The academization of art

A practice approach to the early histories of the Accademia del Disegno and the Accademia di San Luca

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Chapter One

From Pevsner to Practice

1.1. Pevsner and Vasari

The first critical historiographical study of the phenomenon of the art academy is Nikolaus Pevsner's *Academies of Art: Past and Present* from 1940.[17] Although many of its basic assumptions and conclusions are by now rejected, this book remains a starting point for all scholars interested in this topic. Pevsner (1902-1983) identifies the Florentine Accademia del Disegno and the Roman Accademia di San Luca as the first official art academies. According to him, the artist and biographer of artists' lives Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574) was almost single-handedly responsible for the birth of the Florentine academy. Furthermore, Pevsner ascribes a similar role to Federico Zuccari in the Roman Accademia di San Luca. He holds that together Vasari and Zuccari were the founders of the academic tradition, insofar as they laid down the model for future art academies by emphasizing their representational and educational functions.[18]

According to Pevsner, the first description of the birth of the Florentine art academy can be found in Vasari's *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori et architettori* (*The Lives of the Most Excellent Painters,*

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[17] Pevsner 1940/1973. In 1973 appeared a reprint of the 1940 edition with a new preface. Older 'histories' or 'memories' of the first academies of art exist: Alberti 1604/1961, Missirini 1823, and Arnaud 1886 for the Roman academy; and for the Florentine institution Vasari's *Vite* from 1568 (1966-1987), Cavallucci 1873, Ticciati 1876 (written in the 1730s). However, these publications lack the standards of modern objective historiography. In addition to some archival sources, Pevsner used Vasari's, Cavallucci's, and Ticciati's accounts, as well as Olschki 1919-1927 and Maylender 1926-30 as sources for his interpretation of the Accademia del Disegno. Olschki placed the Accademia del Disegno in the context of vulgarization and popularization of science that took place in other sixteenth-century academies, such as the Accademia Fiorentina and the Accademia della Virtù in Rome. According to him, the art academy was the only organization in Florence in the Cinquecento where mathematics was taught on a regular basis. Olschki's exclusive focus on the teaching of mathematics, at the expense of the other practices that were carried out in the Accademia del Disegno, and his identification of the institution as a 'technische Hochschule' makes his interpretation incomplete and anachronistic. See Barzman 2000, 15 for similar criticism. Maylender's monumental five-volume work about the Italian academies is impressive in terms of scope, but it contains very little information on each individual academy.

[18] Pevsner 1940/1973, 42, 51-52 and 59-66.

Sculptors, and Architects), and more specifically, in the biography of the sculptor and Servite friar Giovanni Angelo Montorsoli (1507-1563). [19] Vasari's narrative about the Accademia del Disegno starts in 1562 with Montorsoli's donation of his burial chapel in the church of Santissima Annunziata to the painters, sculptors, and architects of Florence. Montorsoli had acquired the chapel two years earlier for 170 *scudi* when he entered the convent of Santissima Annunziata. Through his donation, Montorsoli wanted to reinvigorate the old religious lay confraternity of the Florentine artists. This confraternity, which was called the Compagnia di San Luca in reference to the painters' patron saint, the Evangelist Saint Luke, had existed since at least the fourteenth century, but around 1550 it seems to have ceased to carry out its assistential and religious activities.

The confraternity's re-establishment and the chapel's inauguration took place on May 24, 1562, the day of the Most Holy Trinity (Santissima Trinità) – which is celebrated on the first Sunday after Pentecost (thus either in May or June). Vasari writes that on that day forty-eight artists gathered in the chapel to celebrate mass. Afterwards, the artists went in solemn procession around the square in front of the church while carrying the remains of the painter Jacopo Carrucci, better known as Jacopo da Pontormo (1494-1557), who had been one of the most celebrated artists of his generation and a member of the Compagnia di San Luca since 1525. In 1557 Pontormo had been buried in the *Chiostro dei morti* (Cloister of the Dead) in Santissima Annunziata. On the day of the Santissima Trinità in 1562 and after the procession, the painter's bones were placed in the tomb in Montorsoli's chapel. Pontormo's second burial at once inaugurated Montorsoli's burial chapel and re-established the artists' confraternity. The reasons for choosing Pontormo were probably that he had been recently buried in the same convent, that he had been an active member of the old Compagnia di San Luca, and that he had been one of the leading artists in Florence – together with Bronzino and, of course, Michelangelo. [20]

According to Vasari, this event not only marked the reinstitution of the confraternity but it also set in motion a process that would lead to the foundation of the Accademia del Disegno the following year. Vasari's narrative continues with how he himself talked to Cosimo I about the idea of forming an art academy. The duke immediately supported the project

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[19] Ibidem, 44-45. See for Montorsoli's biography Vasari 1966-1987, V, 490-509.

[20] Barzman 2000, 26-27 and 33-34. Barzman presents an unconvincing argument of how the inauguration of the chapel by means of the second burial of Pontormo was connected to the painter's role in Medici cultural politics. This is an instance of overinterpretation and it is connected to Barzman's general tendency to reduce the meaning of the activities of the Accademia del Disegno to the political realm. See below for a more elaborate assessment of Barzman's methodology.

and even helped to the artists to find a suitable location for the academy. In January 1563 Cosimo I approved of the incorporating statutes, which officialized the foundation of the Accademia del Disegno.[21] Moreover, the duke became the academy's 'head, guide, and protector' (*capo, guida e protettore*) and he appointed the Benedictine monk, historian, and philologist Vincenzo Borghini as *luogotenente*, or his placeholder in the institution.

Ever since Pevsner's *Academies of Art*, Vasari's narrative about the foundation of the Accademia del Disegno has been a fundamental source for scholars, who were interested not only in the history of the Accademia del Disegno, but in that of the phenomenon of the art academy in general. The subsequent sections explicate the different ways in which scholars in the past seventy-five years have followed Pevsner's footsteps in their interpretation of the early Italian art academies and what methodological and conceptual innovations have taken place.

