USING PHENOMENOLOGY IN CONTEMPORARY ARTS RESEARCH & PEDAGOGY

Facilitated by Jorella Andrews, Jeffrey Say & Clare Veal
Funded by the Goldsmiths/LASALLE Partnership Innovation Fund
Session 2: ‘Starting from below’: Phenomenological interventions in art history and visual culture

Dr Jorella Andrews
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PART ONE  Phenomenology?  
Phenomenology and art

PART TWO  ‘Starting from below’  
Description and what it can do

PART THREE  Researching with Kim Jongku’s  
*Mobile Landscape*
Landscape with Gentlemen Visiting a Scholar in a Lakeside Pavilion. Korean, Chosŏn dynasty, first half 17th century. Traditionally attributed to Kim Che (active mid-16th century); perhaps by Yi Ching (b. 1581) or Kim Myŏngguk (b. 1600)
Album leaf; ink and light color on silk.

PART ONE
Phenomenology?
Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961)

- *The Structure of Behavior* (1942)
- *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945)
- ‘Cezanne’s Doubt’ (1945)
- *Institution and Passivity: Course Notes from the Collège de France* (1954-55)
- ‘Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence’ (1952)
- ‘Eye and Mind’ (1961)
- *The Visible and the Invisible* (followed by working notes) (incomplete/published posthumously in 1964)
PREFACE

WHAT is phenomenology? It may seem strange that this question has still to be asked half a century after the first works of Husserl. The fact remains that it has by no means been answered. Phenomenology is the study of essences; and according to it, all problems amount to finding definitions of essences: the essence of perception, or the essence of consciousness, for example. But phenomenology is also a philosophy which puts essences back into existence, and does not expect to arrive at an understanding of man and the world from any starting point other than that of their 'facticity'. It is a transcendental philosophy which places in abeyance the assertions arising out of the natural attitude, the better to understand them; but it is also a philosophy for which the world is always 'already there' before reflection begins—as an impenetrable presence—and all its efforts are concentrated upon re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world, and endowing that contact with a philosophical status. It is the search for a philosophy which shall be a 'rigorous science', but it also offers an account of space, time and the world as we 'live' them. It tries to give a direct description of our experience as it is, without taking account of its psychological origin and the causal explanations which the scientist, the historian or the sociologist may be able to provide. Yet Husserl in his last works mentions a 'genetic phenomenology'; and even a 'constructive phenomenology'. One may try to do away with these contradictions by making a distinction between Husserl's and Heidegger's phenomenologies; yet the whole of Sein und Zeit springs from an indication given by Husserl and amounts to no more than an explicit account of the 'naturlicher Wettbewerf' or the 'Lebenswelt' which Husserl, towards the end of his life, identified as the central theme of phenomenology, with the result that the contradiction re-appears in Husserl's own philosophy. The reader pressed for time will be inclined to give up the idea of covering a doctrine which says everything, and will wonder whether a philosophy which cannot define its scope deserves all the discussion which has gone on around it, and whether he is not faced rather by a myth or a fashion.

1 Meditations cartesiennes, pp. 126 ff.
2 See the unpublished 5th Meditations cartesiennes, edited by Eugen Fink, to which G. Berger has kindly referred us.
Even if this were the case, there would still be a need to understand the prestige of the myth and the origin of the fashion, and the opinion of the responsible philosopher must be that phenomenology can be practiced and identified as a manner or style of thinking, but that it existed as a movement before arriving at complete awareness of itself as a philosophy. It has been long on the way, and its adherents have discovered it in every quarter, certainly in Hegel and Kierkegaard, but equally in Marx, Nietzsche and Freud. A purely linguistic examination of the texts in question would yield no proof if we find in texts only what we put into them, and if ever any kind of history has suggested the interpretations which should be put on it, it is the history of philosophy! We shall find ourselves, and nowhere else, the unity and true meaning of phenomenology: it is less a question of counting up quotations than of forming and expressing in concrete form this phenomenology for ourselves which has given a number of present-day readers the impression, on reading Husserl or Heidegger, not so much of encountering a new philosophy as of recognizing what they had been writing is nothing more than a phenomenological method. Let us, therefore, try systematically to bring together the celebrated phenomenological themes as they have grown spontaneously together in life. Perhaps we shall then understand why phenomenology has for so long remained at an initial stage, as a problem to be solved and a hope to be realized.

