
BENJAMIN WEST AND PETER BRUEGEL THE ELDER: THE TRANSFORMATIVE ART OF DESIGN

For my friend Philip Ulanowsky

by Pierre Beaudry, 1/30/17

INTRODUCTION

“The highest form of art is the transformative art of provoking your mind into paying attention to the intention.”

Dehors Debonneheure

Benjamin West wrote:

“That the arts of design were among the first suggestions vouchsafed by Heaven to mankind is not a proposition at which any man needs to start. This truth is indeed manifested by every little child, whose first essay is to make for itself the resemblance of some object to which it has been accustomed in the nursery.

“In the art of design were conveyed the original means of communicating ideas, which the discoverers of countries show us to have been seized upon, as it were involuntarily, by all the first stages of society. *Although the people [American Indians] were rude in knowledge and*

manners, yet they were possessed of the means by which they could draw figures of things, and they could make those figures speak their purposes to others as well as to themselves. (The emphasis is mine) [...]

“When, therefore, you have taken up the arts of design as your profession, you have embraced that which has not only been sanctioned by the cultivation of the earliest antiquity, but to which there is no antiquity prior, except that of the visible creation.” (John Galt, [The Life, Studies, and Works of Benjamin West, Esq. President of the Royal Academy of London, Composed from Materials Furnished by Himself](#), Part. II, 1817, p. 86-87.)

West called such an understanding of the *Art of Design* the principle of *American genius* as opposed to the “obnoxious” British form of mannerism and dilettantism; and he portrayed that with historical paintings. Thus, West became the American Revolution’s cultural bridge across Europe and America.

The “*Art of Design*” is the ability to clearly and rigorously delineate within a classical artistic composition, the unity of purpose between moral conduct and the improvement of mankind; and to bring out the happy result of expressing such a higher human moral state of mind by means of visual expressions. In other words, the purpose of design is not to tantalize the senses, as for instance, British and French dilettante artists do, but to improve the human mind. So the fundamental question is: How do you create figures such that they are able to “*speak their purposes to others as well as to themselves?*”

Such was the fundamental purpose of the *Arts of Design* that Benjamin West established as the principle of his cultural revolution in England when he founded the Royal Academy of Design in 1768, and that Samuel F. B. Morse adopted, 57 years later, in founding the institution of the American Academy of Design, in 1825, with the collaboration of Thomas Cole, Fennimore Cooper, William Dunlap, and others. The real challenge is how such a principle of design can be recognized in a work of artistic composition and how its intelligence can be communicated through the medium of artistic composition itself. See my previous reports on: [The National Academy of Design](#).

1. HOW TO DISCOVER THE DESIGN BEHIND A WORK OF ART

How do you discover if there is a design of intention to be found inside of an artistic composition; that is to say, how can you tell when the ordering of light, color, form, action, or physiognomy of characters tells you something about the intention of the author? The only way to answer this question is to know the mind of the author to start with, and then, and only then, do you start looking for traces of some unusual effects or the presence of some sort of anomaly in the painting. For example, Benjamin West's self-portrait.



Figure 1 Benjamin West, Self-portrait, c.1770.

[Self-portrait](#), 1776. Baltimore Museum of Art.

After touring the art centers of Italy for a period of three years, Benjamin West settled in London in 1763 with the purpose of accomplishing a revolutionary mission. Seven years later, in 1770, he made a portrait of himself, which he later copied, in 1776, with a significant difference in design that he could not have

expressed six years earlier. Can you tell *what is not there* in the first portrait and that the second portrait expresses? This is what Lazare Carnot used to call “acting on the soul by the organ of vision.” (Figure 1)

The question those two portraits raise is: Why would West paint the same self-portrait twice? What is it in the comparison of the two portraits that West wished the viewer to discover? What is missing in the first version? Two things are missing: one can be found in the eyes of West and the other is located in the grey handkerchief on his drawing board and the brown fabric roll standing behind him.