1.2. The Pevsnerian tradition

After a period of relative silence, renewed scholarly interest for academies of art started in the 1970s.[22] Reynolds, Goldstein and Jack published studies around the time of the reprint of Pevsner's *Academies of Art* in 1973.[23] These authors remained within the 'Pevsnerian framework' and only elaborated on and filled out in more detail his initial analyses of the first Italian academies. Furthermore, some of the publications of the last two decades of the twentieth century by Rossi, Waźbiński, Boschloo, and Goldstein can be seen as (partly) standing in the Pevsnerian tradition.[24]

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[21] The statutes had been drafted by a committee of six artists with the help of Vincenzo Borghini, who was the Prior of the orphanage of Florence, the Spedale degli Innocenti, which was located at the same square as Santissima Annunziata. The artists in the committee were Montorsoli, Francesco da San Gallo, Agnolo Bronzino, Vasari, Michele di Ridolfo, and Pier Francesco di Jacopo di Sandro Foschi. Zangheri 2013, 87.

[22] An exception is 1963 when two exhibitions in the Uffizi were held to celebrate the fourth centennial of the Accademia del Disegno. However, the accompanying catalogues (Nocentini 1963 and Barocchi 1963) follow Vasari's story of the foundation of the Florentine academy and do not present new interpretations.

[23] Reynolds 1974/1985, Goldstein 1975b, Jack 1976. Writing in 1975, Goldstein (1975a, 102) states that '[o]ne of the most striking developments in the history of art during the last few years has been a preoccupation with academic art.' It would be interesting to investigate the reason for this sudden outburst of popularity of the subject. For example, if it was related to reorganizations of art education in Western countries.

[24] See Rossi 1980 and 1984, Waźbiński 1978 and 1987, Boschloo et. al. 1989, and Goldstein 1996. There are some distinctions in the details of these 'Pevsnerian' interpretations of the academies. For example, whereas most of the authors in this group

The main themes in this 'Pevsnerian' interpretative framework are the social elevation of artists and the revolution in artistic education. Pevsner describes the evolution of the art academy from its Florentine origins to academies in his own day and age as a struggle of artists for freedom from the fetters of the medieval guilds and for a higher social status. The foundation of the Florentine and Roman art academies are presented as a crucial moment in the social history of art, because it institutionalized the existing claims of artists to higher social status. To be more precise, these institutions formalized or legitimized the social distinction between artisan and artist that had been expressed in contemporary art theoretical and biographical treatises.

Regarding the educational aims Pevsner and his followers bring forward that, although the sixteenth century had already seen informal gatherings of artists that were called 'academies', the Accademia del Disegno and the Accademia di San Luca were the first organizations in which painters, sculptors, and architects came together in an institutional setting to study the theory and practice of their arts and to teach it to young students. [25] The first statutes of these academies prescribe the creation of institutions where art students could learn the theoretical and

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credit the idea of the academy to Vasari, Waźbiński attributes a more important role to the first lieutenant of the institution, Vincenzo Borghini. Moreover, while the importance of Michelangelo's art for the Florentine artists in the foundational period of the academy is generally recognized, Waźbiński (1987, I, 80) goes a step further by suggesting that the assimilation of the style of the great master was the cause of the foundation of the art institution. More recent publications by Zangheri (2013), Scorza (2015), and Van Veen (2015) also belong to the Pevsnerian tradition insofar as they identify Vasari and/or Borghini as the initiators of the Accademia del Disegno and try to reconstruct their intentions in founding the institution. Zangheri (2013, 88-89), for instance, calls Vasari the 'soul of the academy' during the first decade of its existence. As evidence for this claim, Zangheri correctly points out that the artist helped to procure for the institution several temporary headquarters through his good rapport with Cosimo I, and that he held many official functions in the academy. However, Zangheri fails to mention that in the same period other academicians, such as Zanobi Lastricati, Alessandro Allori, and Domenico Poggini held a similar number of offices in the academy. The acknowledgement of this fact will lead to a more balanced view of the early life of the academy.

[25] These informal groups of artists were Leonardo da Vinci's (1452-1519) 'academy in Milan' and the two 'academies' (one in Rome in the 1530s and one in Florence in the 1540s) of Bartolomeo 'Baccio' Bandinelli's (1493-1560). See Pevsner 1940/1973, 25-42, Goldstein 1996, 10, and Barzman 2000, 4-7. Furthermore, the gatherings in Lorenzo de' Medici's garden – where promising young painters and sculptors were supposed to have copied antique sculptures under the guidance of Bertoldo di Giovanni (d. 1491) – are also sometimes seen as part of the pre-history of the phenomenon of the art academy. This is due to Vasari (1966-1987, VI, 9-12), who in his 'Life of Michelangelo' describes this garden as a proto-academy.

scientific principles of their trades and were taught by different masters.[26] This was a revolutionary idea in history of the education of artists, because before young artists were trained exclusively by a single master in his workshop.[27] Furthermore, mathematics, anatomy, and art theory had already been studied and developed by previous generations of artists, but the implementation of these subjects in a common curriculum for art students was completely new. In this context the use of the concept of *disegno* – which by mid-sixteenth century could stand for both the creative image in the artist's mind ('design') and the preparatory sketch on paper ('drawing') – as the common ground of painting, sculpture, and architecture is also emphasized in the Pevsnerian literature.[28]

The extent to which the social and educational revolutions were actually realized in the Accademia el Disegno and the Accademia di San Luca in their early years is disputed in the Pevsnerian tradition. Some authors, including Pevsner himself, argue that it was not until the end of the seventeenth century in France that the social position of (the majority of the) artists substantially changed. Furthermore, concerning the educational innovations, scholars have pointed out that archival sources only bear sparse traces of theoretical and scientific lectures delivered in the early years of the academies.[29]

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[26] The first statutes of the Accademia del Disegno were approved by Duke Cosimo I de' Medici on January, 12 1563. See BNCF Magl. II.I. 399, 1r-8r (modern pagination), and for transcriptions Ważbiński 1987, II, 423-436, Adorno/Zangheri 1998, 3-16, and Barzman 2000, 221-231. In 1607 the first statutes of the Accademia di San Luca were approved by Pope Paul V. However, during the first academic meeting on 14 November 1593 a set of *ordini* ('rules') were proposed by Zuccari – which had probably been prepared earlier by a commission of six deputies, including Zuccari – and approved by the members of the institution. These 'Statuti dello Zuccari' were never officially approved and probably functioned as internal rules that guided the organization in the first years of its existence. See Salvagni 2008, who emphasizes the informal and unofficial status of these rules. See, for a brief and general, but useful comparison of the statutes of both art academies, Prinz 1997/1998.

