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The Art of Leonardo and Michelangelo

Fabio Tononi

The eighth issue of *The Edgar Wind Journal* focuses on the art of Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo Buonarroti and Edgar Wind's interpretation of their works. Wind devoted several studies to the two Renaissance artists, some published and other still unpublished.¹ In this issue, Bernardino Branca analyses Wind's Leonardo Papers, Pablo Schneider reflects on Wind's investigation of Michelangelo's pictorial language, and Ang Li offers a new perspective on the display modalities of Michelangelo's *Pietà* and *Bruges Madonna*.

In his article, entitled 'Edgar Wind's Leonardo Papers', Branca reconstructs Wind's vision of Leonardo da Vinci's works by taking into consideration his lecture notes and publications. Branca also focuses on the slides that Wind selected for his lectures and that represent Leonardo's drawings and paintings. According to Wind, Branca observes, Leonardo's works embody the metaphysical ideas of the time. As Branca points out, Wind, in his studies of Leonardo, is indebted to the methodological and theoretical approach of Aby Warburg, of whom he was a research assistant in Hamburg. This is evidenced by the fact that, as is typical of Warburg's approach, Wind identified Leonardo's *Last Supper* as an allegorical work in which opposing forces, rational and irrational (e.g. 'Logos' and 'Magic'), coexist. In this discourse, Warburg's notion of the 'Afterlife of Antiquity' is critical. According to Branca, Wind's studies of individual artists have a specific objective: 'the understanding of the spiritual world of the Renaissance'.

In his study, entitled 'The Pictorial Language of Michelangelo: An Investigation by Edgar Wind', Schneider analyses Wind's manuscript for *Die Bildsprache Michelangelos* (*The pictorial language of Michelangelo*). As Schneider argues, in this work, Wind proposed a new

¹ For Wind's studies on Leonardo see, for example, Edgar Wind, 'An Eighteenth-Century Improvisation in a Leonardo Drawing', in *Old Master Drawings*, 13: 52 (1939), 49-50; Wind, 'The Lion Filled with Lilies: A Reminiscence of Leonardo in Hogarth', in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 6 (1943), 222-3. In 1952, Wind delivered three talks on Leonardo for the BBC, London: Wind, 'Mathematics and Sensibility', in *The Listener*, 47 (1 May 1952), 705-6; Wind, 'The Last Supper', in *The Listener*, 47 (8 May 1952), 747-8; and Wind, 'Leonardo as a Physiognomist', in *The Listener*, 47 (15 May 1952), 787-8. For Wind's studies on Michelangelo see, for example, Wind, 'The Crucifixion of Haman [by Michelangelo]', in *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, 1 (1938), 245-8; Wind, 'Sante Pagnini and Michelangelo: A Study of the Succession of Savonarola', *Mélanges Henri Focillon*, in *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 6: 26 (1947), 211-46; Wind, 'The Ark of Noah: A Study in the Symbolism of Michelangelo', in *Measure*, 1 (1950), 411-21; Wind, 'Michelangelo's Prophets and Sibyls' (1965), in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 51 (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 47-84; Wind, *The Religious Symbolism of Michelangelo: The Sistine Ceiling*, ed. by Elizabeth Sears, with essays by John O'Malley and Elizabeth Sears (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); and Wind, *Die Bildsprache Michelangelos* (1936), ed. by Pablo Schneider (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017). See also Jaynie Anderson, Bernardino Branca, and Fabio Tononi (eds), *Edgar Wind: Art and Embodiment* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2024).

interpretation of the Sistine Chapel vault that goes beyond mere visual identification to describe the relationship between contemplation and meaning. Schneider also discusses the reasons for Wind's 'holy fear' while working on this manuscript.

From a different perspective, in an article titled 'Meaning and Function of Viewpoints in Michelangelo's Rome *Pietà* and the *Bruges Madonna*', Li examines the viewing angles of two sculptures by Michelangelo, the Rome *Pietà* and the *Bruges Madonna*. Drawing on evidence such as prints and photographs, Li argues that the two sculptures by Michelangelo were made with the intention of inviting the viewer to walk around them, thus observing them from different points of view. This way of displaying sculptures (so as to see them in 360°), Li argues, would reveal different but interconnected thematic dimensions of Christian iconography. These two examples help Li suggest a broader point, namely that Italian Renaissance artworks were often placed to be observed from a variety of viewpoints, rather than from a fixed angle, as determined by Leon Battista Alberti's linear perspective.

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