First, look at the eyes of the two portraits and compare them. The eyes on the left portrait are painted in the typical technique of round-shaped eyes, expressing awe in the joy of discovery, while the eyes on the right portrait are clearly almond-shaped laughing eyes, expressing the joy of irony. This reflects the presence of a unique moment which did not exist in the 1770 portrait.



What Benjamin West must have been saying to himself while doing his own portrait in 1776 was probably something like: *“I may still have to wear this tight British colar and keep a stiff upper lip about it, but don’t forget, we are going to win this war. So, Please hurry up and finish what you have started.”*

Figure 2 Details from *Self-Portrait, 1776* and from *The Death of General Wolf 1770*.



Secondly, study closely the handkerchief that West is holding in the second portrait against a drawing board with his left hand. What do you find? You discover a clean handkerchief in the left portrait and a painted handkerchief with two shadowy figures of soldiers in the right portrait. This anomaly represents the

two praying soldiers standing on the right side of West's celebrated 1770 painting of *The Death of General Wolf*, wearing their historical uniforms. (See **Figure 3**) The roll of brown fabric in the background represents his rejection of the use of such drapery for making togas to dress his models with for historical scenes. Why did West make such a cryptic reference to this Canadian event that took place 17 years earlier?

2. BENJAMIN WEST: *THE DEATH OF GENERAL WOLFE*

The reference to *The Death of General Wolf* in Benjamin West's self-portrait of 1776 is a very curious anomaly. What was the purpose of such an enigmatic reference? The intention seems to be extremely provocative. Why put an almost unrecognizable object where there had been none before in the previous portrait? It seems to have been done solely for the purpose of getting the viewer to start asking questions about the nature of the provocation.

This reference seems to have been added to indicate an axiomatic change that West was in the process of making with his polemical design of *The Death of General Wolf*. What was that revolutionary change about? Remember that the mission of Benjamin West was to bridge the gap between European culture and American culture. How could this be done? What is the difference between European culture and American culture, between a European viewer and an American viewer? Was one self-portrait intended for a European viewer (clean handkerchief) and the other for an American viewer (painted handkerchief with a drawing on it)? Was West of two minds about something? No.

Clearly, there is a difference in cultural behavior between a European and an American, and West made a note of it in his diary: "*Although the people [American Indians] were rude in knowledge and manners, yet they were possessed of the means by which they could draw figures of things, and they could make those figures speak their purposes to others as well as to themselves.*"

That is the clue to understand his mission in historical paintings. In a sense, the British viewer is made to admire *The Death of General Wolfe* as the representation of a dying hero, as a Christ-like figure, while the American viewer is made to pay attention to the natural Native-American aspect of the axiomatic transformation which took hold in America during the *Seven Years' War*, at the time when France lost Canada to Great Britain. How can one reconcile these two views? You can't. They are incompatible, because one is a romantic view of the past where things never change, and the other is a future-oriented view of changing the past. Yes, the purpose of this West painting is to change the past. Thus, the elimination of one is to be used for the benefit of the other.



Figure 3 Benjamin West, [*The Death of General Wolfe*](#), 1770.

West created a revolution in historical paintings when he painted *The Death of General Wolfe*, because he succeeded in changing the past by changing the factual details of the event itself for the purpose of establishing a new principle of transformation in the art of design. He recreated the event in a new form that had not existed before and which now exists in the minds of millions of observers who have had the opportunity to change their views about historical paintings. Not only were a number of figures in this painting not in attendance at the death of the hero, but also, some of the figures who were at the event of his death are not in the painting. The point West was making is that the human mind must change history by discovering that things are not what they seem to be.