[27] Pevsner (1940/1973, 46-48) correctly notes, however, that the academic education was not meant to replace the practical training in the workshops, but that it was to be offered to art students for their artistic perfection.

[28] Authors point especially to Benedetto Varchi's *Due lezzioni*, Vasari's 'Proemio' to his *Vite* and Zuccari's *L'Idea dei pittori, scultori et architettori*. See sections 9.2, 9.3, and 9.7 for discussions of these treatises.

[29] Therefore, Pevsner (1940/1973, 55) even openly questions his own analysis of the evolution of the academies and asks himself whether the 'Accademia del Disegno should not be regarded as part of the pre-history of the problem here in question rather than as its first chapter'. Reynolds (1974/1985), Rossi (1980), Ważbiński (1987) and Goldstein (1996) agree with Pevsner that the Academia del Disegno and the Accademia di San Luca were not able to reach their goals until late in the seventeenth century. Rossi (1980, 180), for example, states that the Accademia del Disegno was unsuccessful as a center of artistic propulsion and even less as a didactic institution. Jack (1976) and Barzman (1989b) believe the Florentine institution to have been more successful. According to

Goldstein is most skeptical about the educational achievements of the Italian art academies in their early years. He even argues that the founders of the academies did not aim for a pedagogical revolution, because they conceived the production of art and having learned discussions about it as two completely different things.[30] Although not all scholars are convinced of the efficacy of the Italian academies in their early years, their importance as models for future art schools and their contribution to the elevation of the status and image of the artist in society are generally acknowledged.

1.3. Three methodological innovations

Three methodological innovations are discernable in the historiography of the first Italian art academies from the 1980s onwards. In the first place, the focus has shifted away from the artists to the political rulers of the cities in which the academies were founded. In addition to being the first *formal* art academies – with statutes in which the rules and regulations were specified – the Academia del Disegno and the Accademia di San Luca also were the first *official* art academies, which means that these rules were approved by the political authorities, i.e. the Medici (grand) dukes in Florence and the popes and cardinals in Rome. Second, some of the more recent publications about the early art academies are infused with social theory. This has to do, no doubt, with the perceived role of the Accademia del Disegno and the Accademia di San Luca in the elevation of the social status of the artists. Third, recent studies make more, and more systematic, use of the archival sources. Some authors adopt one of these methodological innovations; others implement two or even all three of them.

1.3.1. The cultural-politics tradition

The official character of the first art academies was only visible in the margin of Pevsner's interpretation. Although he does note the connections between Cosimo I's cultural politics and the birth of the Accademia del Disegno, these relations are described by Pevsner only in a general way and couched in terms of artistic style. For example, Pevsner connects Cosimo I's centralization of the bureaucracy to

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Dempsey (1980, 554), the Accademia del Disegno, especially the assumption of the function of guild in 1571, meant 'a substantial change in the status of artists and their powers of self-determination'.
[30] Goldstein 1996, 23-25.

Mannerism, which was the dominant artistic style at the time of the academy's foundation:

The academy is the obvious equivalent in art to the shapes which political organizations took in absolutist states. Mannerism as a style is on the other hand the aesthetic corollary to both absolutism and academic organization. Its rigid schemes of configurations, its distrust of the freedom of human movement, its coldness, its belief in certain teachable dogmas and certain canons discovered by a few divine artists of the past, all this goes well with absolutism and calls for an academy.[31]

In this passage Pevsner uses Mannerism clearly not just as a stylistic or aesthetic concept, but also as a political and moral category. This generalization of the notion is questionable because it presupposes unlikely close conceptual analogies between artistic style and political constitution, i.e. 'schematic', 'dogmatic', 'cold', 'distrust of human movement'.[32] What is more, the use of these concepts to characterize Mannerism as an artistic style is questionable in itself, because of their negative and subjective overtones. In fact, this interpretation of Mannerism was already criticized in Pevsner's time and by now it is generally rejected.[33]

In the studies that were carried out since the 1980s, the cultural-politics theme has become more and more prominent. It plays an important role in the publications of Rossi, Dempsey, Hughes, Kempers, Beltramme, Salvagni, and Lukehart, whereas Barzman and Van Veen even make it the focal point of their analyses.[34] Although this theme is

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[31] Pevsner 1940/1973, 54-55.

[32] By contrast, Pevsner (1940/1973, 7 and 12) associates the 'Renaissance', both the historical period and the stylistic concept, with unity, freedom, and audacity.

[33] See, for example, Weisbach 1921 and Shearman 1967. Furthermore, Pevsner (1940/1973, vii, 17, and 66) holds that the birth of the art academy under Mannerism not only determined the future and essence of academy *qua* institution, but also that it also helps to explain the crisis and illness of art in his own age. See Chapter Two for a critical discussion of this essentialist and teleological motive in Pevsner's interpretation. It should be noted that Pevsner's coupling of Mannerism and totalitarianism becomes more significant when one takes into account that, as a Jew, he was forced to leave his position at the university of Göttingen in 1933, and that he subsequently moved to Great Britain. This means that Pevsner was one of the many Jewish scholars who had to flee Germany in the 1930s. Other important art historians who left Germany for Great Britain and the United States are Erwin Panofsky and Edgar Wind. It has been argued that art history became an academic discipline in the 1930s in Great Britain partly because of the presence of German art historians (and by the transference of the Warburg Library – by Wind – from Germany to England). See Lloyd-Jones 1983. See, for a more general account of the Jewish exodus from Germany in the 1930s, Fleming/Bailyn 1968.

