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Touch, Tactility, and the Reception of Sculpture in Early Modern Italy

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In most historical and theoretical discussions about the reception of art, the general (though usually unstated) assumption is that one should be concerned with ocular scrutiny, with how contemporary viewers, including artists themselves, used their eyes as the primary means for apprehending works of art.¹ Although the visual reception of art is clearly extremely important, one should consider another possibility, namely, that in the case of sculpture in particular, models of reception should be developed that are not based on optical interpretations alone, but that instead consider the tactile reception of three-dimensional art objects as well. How such an alternative model might function can be demonstrated by considering the case of early modern Italy, a period in which contemporary texts, paintings, and sculptural projects confirm that many writers and artists believed that touch was indeed an important way for beholders to negotiate encounters with three-dimensional art objects. By exploring the tactile reception of sculpture by early modern beholders, one also can begin to ask more generally whether it is possible to write a history of art or, more precisely, a history of the senses used to apprehend art, that goes beyond the ocularcentric and instead considers other modes of experience and forms of attention, such as those made available by touch.²

In light of the importance early modern culture accorded to issues related to sculptural tactility, it is somewhat surprising that most historians of sculpture in this period have tended to overlook the question of touch in their studies.³ Tactility as an abstract concept, however, has interested a number of influential art historians (Iversen, 1993, *passim*; Olin, 1992, pp. 132–7; Podro, 1982, *passim*; Wood, 1998). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for instance, Adolf von Hildebrand, Alois Riegl, and Heinrich Wölfflin investigated the tactile qualities of sculpture, although generally from a theoretical rather than from an historical point of view. In this same period, Bernard Berenson discussed the depiction of what he called “tactile values” in early modern Italian paintings, but he did not apply this concept to three-dimensional sculpture, a somewhat paradoxical approach that is also seen in more recent studies of the role played by

touch in painted works by artists such as Cézanne, Kandinsky, and the Surrealists (Berenson, 1897, pp. 33–4; Shiff, 1991; Olin, 1989; Powell, 1997).

Some philosophers and intellectual historians, including Michel Foucault, Luce Irigaray, and Martin Jay, have begun to critique the ocularcentric assumptions of Western culture, in the process occasionally considering touch in passing. The feminist scholar Irigaray, for instance, has proposed the sense of touch as a possible alternative to what she sees as the patriarchal implications of contemporary culture's ocularcentrism (Irigaray, 1985, *passim*). Some anthropologists, behavioral psychologists, and developmental biologists also have started to privilege senses other than vision in their studies and experiments (Howes, 1991; Montagu, 1971; Synnott, 1993). Nevertheless, it is striking that most historians of sculpture, including those working on the early modern period, have only rarely touched on the question of touch as a practical, material, and historical (as opposed to solely an abstract or theoretical) phenomenon.

Conceptions of Touch from Antiquity to the Early Modern Period

Early modern notions of touch grew out of a long and distinguished tradition. Beginning in ancient Greece, touch had been repeatedly contrasted with sight in discussions about the hierarchy of the senses (Hall, 1999, pp. 80–103; Jay, 1993, pp. 21–82; Summers, 1987, pp. 32ff; Synnott, 1993, pp. 128–55). Plato and Aristotle, for example, both ranked touch well below sight in terms of its relative dignity since the former was considered to be a less cerebral and more carnal sense than the latter, an attitude that persisted throughout the Middle Ages. In the early modern period, many writers continued to stress the primacy and dignity of vision, especially in relation to touch. The Neoplatonic philosopher Marsilio Ficino, for instance, equated touch with the baser, more carnal forms of love and contrasted it with the higher, spiritual love associated with vision (Mendelsohn, 1982, p. 61). Since antiquity, vision also often has been proposed as a model for how knowledge is gained and assimilated by the mind, as when Aristotle compared the process of memory to looking repeatedly at a painting or when St. Augustine used vision as a paradigm for spiritual and intellectual contemplation (Summers, 1987, pp. 39–41, 89, 116, 200). In the early modern period, the pictorial practice of perspective became a key model not only for vision, but for subjectivity itself, that is, for how one formulates a “point of view” about the world in which one lives, an issue discussed by Erwin Panofsky (1991, originally published 1927) and a number of more recent scholars.