It is a matter of describing, not of explaining or analyzing. Husserl's first directive to phenomenology, in its early stages, to be a 'descriptive psychology,' or to return to the 'things themselves,' is from the start a rejection of science. I am not the outcome or the meeting-point of numerous agencies which determine my bodily or psychological make-up. I cannot conceive myself as nothing but a bit of the world, a mere object of biological, psychological or sociological investigation. I cannot shut myself up within the realm of science. All my knowledge of the world, even my scientific knowledge, is gained from my own particular point of view, or from some experience of the world without which the symbols of science would be meaningless. The whole universe of science is built up over the world as directly experienced, and if we want to subject science itself to rigorous scrutiny and arrive at a precise assessment of its meanings and scope, we must begin by reawakening the basic experience of the world of which science is the second-order expression. Science has not and never will have, by its nature, the same significance qua form of being as the world which we perceive, for the simple reason that it is a rationalization or explanation of that world. I am, nota living creature nor even a 'man,' nor again even a 'consciousness' endowed with all...
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This move is absolutely distinct from the ideaist return to consciousness and the demand for a pure description excludes equally the procedure of analytical reflection on the one hand, and that of scientific explanation on the other. Descartes and particularly Kant detailed the subject, or consciousness, by showing that I could not possibly apprehend anything as existing unless I first of all experienced myself as existing in the act of apprehending it. They presented consciousness, the absolute certainty of my existence for myself, as the condition of them being anything at all; and the act of relating as the basis of relatedness. It is true that the act of relating is nothing if divorced from the spectacle of the world in which relations are found; the unity of consciousness in Kant is achieved simultaneously with that of the world. And in Descartes methodical doubt does not deprive us of anything, since the whole world, at least so far as we experience it, is reinstated in the Cogito, enjoying equal certainty, and simply labelled "it". The whole universe of objects is the subject and object are not strictly bilateral: if they were, the certainty of the world would, in Descartes, be immediately given with that of the Cogito, and Kant would not have talked about his "Copernican revolution". Analytical reflection starts from our experience of the world and goes back to the subject as to a condition of possibility distinct from that experience, revealing the all-encompassing synthesis as that without which there would be no world. To this extent it ceases to remain part of our experience and offers, in place of an account, a
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the characteristics which zoology, social anatomy or inductive psy-
chology recognize in these various products of the natural or historical
process—I am the absolute source, my existence does not stem from
my antecedents, from my physical and social environment; instead it
movs out towards them and sustains them, for I alone bring into
being for myself (and therefore into being in the only sense that the
word can have for me) the tradition which I elect to carry on, or the
horizon whose distance from me would be abolished—since that
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which I view the outer world. From the moment I arise and begin to
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we are grafted to the universal by that which is most our own.
Modern painting presents ... the problem of knowing how one can communicate without the help of a pre-established Nature which all men’s senses open upon, the problem of knowing how we are grafted to the universal by that which is most our own.

Phenomenology and art
Donald Judd, *Untitled*, 1968, stainless steel, plexiglass, Walker Art Gallery
Tony Smith, *Light Up!*, 1971, Seagram Plaza, NYC
Richard Serra, *Circuit*, 1972, hot rolled steel, four plates, each 244 x 732 x 2.5. Installed: Bilbao.

Philip Yenawine and Alexa Miller introduce the practice of Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) and explain how class discussions using the art-based pedagogical model support the development of critical thinking not just in the arts and humanities but also the sciences.

By Philip Yenawine and Alexa Miller

Visual Thinking, Images, and Learning in College

What if your first-year students had both the confidence and language skills to debate complex ideas with you and their classmates, and, at the same time, were able to clarify civility and build on information and ideas from others? What if they engaged opinions based on detailed observations and consistently provided evidence to back them up?