[34] Rossi 1980, Dempsey 1980, Hughes 1986a and 1986b, Kempers 1992, Beltramme 1990, Salvagni 2009, Lukehart 2009b, Barzman 2000 and Van Veen 2006.

also present in the publications dealing with the Accademia di San Luca, it is emphasized more strongly in the studies about the Accademia del Disegno.[35]

In this younger interpretative tradition the birth of the art academies in Italy is conceived of as an important moment in the history of state formation in the early modern period. Scholars who adopt this narrative argue that the Accademia del Disegno and the Accademia di San Luca were used as instruments in the cultural politics of the Medici family in Florence and the popes in Rome. These rulers are said to have supported art academies in order to gain more control over the visual arts (and artists) and to ward off the potential subversive powers of artistic images and, instead, to use them in the development and expression of state (and Church) ideology and a national (Tuscan or Roman) or religious (Christian, counter-reformatory) cultural identity.

For instance, Barzman expresses this view when she writes that '[a]cademies in general, and art academies in particular, [played] an important role in the consolidation and representation of power in early modern absolutist states'.[36] Salvagni stresses the same point in relation to the Accademia di San Luca. According to her, the pope approved of the foundation of the academy and subjected it to the authority of the Counter-Reformation Church because the institution 'was responsible for the period's chief form of mass communication' and therefore 'potentially the most dangerous of professional organizations (…).'[37] In this view, art academies are seen as instruments of the state and, consequently, the artists that belonged to them are seen as state artists, who have little agency or autonomous artistic identity.

Van Veen interprets the foundation of the Accademia del Disegno as part of Cosimo I's general cultural-political strategy, which included religious, linguistic, and artistic forms of patronage. Moreover, Van Veen decries a development in Cosimo I's strategies. When the duke's position was still weak, at the beginning of his reign in the 1540s and 1550s, Cosimo I cultivated the image of an absolute ruler. However, when his position was more secure, and especially after his victory over Siena in 1559, when his absolute rule over Tuscany was virtually uncontested, the duke preferred to be represented as first among equals or

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[35] See, for interpretations of the Roman art academy as an instrument in the cultural politics of the counter-reformatory Church, Rossi 1984, Salvagni 2008, and especially Beltramme 1990. Cohen (2009, 330-331), on the other hand, suggests that the lack of direct political interference in the Accademia di San Luca is one of the main differences between it and the Accademia del Disegno. However, it must be noted that as source for this statement she refers to Barzman's strong cultural-political interpretation of the latter organization. See also Lukehart (2009a, 12) in the same volume.

[36] Barzman 2000, 1. Kempers (1992) propagates a similar idea, albeit more tentatively.

[37] Salvagni 2009, 96.

confraternity elder. Cosimo I's power was confirmed and secured for future generations of the Medici family in August 1569, when Pope Pius V awarded him the title of grand duke.[38] According to Van Veen, it is in the context of his increased power and the related development in his patronage strategies that Cosimo I's seemingly contradictory actions towards to the art academy, such as formally but not financially supporting its foundation, should be understood.[39]

The Pevsnerian and the cultural-politics interpretations disagree about the active agent or efficient cause of the foundation and the main functions or purposes of the art academy. Whereas the former highlights the agency of the artists and the elevation of their social status, as well as the educational purpose of the academies, the latter gives the initiative to the rulers and foreground the political function of the institutions. The scholars in the cultural-politics tradition argue that because of their dominated position in the patron-client relations of sixteenth-century Italy, the artists' room for initiative was very limited and they were wholly dependent on the interests and agency of the Medici grand dukes and popes for the foundation and functioning of the art academies.[40]

It should be noted that this innovation not only constitutes a change of perspective – i.e. from the artists' to the rulers' point of view – but it also entails methodological and philosophical criticism of the assumptions of artistic autonomy and the conceptions of subjectivity in the Pevsnerian framework. According to the authors in the cultural-politics tradition, these assumptions and conceptions are modernist and anachronistic. Barzman is most explicit in her criticism on this aspect of the Pevsnerian tradition. She holds that '[n]otions of the artists' self-determination or autonomous agency, which derive from post-Enlightenment discourses, pervade scholarship on the academy, as do liberal assumptions about social mobility attained through schooling and through affiliations with institutions of "higher" education'.[41]

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[38] Hall 1979, 5-9. By the early 1560s Cosimo I was determined to obtain the title of grand duke in order to further augment his power and secure it for his family. In order to achieve this goal, he needed papal approval. The duke seemed to have won over the papacy by renovating Santa Maria Novella and Santa Croce in accordance to counter-reformatory guidelines. In his autobiography published in the second edition of the *Vite* in 1568, Vasari discussed renovation project of the Florentine churches. He likens Cosimo I to King Solomon from the Old Testament, because both had taken it upon themselves to reconstruct and renew existing religious buildings. The connection between King Solomon and Cosimo I was also made by Gherardo Spini in his treatise on architecture from 1568 that was dedicated to the duke. Spini 1568/1980. See for a discussion Waźbiński 1987, I, 146-152.
[39] Van Veen 2006, 160-184, esp. 175-176.
[40] Barzman 2000, 31-32.
[41] Ibidem, 32.