Despite this pervasive and ongoing tradition, however, the primacy of sight in ancient, medieval, and early modern thought is, in fact, not absolute, nor uncontested. Classical mythology, for instance, is replete with tales centered on visual anxiety – Narcissus, Orpheus, and the Medusa come immediately to mind – while it is often touch, rather than vision, that is associated with positive, life-giving powers, as in the myths of Pygmalion and Prometheus. For Plato, it was

sight's dangerous powers of illusion that were most worrying, while St. Augustine warned of the dangers associated with ocular desire, a subject of continuing concern to medieval theologians and philosophers (Jay, 1993, pp. 13, 27). Vision also was not universally accepted as the only model for explaining how one gains knowledge about the world. In the case of Aristotle, while he clearly praised sight above touch in terms of its relative dignity, he nevertheless concluded that the sense of touch was the basis for knowledge obtained from all the senses, a notion reiterated by Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century (Summers, 1987, p. 103). The ancient Stoics went as far as using touch as a metaphor for vision itself when they compared the way an object is apprehended by visual “rays” supposedly emanating from the eye to a person reaching out to touch something with a stick, a concept still current in the eighteenth century, as seen in an illustration in the 1724 edition of René Descartes's book on optics, *La Dioptrique* (Lindberg, 1976, pp. 3, 9–10; Crary, 1990, p. 61). Metaphors for a variety of mental processes and experiences also were not exclusively visual in the pre-modern era. For example, in direct contrast to Aristotle's claim that memory was like a painting that could be re-viewed in one's mind, the sixteenth-century humanist Giordano Bruno likened memory to a series of carved, tactile statues that could be mentally re-encountered (Hall, 1999, pp. 66–7).

Thus, conceptions about the sense of touch, especially in relation to vision, in ancient, medieval, and early modern thought were complex and variable. By and large, however, scholars have focused on the ocularcentric orientation of early modern culture in particular, especially as demonstrated by growing interest in the practice of linear perspective. Indeed, many scholars have assumed that the primacy of vision, which is such an important characteristic of modern culture, holds true for the early modern period as well. One of the few generally admitted exceptions to such ocularcentric assumptions is the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a period during which the sense of touch became the focus of a wide-ranging philosophical debate known as Molyneux's problem (Degenaar, 1996; Morgan, 1977). William Molyneux, an Irish philosopher, formulated the issue in 1688, when he asked whether a man, who had been blind from birth and whose vision was suddenly restored, would be able to identify by sight objects he had previously encountered by touch alone. Philosophers such as John Locke, George Berkeley, Voltaire, Denis Diderot, and Etienne Bonnet de Condillac pondered Molyneux's question, with some of these writers concluding that the sense of touch was in fact fundamental for gaining empirical knowledge about the world and that vision served only as a secondary means of confirming such cognitive knowledge (Jay, 1993, pp. 98ff; Olin, 1992, pp. 133ff; Summers, 1987, pp. 324ff).

Well before Molyneux, however, artists and writers concerned with the visual arts had already demonstrated great interest in the sense of touch. For instance, a number of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century paintings depict active, tactile engagements with sculpture. A few of these images belong to painted series depicting the five senses, as in the case of Jusepe de Ribera's *The Sense of Touch*

(c.1611–16, The Norton Simon Foundation, Pasadena), which shows a blind man examining a sculpted bust with his hands while a painting lies neglected in the foreground (plate 5.1). Other works, however, including a second painting by Ribera that again depicts a sightless man touching a bust (1632, Prado Museum, Madrid) and a similar image by another seventeenth-century painter, Luca Giordano (c.1660, Stanley Moss Collection, Riverdale-on-Hudson), seem to be fully independent meditations on sculptural tactility. The specific theme of the blind beholder's encounter with sculpture also appeared in early modern writings. For instance, in his *Iconologia* of 1603, Cesare Ripa claimed that Michelangelo had had to rely on touch alone to judge the merits of antique and modern statues when his vision began to fail in his old age (Hall, 1999, p. 87), a probably apocryphal tale that nevertheless seems to foreshadow claims that Edgar Degas's increasing interest in sculptural modelling in the later nineteenth century was due to his own deteriorating eyesight. Although the role played by touch in the production and reception of modern art will not be considered in this chapter, it is worth keeping in mind that even in this presumably much more ocularcentric era, tactility could still play an important role (see Olin, 1989; Shiff, 1991; Powell, 1997).