Interestingly, we have documented these skills in elementary students—fourth- and fifth-graders—who have experienced a modest intervention called Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS). VTS uses discussion of art to build language and thinking skills as well as visual literacy, and it accomplishes this in an efficient 10 hours a year beginning in kindergarten. Its efficiency rests on its content: it activates and builds on existing skills and interests, is developmentally based, engages peer interactions, and gradually escalates challenges. In addition to these skills, cognitive researcher Abigail C. Harrison has documented other that appear over time in almost all students, including the capacity to speculate, enumerate multiple possible conclusions drawn from observations. Many students will return to an idea to elaborate or reframe it on new information.

What if these same skills, deployed early by 10-year-olds as result of rigorous art-viewing discussions, were developed with intentional consistency at the college level? If the same Common Core State Standards are effectively implemented—not a bet at this point—students might develop these or similar skills before they go to college. But as it stands now, students enter college only a few weeks out of high school, and we expect them to learn in a much more challenging environment for which they are not really prepared. The rigor, requirements, expectations, choices, and responsibilities of college are new to most students, yet the general expectations are that they will be prepared for the ground breaking, with the ability to take on material that is likely more challenging than any encountered earlier. Processes are much more complicated, and professional work in arts and digital arts are likely more likely now.

If students enter college missing essential skills, and if we expect clear, innovative, analytical, well-considered thinking and writing, what responsibility do college educators have to help students learn to think and express themselves in the ways that optimize the potential learning offered by an array of courses taught by faculty who have spent years acquiring knowledge about these subjects?

In this article (and in its companion by Emily Finley), we propose a role for the Visual Thinking research confirms, using a stream-of-consciousness interview protocol, by asking subjects to talk about what they see in both art and material objects such as forges, tools, or scientific tools, the interviewee had to come up with a concept that can be manipulated generally as observing, inferring, offering evidence, speaking among possible conclusions, and reasoning. These appear first in interviews during which the subject examines an art image and quickly later when looking at objects of another sort. Together, these responses have been observed to be key in the process of visual thinking. The visual thinking is a process that involves the ability to think about what is being seen in a way that allows for the development of new ideas.

At the level of the course, the entire unit was designed to connect observation, inference, and prediction to the benefits of visual thinking. The students were asked to identify the major themes and to generate their own conclusions about the process. At the level of the school, the students were asked to identify the major themes and to generate their own conclusions about the process. At the level of the school, the students were asked to identify the major themes and to generate their own conclusions about the process.
A boy shuts his eyes for a moment. When he wakes the world he once knew is gone. His room is an unfamiliar place. His language has failed him. He has forgotten everything and everyone he ever knew. Gone. The world he now lives in is one of lost things.
The basic steps for conducting a VTS discussion are as follows:

1. Present a carefully selected image. Most images contain:
   - Subjects of interest that are specific, enduring, and important
   - Familiar imagery that is interesting to students
   - Strong narrative, accessible but layered, "deep"
   - Accurate meanings given above or below pictures

2. Allow for a few moments of silent, respectful looking before beginning the discussion.

3. Pose three specific research-related questions to motivate and maintain the inquiry:
   - What's going on in this picture?
   - What do you see that makes you say that?
   - What more can we learn?

4. Facilitate the discussion by:
   - Listening carefully to catch all students say.
   - Prompting students to comment on what they see or hear.
   - Paraphrasing each comment, taking a moment to reflect on it while formulating the responses to make sure all comments are prepared and carefully selected.
   - Linking related comments whether students agree or disagree, or build on one another's ideas.
   - Remaining neutral by treating everyone and each comment in the same way.

5. Conclude by thinking students for their participation.

Research confirms. Using a stream-of-consciousness interview protocol, asking subjects to talk about what they see in both art and natural objects such as family, maps, or unusual tools, Heasman has cited thoughts that can be categorized generally as observing, inferring, reflecting, and evaluating among possible conclusions, and refusing others. These appear often in interviews during which the subject examines an art image and reliably later when looking at objects of another sort. Teachers have observed the reality of thinking better from VTS lessons to observations of natural inquiry in books, scientific fiction, metaphors problem solving, and elsewhere.