Why did West make those changes? Because, he wanted the viewers to go through the changes that he had made, himself, in his own mind. He wanted them to go through the cultural paradigm difference between Europe and America; between a fixed set of rules of conduct and a natural set of principles of discovery. He wanted the viewers to go through each and all of the details of his composition in order to have them discover the transformative principle of historical design that he was constructing into it. His historical painting was not a reproduction of the factual details of an event, but the reproduction of what the historical event was meant to represent for mankind as a whole with respect to an improving form of Universal History. West had a Platonic view of history, not an Aristotelian one. As he put it in his diary:

“It must exhibit the event in a way to excite awe & veneration & that which may be required to give superior interest to the representation must be introduced, all that can show the importance of the Hero. Wolfe must not die like a common soldier under a Bush...To move the mind there should be a spectacle presented to raise & warm the mind & all should be proportioned to the highest idea conceived of the Hero....A mere matter of fact will never produce this effect.” (Quoted in Allen Staley, *Benjamin West. American Painter at the English Court*. Exhibition catalogue (The Baltimore Museum of Art, 1989), p. 54.)

This point is fundamental because it implies that the change involves an anti-entropic increase in energy-flux-density. How can the study of history improve the human mind and increase its power to change the universe if it is not by increasing the power of changing history?

The Death of General Wolfe has often been criticized for not portraying the fact that the actual death of the General was witnessed by only a handful of soldiers, a field doctor, and that his body was riddled with bullets. This is a futile criticism because the real fact of the matter is that the death of this British commander was bigger than his personal life and death. The actual bloody sight of his body, which was pierced, in fact, with three musket shots in the chest, was not an appropriate subject to reproduce in a painting and would have diverted the attention away from the true significance of the event to be commemorated. It were better to show a single drop of blood on his coat, as West showed, and instead, focus the attention on the sublimity of the historical event.

What West wanted to convey was the sublime monumentality of the historical transformation, not the remains of a dead man and a dead system. So, he had to change some particular physical facts in order to bring out the historical truth of the matter. The event that Wolfe's death represented on the stage of history called for a large theatrical scene with the French and British armies in the background and the presence of the thoughtful North-American Indian in the foreground.

This was necessary, because, when the French lost Canada on September 13, 1756, near the Citadel of Quebec City, the historical battle of the Plains of Abraham had become a moment that changed the course of Universal History such that, if the British had lost the battle, the American Revolution would not have taken place in the manner that it did, seventeen years later. This is what the shadowy handkerchief is hinting at in the self-portrait of 1776.

This is how important this event of the *Seven Year' War* was, and that is why West made the changes that he did. However, such an axiomatic change of the past to future was barely noted in the background of the painting except for the presence of a barely visible running soldier on the extreme left side, waving his hat

in one hand and holding the *Fleur de Lis* flag of the French defeat in the other. Wolfe died without knowing he had won the battle. He never knew that his life had been shed to bring about the advent of the American Revolution a few years later. So, the second self-portrait was painted in 1776, as a recollection of such a historical event. Thus, the shadowy handkerchief is the key that unlocks the secret of this transformative art of design.

What did this imply for the history of artistic composition as a whole? In fact, West was demolishing the old axioms of historical painting that the British had been clinging to for centuries. He considered the dressing of his subjects with togas as if they were living in timeless romantic events of Greek or Roman settings as inappropriate. Instead, he created a new transformative form of truth-telling about historical events by putting his subjects in appropriate realistic costumes and by including the crucial presence of props and characters that had the purpose of causing a change in the way the viewer was thinking. Thus, historical painting had been given the mission of changing the minds of anyone who could understand the function of changing history for the improvement of mankind. As West wrote about his own painting of *The Death of General Wolfe*:

“The event intended to be commemorated took place on the 13th of September, 1759 in a region of the world unknown to the Greeks and Romans, and at a period of time when no such nations, nor heroes in their costume, any longer existed. The subject I have to represent is the conquest of a great province of America by the British troops. It is a topic that history will proudly record, and the same truth that guides the pen of the historian should govern the pencil of the artist. I consider myself as undertaking to tell this great event to the eye of the world; but if, instead of the facts of the transaction, I represent classical fictions, how shall I be understood by posterity?” (John Galt, [The Life, Studies, and Works of Benjamin West, Esq. President of the Royal Academy of London, Composed from Materials Furnished by Himself](#), vol. 2, London: T. Cadell, 1820, p. 232.)