Sculpture and Tactility in Early Modern Italian Culture

For the present discussion, it is the significance of touch in early modern Italy that is of particular concern, as demonstrated in statues and paintings that thematized tactility both implicitly and explicitly, as well as in texts written in this period on the production and reception of sculpture. The first Italian treatise to consider sculpture from a theoretical perspective was composed in the mid-fifteenth century by Lorenzo Ghiberti, a practicing sculptor with intellectual ambitions.¹ When speaking in the abstract about sculpture, Ghiberti stresses the importance of vision, optics, and lighting effects. Not surprisingly, however, when he discusses specific statues he has personally encountered and often literally touched, Ghiberti introduces tactility as a key element in the reception of sculpture. For example, when describing a recently rediscovered antique female statue, Ghiberti states that “neither the eyes [alone] nor strong or moderate light are enough to comprehend [this work]; only [by] the hand touching it” can its beauty be fully appreciated (Ghiberti, 1947, p. 55). Elsewhere, Ghiberti records his encounter with another classical statue:

I have seen by diffused light . . . a statue of an Hermaphrodite . . . which had been made with admirable skill. . . . In this [statue] there was the greatest refinement, which the eye would not have discovered, had not the hand sought it out. (Ghiberti, 1947, pp. 54–5)

For Ghiberti, therefore, touch seems to be even more essential than light or vision for understanding how actual sculptures should be encountered and assessed.



Plate 5.1 Giuseppe de Ribera, *The Sense of Touch*, c.1611–16, oil on canvas. The Norton Simon Foundation, Pasadena, CA

Indeed, as Ghiberti seems to have understood, unlike a painting, a touchable sculpture often remains inaccessible to ocular scrutiny alone and may even require tactile exploration in order to be fully apprehended and appreciated, a fact that allows or even encourages beholders to interact with sculpted objects in

ways that are unimaginable for two-dimensional works of art. Ghiberti's manual encounters with female and bi-gendered statues in particular also suggest that sculpture's tactile accessibility at times can be profoundly intertwined with questions of sexual desire and differentiation.

There were, of course, many different types of touch associated with sculpture in the early modern period. Sculptural tactility could be linked to concerns about cognition (philosophical as well as physiological), to the social and sexual structures of desire, and to the power of magic and illusion. But it may be most useful to consider how such rubrics intersected with the various types of beholders who would have actually touched or tried to touch sculpted objects produced in the early modern period. For instance, for religious devotees, touch could have a talismanic or devotional quality, as when pilgrims strained to touch carved reliquaries and saints' tombs, or when wooden statues of Christ were removed from supporting Crucifixes for processions and ceremonies associated with Holy Week. Documents also describe nuns ritually handling life-size statues of the Christ Child, with these objects occasionally giving the illusion of magically coming to life in the women's arms (Klapisch-Zuber, 1985). Of course, it was precisely the possibility of physically engaging religious sculpture through the sense of touch that led some Italian Church reformers to publish polemical tracts denouncing practices such as kneeling before, kissing, and otherwise physically adoring and, in some senses, desiring sacred sculpture (Barocchi, 1978–9, vol. V, p. 1202).

Early modern collectors and connoisseurs, with their inquisitive, admiring, and proprietary hands, had somewhat different concerns in their tactile encounters with sculpture, even though certain aspects of these engagements echo the desires and religio-magical associations of the talismanic or devotional touch. Not surprisingly, early modern collectors often describe and depict themselves touching three-dimensional art objects. For example, in Titian's *Portrait of Jacopo Strada* (1567–8, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna), the sitter is shown using both hands to hold a nude female statuette (plate 5.2). How such encounters are characterized, however, depends very much on the writer's or artist's point of view. Indeed, writers intent on promoting painting at the expense of sculpture often characterize the physical encounter with three-dimensional art objects in very negative terms. For instance, Vincenzo Borghini stresses how vulgar it is to judge a sculpture by touching it, as well as derides women who are obsessively drawn to touching and kissing statues (Barocchi, 1978–9, vol. III, pp. 615, 639). Another sixteenth-century art theorist, Paolo Pino, also ridicules the tactile allure of sculpture by citing the story of an ancient Athenian youth who was driven wild with desire by a statue of Venus (Barocchi, 1978–9, vol. III, p. 550). Such responses to the tempting tactility of sculpture suggest, to say the least, a certain level of anxiety about the dangers associated with handling sculpted objects inappropriately, especially by allowing them to become objects of sexual desire or by being taken in by the illusion of their lifelike three-dimensionality.

