purely expressive arguments in favor of accessibility and inclusion are launched in the hopes of avoiding it. If I'm right, however, this hope is misguided. We should roll up our sleeves and reach out our hands, and our canes.

Appendix: Images

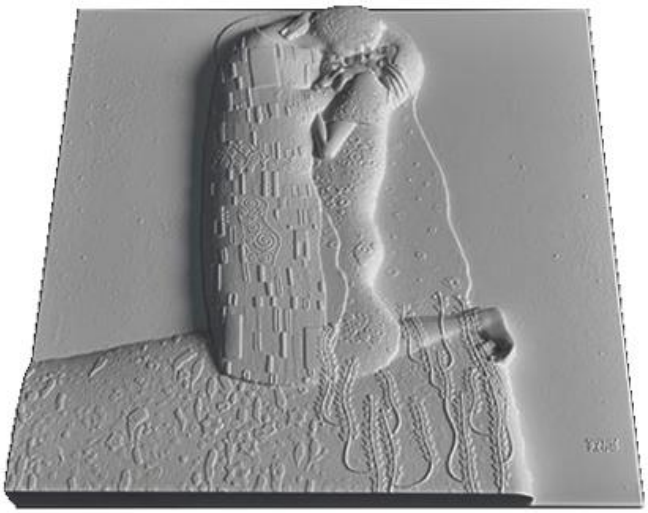

Figure 1. Tactile relief of Gustav Klimt, *The Kiss* (Upper Belvedere Museum, Vienna, Austria). Image © VRVis and Belvedere Museum Wien; used with permission (via Mag. Daniela Drobna, drobna@vrvis.at).

[Alternative text: A rectangular image depicts a tactile rendering, or access aid, of Gustav Klimt's *The Kiss* seen at an angle from the bottom edge. The tactile rendering, or access aid, is made of a white, 3D-printed material and is shown here against a white backdrop. The most prominent tactile feature of the rendering consists of the painting's two embracing figures.]

Further images of the tactile relief of Klimt's *The Kiss* are included in Andreas Reichinger et al., "Pictures in Your Mind: Using Interactive Gesture-Controlled Reliefs to Explore Art," *ACM Transactions on Accessible Computing* 11, No. 1, Article 2 (March 2018): 6.

Figures 2 and 3. Figure 2: A hand runs across the as-yet-unpainted surface of a portrait made of screws by artist Andrew Myers. Figure 3: Images of a blind person named George touching artist Andrew Myers's portrait of him. Video stills courtesy of the artist/Andrew Myers Art, 2022.

[Alternative text: Two video stills, one arranged above the other, show stages of the construction of a portrait of a blind person named George intended to be perceived by touch as well as sight. The portrait is made of screws drilled into a white board to varying depths, allowing them to reproduce the contours of George's face. In the topmost still, the screws have not yet been painted; the board is seen from the right side, hung on a wooden wall, as someone's left hand feels it. In the lower still, George approaches the finished, painted version of the portrait. We see the portrait from over George's left shoulder. George is wearing a blue plaid shirt, overalls, and a straw hat, which he is always depicted as wearing in the portrait.]

Figure 4. Tactile display for Pieter Bruegel, *The Fight Between Carnival and Lent* (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria). Photo by the author. October, 2021.

[Alternative text: A photograph shows an informational display, or access aid, for the visually impaired at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, seen from roughly five feet up and looking down at an angle. The display is roughly one meter wide by one-third of a meter deep, and is about half a meter away from the wall on which the Bruegel that it pertains to is hung. A detailed textual description of the display's contents can be found in section 3.2.1.1.]

Figure 5. Barnett Newman, *Stations of the Cross: Lema Sabachthani*, 1958 (National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., U.S.A.). Photo by Rob Young. Used under a Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC BY 2.0) license. May 2011.

[Alternative text: A room with gray floors, white walls, and two gray benches arranged perpendicularly to the camera's view holds Barnett Newman's *Stations of the Cross: Lema Sabachthani* in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. We see ten of the artwork's canvases. Four are seen on the facing wall, and three are seen on the side walls, two of these partially. Newman's canvases are predominantly yellowish-beige with white and black vertical stripes of varying thickness.]

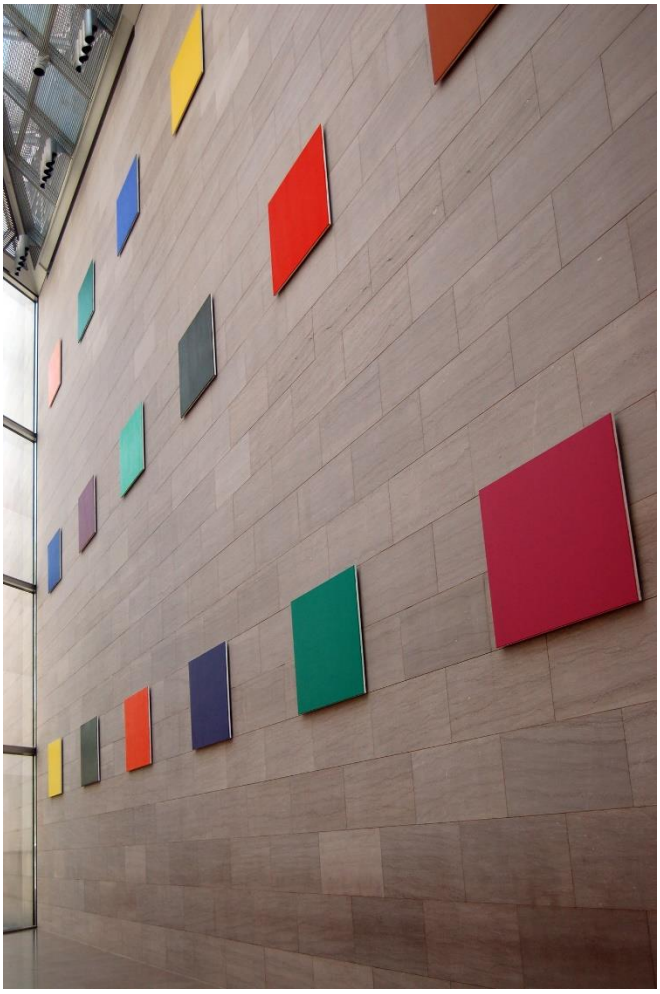

Figure 6. Ellsworth Kelly, *Color Panels for a Large Wall*, 1978 (National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., U.S.A.). Photo by Rob Young. Used under a Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC BY 2.0) license. May 2011.

[Alternative text: A photograph shows Ellsworth Kelly's *Color Panels for a Large Wall* in a multi-story viewing room or lobby in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. The work consists of numerous square panels, each a solid color, hung equidistantly apart from each other in three horizontal rows which are spaced apart slightly further than each square is to other squares in its line. The wall on which the work is hung appears to be made of light brown stone, stacked in blocks, and the work is seen from the lower right-hand corner, so that the rows of colored squares appear in skewed perspective.]

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