This composition revolutionized painting by elevating the mind to the level of Universal History as Schiller understood it. The imagination of man had a new

stage to operate from for the purpose of generating new axiomatic transformations. West had set the rules for a true transformative art of design, and many American painters followed his principle of design, such as John Singleton Copley, John Trumbull, Charles Wilson Peale, Thomas Sully, Gilbert Stuart, Thomas Cole, Samuel F. B. Morse, and many others.

This doesn't mean that American painting is good and European painting is bad; this means that painters, wherever they may be located around the world, should abandon the axioms of oligarchical counter-culture and adopt a future-oriented approach to change. The method of the transformative art of design was made to cause such a shock to both England and America during the first half of the nineteenth century that it resonated like "*one fist across two continents.*"

3. PETER BRUEGEL THE ELDER AND THE FALL OF ICARUS

In creating the Academy of Design, Benjamin West revived, in the domain of classical artistic composition, the forgotten transformative art of design that Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael had established during the Italian Renaissance. With *The Death of General Wolfe*, West brought to life again the polemical principle that Leonardo and Raphael had breathed into *The Last Supper* and into *The School of Athens*. In his *Transfiguration*, for instance, Raphael drew the compassionate faces of John and Peter looking inside the domain of a tragic world gone mad, contrasting those faces with the distraught state of mind of the other apostles who were looking at the deranged boy.



Figure 4 Raphael drawing for the Transfiguration. See my report: [RAPHAEL, THE CATENARY-TRACTRIX PRINCIPLE OF THE TRANSFIGURATION](#)

One of the best examples of this method of transformative art of design is the famous *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* by the Flemish master, Peter Bruegel the Elder. (Figure 5) Bruegel's idea of design, here, is taken in its most universal function; that is, as expressing the purpose of a historical transformation as it was done by Ovid's rendition of the myth of Icarus in his *Metamorphosis*. Bruegel replicated the characters of Ovid's version of the story, most notably the ploughman, the fisherman, and the shepherd leaning against his crook. However, Bruegel entirely transformed the story by almost completely obscuring the main character from the viewer. The idea you want to look for, here, is not what the painting "means" but what the painting "does" to the viewer. What you want to discover is that the purpose of the design is to change the way the viewer thinks.



Figure 5 Peter Bruegel the Elder, *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*, c.1555.

In a sense, the painting of Brueghel is a trap, because most viewers overlook the subject of Icarus and concentrate on the central figure of the ploughman who appears to be the subject that attracts most of the attention. This change of focus, however, is done on purpose; or, should I say, the purpose is to focus on that change. The viewer is forced to become an *alphestes*, as Francois Rabelais called the hard working investigator of hidden ideas. The question is: “Why does this landscape appear to be so quiet and peaceful?”

If you are curious, the first thing you will do after you are given the title of this painting is to look for Icarus. Where is he? You can't find him. If you know the story of Icarus, you first look in the sky for a winged figure, like the shepherd is doing. But that won't help you, because you won't find him there, simply because he has already fallen into the deep and no one has heard or seen the splash. Next, you have to ask yourself: Why would an artist, who seems to be in his right mind, ask you to *look for something that is not there?*

The answer to that may be, just maybe, because the artist is asking you to look for something that is not visible to your physical eyes, but only visible to your mind. The art of design is not the art of the obvious, but the art of looking for what is not there with your mind's eye.

The art of making discoveries of hidden ironies inside of works of art is not to be found in a classroom, as if it were a lesson to be learned. Ironies can only be found in the works of art themselves and through the patient and loving search for their purpose, because the intention of the artistic design is not to entertain, but rather to make you discover your own powers by investigating those of another mind. Ironies are not visual effects, but mental effects.