Why start with art as a discussion topic? First, all righted have the ability and innate habit of looking, but that's around them and thinking about what they see. Beginning at toddlerhood, we examine everything—people, things, faces, bugs, the moon— and even understand such things. To reflect on the universal practice reminds us of the close association between the mind and the eye, what we see immediately shapes what we think we know.

As the child further learns the names of things, he or she becomes more capable of describing what is observed. In this respect, the visual experience is a window into the future, an opportunity to see beyond what is perceived by normal interactions. Skillful facilitators, as discussed in the following paragraph, greatly enhance individual students, as well as the group at large, in thinking full expression for their thoughts and evolving understandings of what they see.

While these questions make up the core of the VTS protocol, other key teachers also have driven the process of learning. Students learn in discussion of what they see, they are taught, how to talk, and the experience. VTS focuses on the self-sustaining act of transforming meaning and thus the importance of the eye and mind connection. Angela Heasman's data confirm this idea is true in Aristotle, when our brain is engaged by visual meaning, the line of expression can shift from a relative discipline to a more direct relationship. The act of perceiving clearly captures the thrust of students' comments that may be quite rich as ideas but need assistance to be expressed with equal rigor.

Works of art provide the level of density and complexity to engage the mind thoroughly and a context for students as well as teachers to address material that is authentically unfamiliar, which is an essential condition for promoting a climate of discovery.

Student appreciation of the nearly irrepressible and visual stimuli as well as the respect each student receives is the authority figure at the head of the table. In order to build resources of thinking itself, the facilitator identifies the kinds of thought for each subject, the right way subject language that is used, you're building a narrative, you're telling information and applying it here, you're thinking of what the student has been told, you're giving the metaphor here, you're picking up cues regarding the environment and are able to do that specifically when this is taking place, not at all.

The Importance of Discussion in Higher Learning

Twenty-first century students need to learn to manage twenty-first century data. data that is complex, ambiguous, changing, and requiring synthesis across disciplines. We share this hypothesis with many colleagues—one in particular is Linda Duke, director of the Beach Museum of Art at Kansas State University, who has been influential in developing these ideas through her collaboration, mentoring, and teaching work at the intersection of art history and higher education. Works of art provide the level of density and complexity to engage the mind thoroughly and a context for students as well as teachers to address material that is authentically unfamiliar, which is an essential condition for promoting a climate of discovery. Furthermore, students must navigate this multimedia aesthetic using the ability to recognize images, language, thought, emotion, and collaboration. In this way, VTS nurtures the skills of inquiry and critical thinking.

Art provides a platform in the context of the principles of essential skills, allowing for students to explore new behaviors, see anew, push their boundaries, and to do so in a supportive environment.

The case for employing VTS to enrich learning among college and university students is a logical extension to be for younger people, based on the premise that discourse forms the development of skills difficult to teach or learn in any other way.

Image 1. VTS at a Glance

Figure 2. Works of art provide the level of density and complexity to engage the mind thoroughly and a context for students as well as teachers to address material that is authentically unfamiliar, which is an essential condition for promoting a climate of discovery.
PART TWO
‘Starting from below’
We will come to these questions by starting ‘from below’.

• The value of pre-critical forms of engagement with primary sources
• The value of pre-critical forms of engagement with primary sources

• The role and power of description as a key phenomenological method
• The value of pre-critical forms of engagement with primary sources

• The role and power of description as a key phenomenological method

• The use of visual skills like drawing, diagramming, mapping
• The value of pre-critical forms of engagement with primary sources

• The role and power of description as a key phenomenological method

• The use of visual skills like drawing, diagramming, mapping

• The critical value of the personal, situated and ideographic nature of phenomenological research
Description and what it can do
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Description enables me to find a home within the visual, with its difficulties, so that it becomes a site of openings
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Description teaches me how to attend (to attend involves positioning myself in service of another and of a self-showing world).
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Description teaches me how to attend (to attend involves positioning myself in service of another, of a self-showing world)