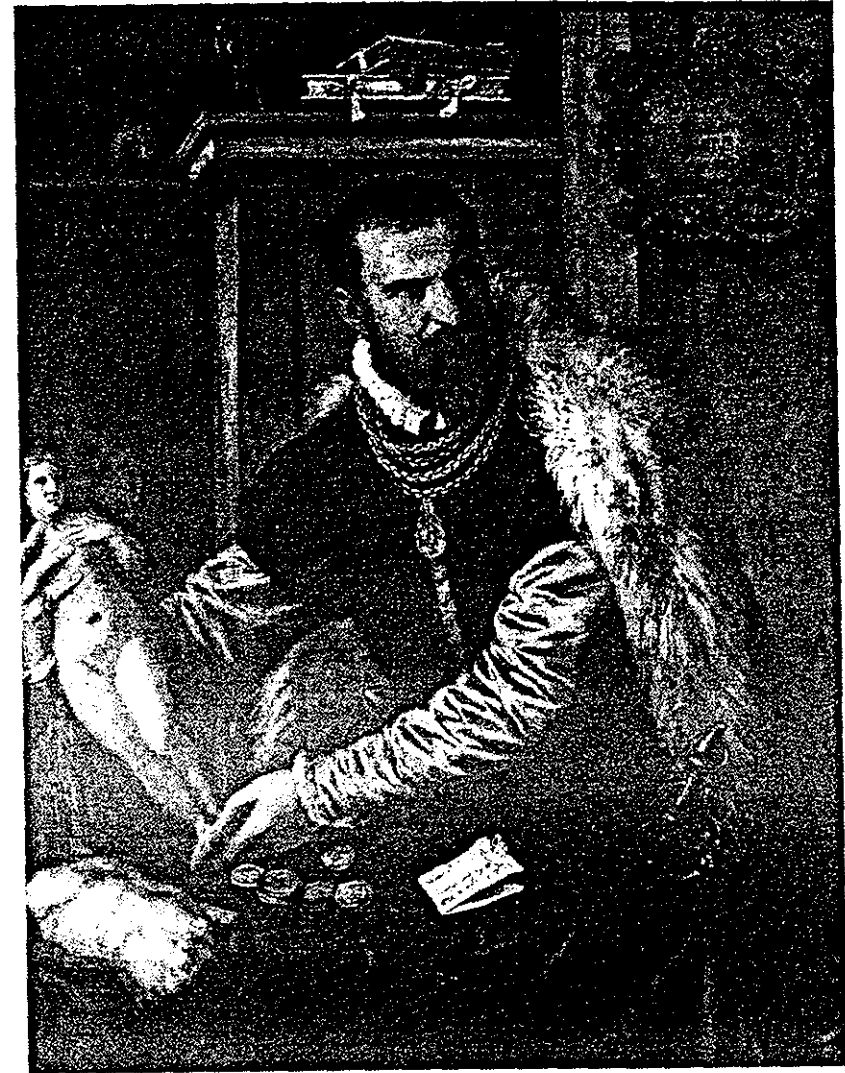


Plate 5.2 Titian, *Portrait of Jacopo Strada*, 1567–8, oil on canvas. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

The tactile reception of three-dimensional art objects was not always so explicit. Large-scale public or religious sculpture, for instance, was often literally out of hands' reach in this period. Nevertheless, it is likely that early modern beholders would have been able to imagine the implicit tactility of such works. As discussed above, most contemporary beholders would have witnessed the

regular ritual handling of movable religious sculpture. Many elite patrons also would have been familiar with small-scale bronze statuettes, a new sculptural genre that comprised works specifically designed to be held, turned, and otherwise manipulated by a beholder. A representative example of this type of object is Giambologna's *Venus Urania* (c.1573, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna), one of his many gilded bronze female statuettes with smoothly polished surfaces and elegantly serpentine designs that almost seem to demand concentrated touching and handling. Thanks to the increasing availability of such statuettes, as well as long-standing religious practices that involved manually engaging sculpture, an early modern beholder's mimetic impulse to touch and his or her awareness of the implied tactility of large-scale works would have been encouraged and reinforced.⁵