Landscape with the Fall of Icarus contains a few recognizable proverbs, but there is only one proverb which relates to Icarus and which has the function of exciting the imagination of those who are investigating the intention behind the idea of design. That's the proverb you are looking for, if you wish to discover the epistemological locking mechanism of that artistic composition.

Alphestes know that this proverb is locked both in the painting and in their memory, but they don't know what it says; and therefore, they must find the clue in the painting that tells them what it is, if they wish to unlock the secret of the author's design. So, now that you know what the design is about, you have to be looking for two different things: you have to look for Icarus, and you have to look for a proverb which relates to Icarus. Once you have discovered those two things, the design of this painting will be locked into your mind forever, and you will never forget it.

Walk around with Bruegel in your mind for a while and you will discover this is the way the creative mind works. Bruegel is the doorkeeper of classical proverb painting. He is teasing your curiosity by telling you: "Come here and find the key to the riddle of my painting. I will only give you one hint: *look for what is not there.*" So, now, let's look at what the drama of this axiomatic change is all about.

Bruegel's painting appears to be a classical idyllic scene in which everything is peaceful and uneventful: ships are sailing for the Orient, a ploughman, a shepherd, a fisherman, are going about their business with complete indifference. But, in the lower right corner of the painting, a tragedy is unraveling; a terrible disaster is unfolding, unnoticed by everyone. Icarus has fallen from the sky into the sea to his death, because the wax on his wings melted when he got too close to the Sun. As tragic as that may be, no one pays any attention. All you see is a pair of legs about to disappear forever under water within a fraction of a second.

An undisturbed ploughman at the very center of the foreground catches all of our attention, because he incarnates what the story is about; that is, he is going about his business as if nothing had happened. Hey Ho! Wait a minute. What is the matter with these people? Icarus has almost completely disappeared into the deep, and yet, no one is paying attention to that tragic incident. No one is attempting to save him. Why not? Shouldn't the observer be perplexed, here, for a moment, and ask himself: "Why is everyone so quiet, so indifferent, so passive and so emotionless?"

“De te fabula narratur” (the story is about you.) This is what Bruegel is provoking the spectator to discover: the subject of the painting is precisely about ***what you are not paying attention to***. It is as if the artist was grabbing you by the shoulders and saying: “Can’t you see that what I am doing here is for your benefit? If you don’t pay attention to what older people are warning you about, you risk ending up like Icarus.” What Bruegel is telling you, in this amazing axiom busting painting, is that ***artists and poets pay attention to things that no one else pays attention to and warn of the dangers that ordinary people are unaware of***.

As the story goes, Icarus was the son of an excellent craftsman, Dedalus, who constructed wings for both of them to escape from the labyrinth they had been imprisoned into by King Minos of Crete. Dedalus made the feathers to hold together with wax and, before they escaped, he warned his son not to fly close to the Sun, otherwise the wax would melt. Icarus did not heed his father’s warning and the wax melted causing him to fall into the sea. Bruegel’s painting is one of the best creative means to discover, transformatively, the lesson to be learned, which is: ***pay attention to the intention. Don’t just talk about Icarus; embody and relive the truth of the story***. As Lyn wrote in his paper on the Method of the Transfinite:

“This method of pedagogy, which is the essence of the platonic dialogue, is the only known method (historically) for directly addressing and developing the creative processes of mentation. [...]

“I am no magician. Rather, because of the combined advantages of my discoveries and successful teaching in the mode described, I have mastered a method which makes me perhaps the most effective teacher of conceptions in the world today. This works because my sense of personal identity in political work is free of the encumbrances of "earthly paradise." Rather than expressing something, I am able to be what I am communicating, rather than a describer of a conception which is of a different order than my own sense of identity. The result is a freedom from the disabling problem of being in the position in which one does not really know what one is communicating, but has only achieved the ability to talk cleverly about it. That is the difference between mere pedagogical rhetoric

and communicating directly from the standpoint of knowledge.” ([LYNDON LAROUCHE, THE TRANSFINITE AS AN ORGANIZING PRINCIPLE, 1981](#), Internal Memorandum, Jan 27, 1981.)