Notwithstanding these major differences, what the Pevsnerian tradition and the cultural-political interpretation have in common is that they see the birth of the Accademia del Disegno and the Accademia di San Luca as an important moment in the transition of Western culture to Modernity. The idea here is that in the modern period artists enjoyed a relatively high social status for which they paid by a loss of creative freedom. This narrative typically continues with discussions and critiques of the generally depreciated 'academic art' of later centuries and of avant-garde movements such as French impressionism, which rebelled against it.[42]

1.3.2. Social theory

The second methodological development discernable in the literature after Pevsner concerns the infusion of social theoretical and social ontological conceptions in the interpretations of the academization of art. Since the 1980s, three studies have been based on the insights of social theorists. On the one hand, this can be seen as part of a more general development of the past four decades, in which studies in art and cultural history have been increasingly inspired by concepts and methods derived from the social sciences. On the background of this general development stands the rejection of the myth of the artist as genius and the conviction that artistic and cultural products have an intrinsic social dimension, which should be taken into account when interpreting them.[43]

On the other hand, the academization of art can be seen as a particularly suitable research object for applying social theory, because scholars deem the artists' social standing in society and their position in power relations crucial in understanding the foundation of the Accademia del Disegno and the Accademia di San Luca. Pevsner himself had already stated that with *Academies of Art* he intended to write part of a social history of art – namely the history of the education of artists – that could complement the formal or stylistic art history that dominated the

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[42] In the Foreword to the reprint edition of his *Academies of Art*, Pevsner (1940/1973, VI-IX), for example, quotes several artists, such as Goya, Fuseli, Ruskin, Viollet-le-Duc, and William Morris, who criticized the art academy. It is interesting and telling that these quotes date from the period 1773 until 1890. Lukehart (2009a, 2) also emphasizes the negative stance against the academy by nineteenth- and twentieth-century artists: 'For several generations "the academy" has served as the foil to the avant-garde, an impediment rather than a spur to the arts.' See also Boime 1994, 203-204 and Goldstein 1975a.

[43] See, for instance, Burke 2008, 23-25, which describes the Marxist influences in cultural history of the 1960s and 1970s. The foundation of Cultural Studies (or Cultural Sciences) as a new field of research in this belongs to the same development.

discipline in his age. [44] However, in his interpretation of the academization of art Pevsner did not make use of concepts and questions from the social sciences and social theory. Instead, his concepts of subjectivity, social mobility, and culture seem to have been derived from common sense and ordinary experience. As mentioned, these notions have been criticized and rejected by other scholars for being modernist and anachronistic.

The first study that has made explicit use of social theory for the understanding of the academization of art is Sergio Rossi's *Dalle Botteghe alle accademie* from 1980. In this book, Rossi employs a Marxist framework for his interpretation of the foundation of the Italian art academies. On the one hand, Rossi describes the evolution of the social and economic position of artists and artisans in the context of the guild system in the city of Florence between 1400 and 1600. He gives an account of how in this period artisans came to stand in a subordinate position in relation to artists (painters, sculptors, and architects). On the other hand, Rossi describes the evolution of art theory in the same period in Tuscany, i.e. the treatises written by Leon Battista Alberti, Leonardo, Benedetto Varchi, Michelangelo, Vincenzo Danti, and Vasari. According to Rossi, the central distinction in these treatises is that between *fatica di corpo* and *fatica di mente* (manual and intellectual work). [45]

Marxist terminology pervades Rossi's analysis. For, according to him, in sixteenth-century Florence the social-economic and the theoretical levels are related to each other as base (*struttura*) to superstructure (*sovrastruttura*). That is to say, Rossi argues that the theoretical writings of the artists were superstructural or ideological reflections on, and justifications of contemporary social and economic changes. Furthermore, according to Rossi, the Accademia del Disegno and the Accademia di San Luca – but this also holds for the later art academies – were created to subordinate the artisanal corporations. [46]

For the artisans the conditions deteriorated. Rossi describes this as the 'progressive proletarization' (*progressiva proletarizzazione*) and alienation of the artisan. Through the new division of labor in the workshops, the character of the work also changed. It became more abstract and the worker was ever less the owner of his product as before. Moreover, Rossi claims that to this economic and social expropriation of the medieval artist corresponded a growing intellectual expropriation.

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[44] Pevsner (1940/1973, viii). According to him, in addition to the history of the education of artists, other parts of the social history of art that should be written, include the history of taste (which, in parenthesis, is a modernist term), of aesthetic theories, of exhibitions, of collections, and of art dealing.
[45] Rossi 1980, 15 *et passim*.
[46] Ibidem, 34.

The artisan-worker was also no longer the inventor of the products he made, but only executed products that were not thought up by him and that definitely not belonged to him, neither socially nor culturally.[47]

It should be noted that Rossi's analysis of the development of the socio-economic position of the artisan in premodern Italy is problematic. For, by arguing that the progressive proletarization of the artisan meant that he was no longer the inventor of his products, Rossi implies that before this development the artisan *was* the inventor. However, Rossi also admits that notions of 'artistic individuality' and 'creativity', which are closely connected to that of 'invention', only emerged in theoretical treatises in the period under discussion and in the context of the first academies of art.[48] Therefore, the extent to which artisans in previous ages can be conceived of as inventors of their produces is limited at best.

Rossi adheres to both sides of the methodological distinction discussed in the previous section, i.e. the perspective of the artists and that of the rulers. He belongs to the Pevsnerian tradition insofar as he makes social mobility the central issue in his interpretation of the academies. At the same time, Rossi belongs to the cultural-politics tradition because he holds that the interests of the artists and those of Duke Cosimo I coincided – which, according to him, explains why the Accademia del Disegno was founded when it was. In this context, Rossi points to a fundamental contradiction in the idea of academy, namely between its bureaucratic and administrative function on the one hand, and its role in the elaboration of the autonomous cultural ideals of the academicians, on the other.[49]

The second social theoretical interpretation of the academization of art is given by Bram Kempers in his *Painting, Power and Patronage* from 1987.[50] In this book, Kempers analyses the evolution of the profession of painting from 1250 until 1600 in Italy with the help of Norbert Elias' theory of *civilization* and the concept of *professionalization*.[51] This means that the academization of art and the foundation of the first art academies are not the main subjects of the

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[47] Ibidem, 160.