In addition to the devotee's adoring hand and the elite collector's caress, there was also the sculptor's own touch, the hand of the maker, which again incorporated elements of the cognition, desire, and magic associated with other types of early modern encounters with sculpture. The importance accorded to the artist's active, manual engagement with sculpture is well illustrated by the fact that Ghiberti repeatedly refers in his writings to sculpture being made by the "hand" of a particular artist, while applying this term much more rarely to works produced in two-dimensional media. Of course, the idea of the "painter's hand" was important in early modern artistic culture as well (Barolsky, 1995), but the emphasis on the hand's physical engagement with the medium is particularly striking in discussions about sculpture. The significance of the sculptor's touch is attested to not only by early modern texts, however, but also by material evidence. Michelangelo, for instance, became famous (or rather, infamous) for leaving many of his statues and reliefs unfinished. One explanation for this phenomenon may be that Michelangelo wanted to preserve the material traces of his own potent and almost magically generative touch, thereby allowing his role as creator to be permanently commemorated by the sculpted surface itself, an attitude that once again links sculptural tactility to notions of illusion, possession, and desire.⁶

Sculpture, Painting, and the *Paragone* Debate

The three types of sculptural tactility associated here with different categories of early modern beholders – the devotional or talismanic touch of the religious devotee, the collector's possessive grasp, and the artist's generative handling – also are discussed in early modern writings devoted to the so-called *paragone* debate, the theoretical discussion concerned with comparing and contrasting sculpture and painting in order to establish which art was more noble (Hecht, 1984; Mendelsohn, 1982; Farago, 1992). One of the key issues raised by this debate revolved around the status of touch and its relation to notions of truthfulness (or the illusion of truthfulness) in art. For instance, in his response to a

mid-sixteenth-century questionnaire on the *paragone* devised by the humanist Benedetto Varchi, the sculptor Niccolò Tribolo stated that:

[S]culpture is . . . [the art] of using one's hands to show what is true. . . . [I]f a blind man . . . happened to come upon a marble or wood or clay figure, he would claim that it was the figure of a [living person, but] . . . had it been a painting, he would have encountered nothing at all . . . [because] sculpture is the real thing, and painting is a lie. (Barocchi, 1978–9, vol. III, p. 518)

As mentioned above, the theme of the blind man's encounter with paintings versus sculpted objects can be found in a number of early modern texts and images (see Plate 5.1). However, in Tribolo's passage, this theme is now explicitly linked to the notion of the relative truthfulness of the various arts, a key issue in light of the value early modern culture placed on art's ability to imitate nature truthfully. In fact, Varchi himself explicitly stated that one "knows that by touching a statue one can confirm everything that the eye sees . . . which is why sculptors say their art is truthful and painting is [not]" (Barocchi, 1978–9, vol. III, p. 534).

Tactility was also an important issue in discussions on the social status of painters versus sculptors. In Baldassare Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* (1528), for instance, a debate on the *paragone* takes place, with painting emerging as the proper art of the elite gentleman-courtier (Barocchi, 1978–9, vol. III, pp. 489–92; Hall, 1999, p. 17). Interestingly enough, the sculptor Baccio Bandinelli seems to have strived to embody Castiglione's ideal of the gentleman-artist in both his life and his sculptural practices in order to avoid being perceived as merely a working-class artisan engaged in a trade involving manual labor and little or no intellectual ability. Indeed, soon after Castiglione's book appeared, Agostino Veneziano produced an engraving of Bandinelli's studio based on a drawing by the sculptor himself in which the latter seems to have succeeded in banishing the sweat and dust of the working-class artisan's shop from his sculpture academy (1531, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; see Klein and Zerner, 1966, frontispiece). Instead, the well-dressed apprentices that surround the elegantly attired master are shown serenely sketching classicizing statuettes.