However, just when you think you have found the answer to the riddle, the discovery you have just made is not the clincher of this painting. There is one more thing to discover: the proverb.

Under the bushes, on the opposite side of the painting, if you look closely enough, you will discover that there lies on the ground a dead man whose bare head emerges from the brush. (**Figure 6**) That's the visual echo of the proverb that you have been looking for, which says: “*No plough stops for the dying man.*”

That's the clincher. That's the key that unlocks the whole design of this masterpiece of irony; that's the shadowy handkerchief of Benjamin West. Whether you have made those discoveries or not doesn't matter; the artist must go on with his mission of teaching ordinary people *how to discover what is not there by paying attention to the intention.*



Figure 6 Details from *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*.

How so? This is what Bruegel was getting you to pay attention to. It is not enough to simply heed the warning. The mission of art is to improve the soul of mankind by changing the way people think, and the role of *alphest*es is to replicate the same design of artistic compositions by uncovering the truth that lays hidden in them. In a sense, you want to look for the difference between ordinary thinking and creative thinking. Ordinary thinking always relates to what appears to be self-evident to sense perception. On the contrary, creative thinking always requires *looking for something that is not there*.

For example, the truth of what LaRouche has been saying for the last 50 years, about the need to change the way you think in order to change the world, should be enough to convince anyone of the essential role that such a transformative function of design plays in human society; but no: people prefer to continue about their lives as if nothing had happened, as if artists, poets, and musicians were of no significance in telling the truth about how and where to look for what is about to come down on their heads.

“Who cares,” as someone might say, “about the fall of Icarus.” So few have paid attention to the reason for his demise that even time itself has forgotten about him. As Bruegel showed in this painting, even the Sun took eight additional hours of time to set on the horizon before realizing that Icarus had fallen into oblivion. How much more time do you need to figure things out on the horizon of your mind?

FIN

APPENDIX

KEEPING THE ART OF DESIGN ALIVE

Correspondence with Philip Ulanowsky, January 10-23, 2017.

FOREWORD

The preceding study on the method of the transformative art of design and the following brief correspondence between Philip Ulanowsky and Pierre Beaudry were written for the benefit of the members of the LaRouche organization who are curious researchers of truth behind artistic compositions.

The method, specifically developed by the American artist Benjamin West, was aimed at causing a paradigm shift in the cultural domain of Great Britton and America by transforming the art of historical painting. The method was largely misunderstood and sabotaged by Wall Street protagonists and was ultimately relegated to oblivion during the second half of the nineteenth century.

The recovering of this method is aimed at reviving the crucial insights of Benjamin West for a future renaissance in the arts of design.

From: Philip and Susan [<mailto:psulo5@verizon.net>]

Sent: Tuesday, January 10, 2017 10:47 PM

To: Pierre Beaudry

Subject: Status

Dear friend,

I have downloaded your five art articles and so far managed to read West Pt1, which is fascinating. Reading time is just hard to find. Just so you don't think I'm shirking.

Philip

From: Pierre Beaudry <pierrebeaudry@larouchepub.com>

To: 'Philip and Susan' <psulo5@verizon.net>

Sent: Wednesday, January 11, 2017 1:15 PM

Subject: RE: Status

Hi Philip,

I know you are busy with your family. However, it sounds like you're able to find some time and have fun looking into my curiosity box. You will find it gets curiouser and curiouser as you go into the nature of gratuitousness. Yes, Benjamin West is very special to me. I advise you pay special attention to *The Departure of Regulus*; the proof that "The fine arts are called the offsprings and the emblems of peace."(John Williamson)

I will put my ARTISTIC COMPOSITION CD in your mailbox so that you don't have to download too many big files.