[48] Ibidem, 22.

[49] Rossi 1980, 161-162. The coincidence of the interests of the artists and Cosimo I is also emphasized in Dempsey 1980, 555, Hughes 1986a, 6, and Kempers 1992, 275-298.

[50] For this dissertation is used Kempers 1992. This is the English translation of the original version that was published in Dutch under the title *Kunst, macht en mecenaat* in 1987.

[51] Within Italy Kempers focuses especially on Siena, Florence, Rome, and Urbino. See for a more recent interpretation of the academization of art with the help of the concept of the sociological concept of *professionalization*, Sciulli 2007. However, Sciulli focuses mainly on the French Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture, rather than on the earlier Italian academies.

book, but these are placed in the larger process of professionalization of painting and painters. Kempers understands the emergence of the art academies as an expression of a professional ideal, partly based on antique literature.[52] Moreover, according to him, the term 'academy' was used as an indication of the theoretical study of art. The functions of academies consisted of maintaining a high level of craftsmanship, adducing historical examples and models to the practical training, and the dispersion of theoretical insights. In addition, Kempers holds that the emergence of the academies not only entailed the theorization of art but also the canonization certain great past masters and the institutionalization of the profession. This gave painters a more official recognition from the state than guilds did before.[53] Furthermore, he argues that the uplifting of social status of the artist was only possible because of external developments, such as the reorganization of state government, especially in Tuscany. Like Rossi, Kempers combines the Pevsnerian and the cultural-political tradition by discussing the foundation of the Accademia del Disegno both from the artists' and from the state's point of view.

The third and last interpretation of the early modern art academy that is based on social theoretical insights is Karen-Edis Barzman's *The Florentine Academy and the Early Modern State* from 2000. Barzman uses Michel Foucault's genealogical approach to describe how the Florentine academy evolved in its first 170 years, that is, until the end of Medici rule in Florence in 1737. The central theme in her book is the constitution of subjectivity through the mechanisms and techniques of power.[54] With the help of Foucault, Barzman comes to an alternative

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[52] In this context Kempers refers to the *ut pictura poesis* analogy and the *paragone* debate.
[53] Kempers 1992, 286-293.
[54] In general, Barzman takes over from Foucault his genealogical method, which consists of the analysis of the effects of power on the production of knowledge and the constitution of subjectivity. More in particular, she is inspired by three of Foucault's publications. The first is his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France in 1970 ('L'ordre du discours'), and she is specifically interested in the term 'fellowships of discourse' in this lecture. See Foucault 1981, 62-63. Second, this is Foucault's 'Two Lectures' from 1976, published in Foucault 1980. Finally, this is *Discipline and Punish* from 1975 (Foucault 1991a). To a lesser extent she makes use of Habermas' idea about the formation of a public space in the modern period. However, whereas both Foucault and Habermas let modernity begin in the eighteenth century in France, Germany or England, Barzman aims to show through her analysis of the Accademia del Disegno that this already started in the sixteenth (and seventeenth) century in Florence. This means that she borrows from Foucault (and Habermas) concepts, which were developed for understanding eighteenth-century culture and applies them to an earlier period. Whereas this is not forbidden in principle – it can even be fruitful and constructive if it enlarges the scope of a theoretical framework – it should, however, not be carried out without reflection, because it might lead to forms of anachronism. As argued below, this is precisely what happens when

interpretation of the foundation of the academy and the role of the artists in it: 'rather than reflecting subjective autonomy and self-determinating agency, the artists' participation in the founding of the academy may be seen as the disciplining effect of the subordination within relations of patronage on which they had come to depend.'[55] Thus, she holds that although superficially the initiative for the founding of the Accademia del Disegno, indeed, came from the artists, and Vasari in particular, on a more fundamental level, they were dependent, on and dominated by, the duke. Cosimo I was, therefore, the real active agent, even if he only waited for proposals to approve (or decline).

The concept of *disegno* played an instrumental role in this subjection. According to Barzman, it was through the 'discourse of *disegno*' – where 'discourse' is used in the Foucauldian sense that combines linguistic practices with power relations – that the different types of artists (painters, architects, and sculptors) were brought together in the same institution and that made them pledge their loyalty to the Medici family.[56] Barzman explains how the Medici's grip on the academy weakened in the course of the seventeenth century, as increasing numbers of amateurs and aristocrats joined the institution. Finally, she argues that at the beginning of the eighteenth century the academy had changed from an instrument of political control to a public forum where the modern subject, which had already started to emerge in the previous centuries, was completely developed, insofar as the academicians could freely discuss and negotiate the affairs of the state within its the walls.

In terms of the first methodological innovation Barzman clearly stands in the cultural-political tradition. Indeed, Barzman's publication contains the most explicit and ardent plea for such a cultural-political interpretation of the Florentine institute. In parenthesis, it should be noted that where Barzman emphasizes the power relations between the artists and the ruler only, Rossi also does this for the artisans in connection to the artists.

Barzman reduces the artistic, juridical, and religious functions of the institute to the cultural politics of the Medici family. See, for a similar point of criticism, Witte 2002.

[55] Barzman 2000, 16.

[56] Salvagni (2012, 145-146) adapts Barzman's interpretation of the Florentine academy to the Roman situation when she writes in her analysis of the Accademia di San Luca that the artists were placed under papal control and counter-reformatory dispositions through the 'discipline of disegno' (*disciplina del disegno*). See also Witcombe 2009.