However, in an unintentionally telling detail that suggests that one should attend carefully to the gender- and class-based power relations implicit in such manual encounters with sculpture, Bandinelli seems unable to keep his hands off sculpture despite his social and academic pretensions: the inevitable tactile allure of the art he practices is inadvertently demonstrated here by the fact that his hands are shown firmly gripping a nude female statuette. A number of sixteenth-century paintings also depict male artists or collectors literally man-handling nude female sculptures. In the case of Titian's *Portrait of Jacopo Strada* discussed above, the female statuette held by the sitter is painted in the flesh tones of a living woman, rather than in the colors of white marble, plaster, clay, or polished bronze (see Plate 5.2). In other words, Titian's chromatic palette serves to equate visually the sculpted female body with the body of a living woman, thereby

reinforcing the intimations of desire and the illusion of sexual possession seen in many other types of early modern encounters with sculpture.

In this portrait and the print of Bandinelli's academy, the relationship between the toucher and the touched seems to remain essentially hierarchical, socially and sexually, with the elite male artist or beholder firmly in control of an apparently powerless sculpted female body. However, in comparison to an act of ocular scrutiny, this type of tactile relationship is comparatively reciprocal and thus retains the potential to subvert hierarchical relationships between men and women, between elite and disempowered subjects, and even between objects and their beholders. Indeed, as the philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty asserts, the process of touching in general can be "an ambiguous set-up in which both [participants] . . . can alternate the rôles of 'touching' and being 'touched'" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 93). Thus, unlike most other theoretical models of sexual or social domination, in which visual or textual structures are in some sense metaphors for implicit underlying power structures, physical engagements with sculpted objects can explicitly demonstrate the hierarchical nature of such relationships while at the same time signalling how these hierarchies can be subverted and perhaps even reversed by the reciprocal nature of tactility itself.

Interestingly enough, one sixteenth-century artist in particular produced a series of paintings in which sitters resolutely avoid manual contact of any kind with sculpted objects. Instead, portraits by the painter Agnolo Bronzino often depict sitters who maintain an intellectual, emotional, and physical distance from three-dimensional art objects (Currie, 1997). Significantly, the haughty sitters in Bronzino's portraits, such as his *Young Man with a Lute and an Inkwell-Statuette of Susanna* (c.1534, Uffizi Gallery, Florence) or his *Gentleman with a Statuette of Venus* (c.1550–5, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa), do not even deign to look at, let alone touch, the sculpted figures displayed beside them. This determined antitactility vis-à-vis sculpture is readily explicable, however, if one realizes that Bronzino was one of the strongest advocates of painting in the on-going *paragone* debate. According to Bronzino, sculpture's three-dimensional tactility actually excluded the medium by definition from the realm of art altogether since "all that pertains to art are the [surface contour] lines that circumscribe a body . . . [and] therefore, the three-dimensional does not appertain to art but to nature" (Jacobs, 1988, p. 148n. 2). Thus, it is not surprising that Bronzino's painted depictions of sculpted objects de-emphasize the tactile allure of sculpture and instead highlight painting's ability to imitate coolly and dispassionately the natural and artificial world in full color.

Michelangelo's Verbal and Visual Tactility

Writers who favored sculpture and sculptors themselves refused to accept such negative assessments of sculptural tactility. In Michelangelo's writings, for example, it is clear that he ranked sculpture well above two-dimensional art

forms. Indeed, he even went as far as claiming that painting was best the more it resembled sculptural relief, while sculpture was worse the more it resembled painting (Klein and Zerner, 1966, pp. 13–14). Michelangelo also thematized the hand itself in many of his statues, for example in the auto-erotic, probing hand of the so-called *Dying Slave* (begun c.1513, Louvre Museum, Paris) or in the dramatically oversized hands of his marble *David* (1501–4, Accademia Gallery, Florence). Likewise, Michelangelo's *Moses* (c.1506–16, San Pietro in Vincoli, Rome), who insistently fingers his flowing beard, alludes visually to the important role played by touch in the enjoyment and evaluation of sculpted forms. The prominence of hands in many of Michelangelo's works suggests that, at some level, this member may have even functioned for the sculptor as a visual synecdoche, that is, as a part symbolically representing the sculptor – or perhaps the tactile art of sculpture – as a whole.