Pierre

From: PHILIP ULANOWSKY [<mailto:psulo5@verizon.net>]

Sent: Wednesday, January 11, 2017 1:43 PM

To: Pierre Beaudry

Subject: Re: Status

Much obliged. By the way, did you see my post (under Megan B in Art on Lnet) on Education in the Silent Arts from last year? I had come across Jonathan Richardson and read his Treatise, then pulled together a few things.

Cheers,

Philip

From: Pierre Beaudry [<mailto:pierrebeaudry@larouchepub.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, January 11, 2017 1:56 PM
To: 'PHILIP ULANOWSKY'
Subject: RE: Status

No. I didn't see that post. Can you send me a link or a copy.

From: Philip and Susan [<mailto:psulo5@verizon.net>]
Sent: Wednesday, January 11, 2017 7:47 PM
To: 'Pierre Beaudry'
Subject: RE: Status

<https://larouchenet.net/viewtopic.php?f=12&t=10510>

From: Pierre Beaudry [<mailto:pierrebeaudry@larouchepub.com>]
Sent: Saturday, January 14, 2017 10:57 AM
To: 'Philip and Susan'
Subject: KEEPING THE ART OF DESIGN ALIVE

Hi Philip,

I like very much your report on the Richardson approach to artistic composition, although I have not read his book. However, from what you have quoted, I can see how he could have influenced Benjamin West. What I am wondering is: did he address the conception of “**DESIGN**” that West was to later establish as the overriding principle of artistic composition in the Royal Academy of Design (1768); because that is what has dominated the works of the first American school of painting with Benjamin West, Thomas Cole, Fennimore Cooper, and Samuel Morse. Unfortunately, the organization is almost completely oblivious to that heritage of American Artistic culture.

You are right in emphasizing the necessity of recovering the sense of discipline and of virtue, which did exist in America's National Academy of Design

(1825). Unfortunately, these principles have completely disappeared from American culture, and I am determined to revive what that past history had bequeathed to the world on matters of principle. I wish more could be done about retrieving this lost historical treasure.

Keep the Art of Design alive,

Pierre

Jan. 16, noon

Hi, Pierre.

Unable to sleep longer last night after a few hours (due to some personal turbulence), I came downstairs to resume my reading of your five articles on the American school of art, from West through Cole, Morse, et al., and have now finished them. I have yet to return to reread your latest one on Cole's Clove, which prompted me to seek out the others.

I would have to review the Richardson Treatise in full to answer you regarding design, but my recollection seems to indicate that he would not have gone quite so far. I have found but a few examples of his work, among which his mature self-portrait appears to be the best. Appears, because I have found no further source of discussion of his work and could easily misjudge it as badly as I would a West or a Cole without such guidance as you have provided in your excellent papers. One remembers, however that he was indeed working under patronage at a time when his freedom to work independently would have tended to be severely circumscribed.

In the additional post following the Richardson, you may have seen my sampling of a few paintings, with comment, beginning with his self-portrait, up through Eakins's, and then a few photographs. I would be interested in your thoughts. Your discussion, as you know, is no passing interest to me but drives to the core of my

concern for a new Classical art, both as photographer contemplating future portraiture, and as a member of our renaissance movement.

I trust you will not mind if I include our back-and forth as further discussion on Lnet, as my intention has always been to provoke dialogue. I find it striking that the post has seen about 200 visits now, yet I have received, prior to your latest notes, virtually no response.

We will set a date for dinner very soon, so that we can chew over some further ideas!

Yours,
Philip

From: Pierre Beaudry [mailto:pierrebeaudry@larouchepub.com]

Sent: Tuesday, January 17, 2017 12:21 PM

To: 'Philip and Susan'

Subject: RE: KEEPING THE ART OF DESIGN ALIVE

Salut, Philip,

I did not want to give you an evaluation of your additional material, because something of importance was missing in your approach, and, as a general rule, I don't think it is useful to make a criticism of what is missing; *I think it is better to identify what is not there and discuss that*. So, what was missing was the method of "DESIGN" that Benjamin West had adopted from Leonardo Da Vinci and Raphael in order to establish a cultural bridge between Europe and the United States. This is also where I am coming from, on the French side of things, going back more than 60 years.