1.3.3. The 'archival Turn'

The third and final methodological development discernable in the literature can be described as an 'archival turn'. Although all critical historiographical analyses of the first Italian art academies make use of, or at least refer to, archival documents pertaining to these institutions, before 2000 the Florentine and Roman archives were consulted unsystematically and only in order to confirm preconceived notions about the institutions.[57] Instead, previous scholars have tended to place more weight on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century published sources, in which the stories of the birth of the academies are told.[58] This is also the reason of the persistence of many preconceived notions. Interpretations especially relied heavily on Vasari's description of the foundation of the Accademia del Disegno in his 'Life of Montorsoli', and on Romano Alberti's early history of the Accademia di San Luca, *Origine e progresso dell'accademia del disegno di Roma* published in 1604.[59] It is, no doubt, because Vasari and Zuccari take on such important roles in these publications that these men have been understood as the founding fathers of these organizations in a large part of the literature, and especially in the Pevsnerian tradition.[60] Although somewhat biased – Zuccari is unmistakably the hero of the book – Alberti's narrative is the

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[57] See Barzman (2000, 215) for this criticism.

[58] Later publications used by twentieth-century scholars are Cavallucci 1873 and Ticciati 1876 for the Accademia del Disegno and Missirini 1823 for the Accademia di San Luca. However, lacking the standards of critical historiographical research and writing from within the walls of these institutions the authors of these nineteenth-century publications used only small parts of the archival documents for their narratives. Moreover, they are justly criticized for making errors in their interpretations.

[59] Vasari 1966-1987, V, 491-509 (with the part about the Accademia del Disegno on pages 506-509) and Alberti 1604/1961.

[60] Waźbiński (1987, I, 45-46) and Barzman (2000, 16) criticize Pevsner's interpretation of the Accademia del Disegno for almost exclusively using Vasari as source. However, they also claim that this was not entirely Pevsner's fault. Waźbiński holds that when Pevsner did his research in the 1930s a substantial part of the academy's archive had been lost. According to Waźbiński, it is very unfortunate that Cavallucci did not include an extensive discussion of archival documents in his study from 1873, because at that time a larger part of the sources was presumably present. On the other hand, according to Barzman, Pevsner's scant use of archival sources was due to the limited access to the archives in the 1930s. What is more, she also criticizes Waźbiński for his general neglect of the archival sources – especially those in which the expenditure related to artistic education was recorded. See Barzman 2000, 18). Contrary to Waźbiński and Barzman, Goldstein (1975b, 145) holds that Pevsner was able to go beyond the earlier publications on the Florentine academy precisely because of his discovery and use of archival sources, especially the first statutes, which he partly reprinted in the appendix of his book. Be that as it may, compared to the recent publications discussed below, Waźbiński and Barzman a correct in calling attention to Pevsner's meager use of archival material.

best account available of the early history of the Roman art academy, and the little independent evidence that exists corroborates his account.[61]

The motive behind the renewed attention for and appreciation of the archive should be sought in the desire to know what actually went on in these first academies. It is thought that the archive can balance the partial and biased sixteenth- and seventeenth-century published sources and, thus, correct the preconceptions about the art academy of modern scholars that are based on these sources. Archival documents can do this not because they are impartial or complete – in fact, they are neither – but because they often offer a different perspective and additional information that can throw new light on existing interpretations.

Archival research occupies a central position in four of the most recent publications. In the first place, Barzman monograph on the Accademia del Disegno should be mentioned again. More than the other authors, she has made systematic use of archival sources pertaining to the Florentine academy. She explicitly connects this methodological choice to her Foucauldian approach, which she characterizes as looking 'for evidence of power somewhere other than "at the level of conscious intention" or as "a phenomenon of one individual's consolidated and homogeneous domination over others"'. In Barzman's view, the evidence for this kind of power can be found in the archive because it helps to 'provide a picture of the operations and the *work* of the institution – "the continuous, uninterrupted processes" that subjected the bodies, governed the gestures, dictated the behaviours, and shaped the thought of those who moved within its walls'.[62] Barzman's book is unique in the extensive

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[61] In the first place, four of the dates on which academy meetings were held, according to Alberti, correspond to documents in the ASR and AASL. These dates are November 28 (Alberti 1604/1961, 6 and AASL, 42 82v) and December 13, 1593 (Alberti 1604/1961, 11 and ASR, TNC, uff. 11, 1593, pt. III, vol. 27, fols. 385r-v, 398r); and April 3 and May 1, 1594 (both Alberti 1604/1961, 66 and AASL 42, 84r). Furthermore, Alberti writes that the room in which the academy was held was renovated and decorated before Zuccari's inaugural speech on November 14, 1593 (Alberti 1604/1961, 2). Between June and November there are indeed several entries in the account book that recorded the expenses for work done on the academy room (AASL 42, 81r). Also the list of members and the names of the subsequent *principi* in the back of Alberti's book correspond with the names in the other sources. However, it is remarkable that Alberti's name does not turn up in the archival sources of the academy. Moreover, the statutes of 1607 mention that a book should be written about the beginnings of the 'modern academy', starting in 1592, so that the history and true beginnings of the academy is recorded for posterity and for the benefit of the studies. Subsequently, this should be done every ten years. AASL, Statuti 1607, 28r-v. This is remarkable, because Alberti had just published his history of the academy three years earlier, although this only covered the period 1593-1599.

[62] Barzman 2000, 215-216. Barzman's quotes are from Foucault 1991b, 97-98. Indeed, the archive plays an important role in Foucault's work, both in the literal sense of doing archival research and in the specific meaning he attaches to it in the *Archaeology of*

use of the archival material that dates from the whole period of the Medici reign over Florence.