That Michelangelo was concerned or, one could even say, obsessed with sculpture's tactile allure and, as previously discussed, with the generative power of the sculptor's touch is confirmed by his poetry. For instance, in a number of poems, he uses the physical labor involved in carving a marble block by hand as a metaphor for the lover's desire to uncover the beloved's inner emotions. In other sonnets, Michelangelo sees the sculptor's "hand that obeys the intellect" as a powerful, life-giving force capable of magically animating carved figures almost like an early modern incarnation of Pygmalion or Prometheus (Mendelsohn, 1982, p. 103). In such texts, as well as in a number of his sculpted works, Michelangelo thus confirms the importance for him and for many of his contemporaries of tactility in all its cognitive, sociosexual, and magical-illusionistic variations. Indeed, the case of early modern Italy in general suggests that art history's prevailing ocularcentric assumptions need to be examined much more critically and that the reception of art, especially sculpture, should by no means be restricted to optical experiences alone.

Notes

- 1 Since the early 1980s, art historians such as Hans Belting (*Das Bild und sein Publikum im Mittelalter: Form und Funktion früher Bildtafeln der Passion*, Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1981), Michael Fried (*Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot*, University of Chicago Press, 1980), and Wolfgang Kemp (*Der Anteil des Betrachters: Rezeptionsästhetische Studien zur Malerei des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Munich: Mäander Verlag, 1983), have used reception theory (also known as reader-response criticism) in their studies, an approach first formulated in theoretical terms by literary historians such as Wolfgang Iser (*The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), and Hans Robert Jauss (*Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. by T. Bahti, University of Minnesota Press, 1982). On artists, especially painters, as the initial beholders of their own works and the implications this has for the production of art, see Richard Wollheim (*Painting as an Art*, Princeton University Press, 1987, *passim*).

- 2 The term "ocularcentric" refers to theoretical or historical approaches to art objects that privilege the visual. See Farago, p. 5, and especially Jay, p. 3 and *passim*. In this chapter, "early modern" (a phrase often used interchangeably with "Renaissance and Baroque") refers to a period stretching from the early fifteenth century through the seventeenth century. Also note that the term "beholder" (with its emphasis on "hold") is used throughout this chapter instead of "viewer" when discussing the reception of sculpture.
- 3 Two important exceptions are Michael Baxandall (*The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany*, Yale University Press, 1980) and Suzanne B. Butters (*The Triumph of Vulcan: Sculptors' Tools, Porphyry, and the Prince in Ducal Florence*, I-II, Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1996), scholars who have considered the material reality of early modern sculpture, if not explicitly its tactile reception. Nevertheless, only Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle (*Senses of Touch: Human Dignity and Deformity from Michelangelo to Calvin*, Leiden: Brill, 1998) and, more briefly, David Summers (1987, *passim*) have explicitly explored the importance of the sense of touch itself in relation to the production and reception of art in this era.
- 4 Although the architect and art theorist Leon Battista Alberti also wrote a treatise on sculpture (*De statua*) in this period, this text belongs primarily to an on-going tradition of technical manuals intended mainly for workshop use, unlike his famous book *De pictura*, which treated painting as a project worthy of serious humanistic and scientific consideration. See Alberti, *On Painting and On Sculpture: The Latin Texts of De Pictura and De Statua*, trans. by C. Grayson, Phaidon, 1972; original works written c.1430s-40s.
- 5 The power of such imagined or anticipated tactility was discussed in a letter (c.1950s) sent to the art historian Meyer Schapiro by the anthropologist Alfred Kroeber. Kroeber claimed that, because infants first learn about the world through touch, "what is seen and touched is always made part of ourselves more intensely and more meaningfully than what is only seen. . . . [A] picture we *only* see but cannot, in imagination, touch, does not carry the same attraction and concentration of interest as the one we can, imaginatively, handle and touch as well as see" (Montagu, 1971, pp. 236-7).
- 6 See Juergen Schulz (1975) "Michelangelo's Unfinished Works," *The Art Bulletin*, 57, 366-73. For a contrary view of Michelangelo's *non-finito*, see Michael Hirst (1996) "Michelangelo and his First Biographers," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 94, 63-84, who argues that the artist never consciously wanted to leave any sculptural surface unfinished.

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