I would much prefer to look at your pictures with you present, and have a Platonic dialogue, *à tête reposée*. But, this requires Lyn's axiom busting approach of the Socratic dialogue, which must include a crucial first step of "PERPLEXITY." You see, your choice of pictures have posed a high degree of perplexity to my mind,

and this perplexity matter is something very delicate to handle, because it is part of a personal living transformation. I cannot simply talk about it, because it is part of a performative form of change which requires that the two of us be together *in vivo*.

I appreciate your honesty about the dialogue and I have no objection in your putting it up on LaRoucheNET. I also intend to put it up on my [Galactic Parking Lot](#) when we have completed it.

Before we meet again, however, I would like to give you something to ponder over from Benjamin West, and you can tell me if you have any insight into his idea of DESIGN. This, for me, is truly the pathway that any future classical artistic composition has to take. Here is how West put that matterofmind into focus:

“That the arts of design were among the first suggestions vouchsafed by Heaven to mankind is not a proposition at which any man needs to start. This truth is indeed manifested by every little child, whose first essay is to make for itself the resemblance of some object to which it has been accustomed in the nursery.

“In the art of design were conveyed the original means of communicating ideas, which the discoverers of countries show us to have been seized upon, as it were involuntarily, by all the first stages of society. *Although the people were rude in knowledge and manners, yet they were possessed of the means by which they could draw figures of things, and they could make those figures speak their purposes to others as well as to themselves.* (The emphasis is mine) [...]

“When, therefore, you have taken up the arts of design as your profession, you have embraced that which has not only been sanctioned by the cultivation of the earliest antiquity, but to which there is no antiquity prior, except that of the visible creation.” (John Galt, [The Life and Studies of Benjamin West Esq., President of the Royal Academy of London](#), Part. II, 1817, p. 86-87.)

You can find this quote in my report: [BENJAMIN WEST, THE PROMETHEUS OF AMERICAN PAINTING, PART I](#) under the section on [THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF DESIGN](#). Galt's book is crucial because it contains everything Benjamin West wanted to say and do about the "*Art of Design*." And, what West wrote, here, is the heart and soul of what he called the principle of *American genius* as opposed to the obnoxious British form of mannerism and dilettantism. This is what West's mission was and how he became the American Revolution's bridge between Europe and America: "*One fist across two continents*."

In substance, the "*Art of Design*" is the ability to clearly delineate, rigorously within a classical artistic composition, the unity of purpose between a moral conduct and the development of good taste and bring out the happy result of expressing such a higher human moral state of mind by means of visual expressions. In other words, the purpose is not to tantalize the senses, as British and French dilettante artists do, but to improve the human mind. So, the fundamental question is: How do you create figures such that they are able to "*speak their purposes to others as well as to themselves*?"

Such was the fundamental purpose of the *Arts of Design* that Benjamin West established as the principle of his cultural revolution in England when he founded the Royal Academy of Design, in 1768, and that Samuel F. B. Morse later adopted in founding the institution of the American Academy of Design, in 1825, with the collaboration of Thomas Cole, Fennimore Cooper, William Dunlap, and others. The real challenge is to discover how such a principle of design can be recognized in a work of artistic composition and how its intelligence can be communicated through the medium of artistic composition, itself.

Till we meet again, let me know what you think about such a challenge? I will provide you with an example next time around.

Pierre

THREE EXAMPLES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DESIGN PAINTINGS



Leonardo da Vinci, The Lady of the Rocks



Peter Bruegel the Elder, Landscape with the Fall of Icarus



Benjamin West, Self portrait.