A second publication based on thorough and systematic archival research is Piero Pacini's *Le sedi dell'Accademia del Disegno al 'Cestello' e alla 'Crocetta'* (2001). Like Barzman's study, this book also deals with the Accademia del Disegno in the first two centuries of its existence (1563-1784). Pacini focuses exclusively on the physical or material reconstruction of its two official headquarters in this period, a subject that had been largely neglected in previous publications. However, the first two methodological developments seem to have passed Pacini by unnoticed, as he focuses exclusively on the agency of the artists (instead of on that of the grand dukes) and makes no use of social theoretical insights.[63]

The third and fourth publications that are based on extensive and systematic archival research deal with the Roman Accademia di San Luca. Isabella Salvagni's *Da Universitas ad Academia: La corporazione dei pittori nella chiesa di San Luca a Roma (1478-1588)* from 2012 covers the prehistory of the academy.[64] That is to say, she discusses the institution's predecessor, the painter's guild and confraternity. Although Salvagni's account stops before the 'official' foundation of the Accademia di San Luca in 1593, the book is useful, precisely because it presents a picture of the institution's prehistory, and also because of its detailed and extensive use of archival sources, which is visible in the 150-page chronological description (in tables) of the documents. Moreover, as Pacini, Salvagni focuses on the material possessions and especially on the academy's first church, the San Luca on the Esquiline Hill, which was demolished by order of Pope Sixtus V in 1588. In terms of the first methodological distinction, Salvagni belongs to the cultural-politics tradition insofar as she emphasizes the role of the papacy in the transformation of the guild-based confraternity into the academy. However, like Pacini she does not employ any social theoretical concepts in her interpretation.

The fourth and final publication that is part of this archival turn is the fruit of a series of seminars organized by the Center for Advanced Studies in the Visual Arts in Washington and initiated by Peter Lukehart.

Knowledge, as systems of statements, events and things in a certain period. See Foucault 2002, 142-150.

[63] It is telling in this respect that in the historiographical overview in Pacini's book, both the Preface written by Detlef Heikamp and the Introduction written by the author, is limited to Italian publications, with the exception of Pevsner. See Heikamp 2001, v and Pacini 2001, 4. However, the 'essential bibliography' at the end of the book also contains some references to literature published in English.

[64] It should be noted that this is the first of two volumes about the Accademia di San Luca. The second volume, yet to appear, will cover the period from ca. 1590 until 1635.

Scholars from different national and disciplinary backgrounds participated in these seminars and contributed to *The Accademia Seminars: The Accademia di San Luca in Rome, c. 1590-1635* from 2009, which is the resulting volume of essays also edited by Lukehart. As the title suggests the essays cover the first five decades of the Roman Accademia di San Luca. The starting point of the seminars series was Lukehart's discovery (in 1998-1999) of a substantial number of previously unknown archival documents in the Archivio di Stato in Rome, concerning the early history of Accademia di San Luca.[65] The documents are notarial records from the *Trenta Notai Capitolini* ('thirty notaries of the Capitol') and, together with the documents in the archive of the Accademia di San Luca, they are the main sources of six of the twelve essays. Moreover, the Center for Advanced Studies in the Visual Arts has developed a website with scans and transcriptions of the notarial records in the Archivio di Stato in Rome. The archive of the Accademia di San Luca is also engaged in a digitalization process of their documents concerning its early history, which are consultable on their website.[66]

The *Accademia Seminars* contains important new information about the early history of the Roman art academy, and the database is an invaluable aid to the scholar. However, due to the different perspectives of the authors and because of the exclusively descriptive approach, the essays lack theoretical concepts that would enable the integration of the various contributions into a single and comprehensive interpretative framework.[67] Lukehart in his own contribution and Elizabeth Cohen in her epilogue to the volume, which is a summary of the other essays, both arrive at the conclusion that the activities of the Accademia di San Luca in its early years depended on the efforts and ideas of multiple men (artists, amateurs, and cardinals), who frequently disagreed and seem to have had different thoughts about what an art academy should be and do.[68]

Although justly correcting the earlier interpretations that were based on the 'great men models of history', this conclusion is somewhat superficial.[69] Why did these men have different thoughts about the Accademia di San Luca, and how were these thoughts shaped?

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[65] See Cropper 2009, vii.

[66] See the end of the Bibliography for the addresses of the websites of CASVA and the Accademia di San Luca.

[67] The same can be said of the volume of essays about European art academies from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, published twenty years earlier and edited by Anton Boschloo et. al. (1989).

[68] Lukehart 2009b, 185 and Cohen 2009, 327.

[69] The *great men model of history* is explicitly mentioned and rejected by Cohen in her essay (329-330).

Furthermore, although Cohen and Lukehart justly recognize the functions that the nascent academy fulfilled, it remains unclear how these functions can be understood in relation to each other. How were artistic education, religious activities, and political allegiances connected to each other in the Roman academy?

1.4. From Pevsner to practice

In this dissertation an attempt is made to answer such questions with the help of a practice theoretical approach. The following chapter explains in general what this approach consists of and how it is related to the methodological developments in the literature about the academization of art in Florence and Rome. In preparation to the discussion of these issues and in conclusion to this chapter, three things should be emphasized. In the first place, practice theorists would underwrite the thesis that the archive is a crucial – albeit not the only – place to find out what actually went on the academies and to reconstruct the everyday practices. Therefore, by applying a practice approach this dissertation partakes in the archival turn.

Second, practice theories are a type of social theory or social ontology. They express the view that not only in sociological research but also in cultural and art historiography scholars should work with an explicit social theoretical framework. The reason for this is that scholars, who do not use an explicit social theoretical framework, employ implicit conceptions of culture, subjectivity and meaning, which are possibly anachronistic and/or inconsistent with each other. In addition, making presuppositions explicit is what – or at least one of the things that – differentiates scholarly and scientific research from storytelling. [70] Therefore, this dissertation also partakes in the second methodological development discussed. Finally, like the authors in the cultural-politics tradition, practice theories reject modernist conceptions of subjectivity and culture. However, this does not mean that practice theorists agree on the role that the political dimension and power relations should play in analyses of culture and society. In the following two chapters these issues are addressed in more detail.

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[70] See Hatt/Klonk 2006, 1, for a similar argument about the importance of explicating methodological presuppositions, and about the need for a theoretical and methodological framework for art historical interpretations. The only difference with the argument put forward in this dissertation is that they do specify this framework as necessarily based on *social* theory.