Description turns things around, inside out, upside down; it expands our vision
PART THREE
Researching with Kim Jongku’s
Mobile Landscape
Thursday Afternoon, June 14, 2018

2:00 – 3:30 SESSION VII: CONTEXTUALIZING POSTHUMANISM (CONTINUED INVESTIGATION)

The Sublime Heteromorphic
Roberto Marchesini, Center for the Study of Posthumanist Philosophy

Evolution of Art’s Effectiveness on Post Humanism, Infinite Life through the Changes of Time/Humanity
Christine McNeill-Matieson, University of Kansas

The Aesthetics of Metahumanism: A Feminist Perspective
Nikita Lakshmanan, Smith College

3:30 – 3:45 (COFFEE, TEA BREAK)

3:45 – 5:00 SESSION VIII: TRANSLATING EMOTIONS

How to Turn Around Trouble: Merleau-Pontian Institution, Aesthetics, and the Metaphor of ‘Woman’-as-Hinge
Jorella Andrea, Goldsmiths, University of London

Human Emotions: From Philosophy of Mind to Psychiatric Diagnostics
Ayhan Turanlı, Istanbul Technical University & Gamze Bü Camaro, Mayo Clinic

Phenomenological Aspects of the Perception of Architectural Space
Lyudmila Molodkina, The State University of Land Use Planning and Management, Moscow

FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION OF PAPERS
In this essay I present phenomenological aesthetics, principally as a mode of *investigation*.

I argue that, *if* deployed, it is especially effective in turning around (transforming) situations of the worst kind. By these I mean situations experienced as hopelessly entrenched in conflict, threat or harm where …
no attempts at resolution seem to work. In *The Phenomenology of Perception* of 1945, when referencing an instance of such a scenario, Merleau-Ponty wrote of a ‘subject who remains open to the same impossible future, if not in his explicit thoughts, at any rate in his actual being’. We can recognise similarly entrenched structures of behaviour in other contexts ranging from the personal to the administrative to the political.

My claim is that the only way to turn around (in the sense of transforming/resolving) trouble of this intractable kind is by developing ways of *turning around within* those situations and of *being* turned around within them. This second sense of turning around (which provides an alternate to the classic responses to trouble of flight, fight and frozenness) has, in the first instance …
... to do with *perceptual* flexibility which, following Merleau-Ponty, opens up dimensions of unanticipated but effective emotional, intellectual and strategic capacity.
Landscape with Gentlemen Visiting a Scholar in a Lakeside Pavilion. Korean, Chosŏn dynasty, first half 17th century. Traditionally attributed to Kim Che (active mid-16th century); perhaps by Yi Ching (b. 1581) or Kim Myŏngguk (b. 1600) Album leaf; ink and light color on silk.

The robust potential of phenomenological aesthetics
[The painter’s question] is not a question asked of someone who doesn’t know by someone who knows – the schoolmaster’s question. The question comes from one who does not know, and it is addressed to a vision, a seeing, which knows everything and which we do not make, for it makes itself in us. … The painter lives in fascination. The actions most proper to him — those gestures, those
paths which he alone can trace and which will be revelations to others (because the others do not lack what he lacks or in the same way) — to him they seem to emanate from the things themselves, like the patterns of the constellations. Inevitably the roles between him and the visible are reversed. That is why so many painters have said that things look at them.

Antonello da Messina (active 1456; died 1479), *Saint Jerome in his Study*, about 1475, Oil on lime, 45.7 x 36.2 cm, National Gallery, London.
Jean-Siméon Chardin (1699 - 1779), The House of Cards, about 1736-7, Oil on canvas, 60.3 x 71.8 cm, National Gallery, London.
The robust potential of phenomenological aesthetics.
We live in intersubjectivity … [A] world with several compossible entrances; we are one for the others. Me-others hinge, which is common life, like me-my body hinge, which for me is not just weight, a curse, but also my flywheel. Accompany others, history, and not just endow it with sense by decision.
