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Memories of Edgar Wind¹

Jaynie Anderson

Abstract

This essay was written to introduce the book launch of a volume of essays on an exceptional art historian of the twentieth century. The launch was unusual in that the two intellectuals who launched the book, one a classicist and the other a cultural historian, are both blessed with longevity and remembered encounters with Wind when they were undergraduates in the sixties that inspired them for the rest of their lives.

Keywords

Art Historiography; Renaissance Art History; Embodiment; Renaissance Philosophy

Edgar Wind: Art and Embodiment, published by Peter Lang in January 2024, is a collection of essays about a German Jewish refugee of exceptional brilliance and his intellectual life between Germany, the United States and England before, during and after the Second World War. Everyone here is a special guest. Some who knew Wind (among others, Nigel Wilson and James Reed), some studied with him (such as Peter Burke and Caroline Elam), some succeeded him as the Oxford chair of art history (Geoffrey Batchen, Craig Clunas and Martin Kemp), others attended his lectures, and many have read his books and been inspired by them, including the scholars whose essays appear in our volume (Bernard Buschendorf, Franz Engel, Oliver O'Donnell, Ianick Takaes de Oliveira, Pablo Schneider, Elisabeth Sears, Giovanna Targia and Tullio Viola). Many have helped in the production of this book, most notably the Keeper of Manuscripts in the Bodleian, Dr Martin Kauffmann, and his colleagues. The Wind Archive is central to the book and the research questions it provokes. My co-editors, Bernardino Branca and Fabio Taroni, have created the *Edgar Wind Journal*, and despite the naysayers, it is now in its fourth year, about to be enshrined in JSTOR – a promise of longevity and proof of success. Edgar Wind's unique contribution to art history, which was one of the reasons why he was elected to the first Oxford chair in the subject, may be summarized in his own words:

¹ This text is an expanded version of my introduction to the launch of *Edgar Wind: Art and Embodiment*.

For some twenty years my chief interest has been to explore the boundaries between the histories of art and of philosophy. My aim has been to demonstrate that in the production of some of the greatest works of art the intellect has not thwarted but aided the imagination; and I have tried to develop a method of interpreting pictures which shows how ideas are translated into images, and images sustained by ideas.²

May I begin with my memory of meeting Edgar Wind for the first and only time, when he examined me for my Rhodes Fellowship in 1969? I was the first woman appointed to a Rhodes Fellowship before women were allowed to be called Rhodes Scholars. I had read as an undergraduate in Melbourne *Bellini's Feast of the Gods*, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*, and *Art and Anarchy* and many of his articles. I was thrilled to meet the author. Patrick Matthiessen informed me that students at the Courtauld Institute in London were forbidden to access Wind's books. The volumes were even kept in a locked cupboard, only sometimes made available to final-year students, according to Caroline Elam. Others remember that Sir Ernst Gombrich refused to have Wind's books in the reference section on the ground floor of the Warburg Institute. I realise now that having read all of Wind's books as an undergraduate and without prejudice made me an unusual postgraduate student in England, different from anyone from the Courtauld.

With my application to St Hugh's (where I had been invited to apply), I had submitted the proofs of an article published in the *Art Bulletin* on Agostino Carracci's fresco cycle for the Palazzo del Giardino, Parma.³ It has never been well known as the palace is the headquarters of the police force (*Comando Provinciale dei carabinieri*) in Emilia Romagna and has always been complex to access. Wind had never heard about it. Our discussion ranged from the Carracci to Giorgione to Giovanni Morelli. It was a thrilling two hours, the most intelligent examination I ever had. I met Margaret Wind for the first time as she prepared an exquisite Boston tea, briefly appearing at the end of the exam and then disappearing.

Neither Edgar nor Margaret liked being photographed. We reproduce all of the few images of Edgar that Margaret kept. Like most archives, this one is carefully curated. (That is a good thing as you do not want to have every airline ticket.) This photograph by Michael Dudley, the Ashmolean photographer, with whom Edgar worked closely, shows him in his library as I remember him looking when we met (Fig. 1). The letter from him that I received afterwards was enclosed in a copy of the *Pagan Mysteries* (Fig. 2).

At our meeting, Wind took down individual volumes, and we looked at black and white photographs in high resolution and prints by Marcantonio Raimondi. We talked about how you could discuss art in relation to what contemporaries in the Renaissance said about it. This made Edgar Wind's writing very original, and his failure to repeat the clichés

² Edgar Wind to Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 15 April 1952, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Edgar Wind Archive, MS. Wind 216, folder 1.

³ Jaynie Anderson, "The "Sala di Agostino Carracci" in the Palazzo del Giardino", *Art Bulletin*, 52 (1970), pp. 41–8.

of earlier scholarship could annoy his contemporaries. This focus on primary sources has remained with me forever. Whenever I begin a subject, whether the topic relates to Italian or Australian art, I begin by examining just primary sources. Then I try interpretations of my own before looking at later publications. Inevitably this results in something original. In supervision, I encourage my students to do the same.

I knew quite a lot about Edgar that is not in the archive as my late husband Richard Pau was a fellow in Trinity and knew him quite well – here is a photograph of me and our daughter Alicia at her christening in Trinity College in 1975 (Fig. 3). She is here this evening. Of all the institutions where Edgar Wind was employed, he was happiest here. There were quarrels in Chicago and elsewhere, described by Ben Thomas and Betsy Sears in their essays, and notably disagreements about who was the successor to Warburg. Oswyn Murray's contribution to the volume reveals Edgar's role in transferring the library from Hamburg to London, which has often been contested. At Trinity, Edgar Wind enjoyed the collegiality of fellows and held memorable soirees at his home at 27 Belsyre Court in North Oxford.

All the authors who contributed to the volume have looked at parts of the archive, and this has resulted in a new view of Edgar. The only image of Margaret and Edgar together is from the time they met in America (Fig. 4). Margaret kept it as the most telling image of their relationship. There are no images of their wedding in 1942 or any of the happy snaps that are found in most archives. But theirs was a remarkable relationship that endured beyond death. After Wind died, Margaret compiled the archive during the last thirty years of her life. They must have begun it together, but she developed it and consulted widely, especially with the Getty Research Institute, which began collecting art historians' papers and restorers' archives in Kurt Foster's time. I had been invited by the Provenance Index of the Getty Museum to write an introduction to Otto Mündler's travel diary⁴ and had seen the beginnings of this remarkable resource, which included not only art historians' papers but also those that belonged to restorers, architects and collectors. I told Margaret about it when I returned to Oxford, and she consulted the archivists at the Getty but resisted the temptation to give the archive to Los Angeles, preferring Oxford.

Does it matter whether we know about art historians' lives? In the past, the question has been asked about artists. Until about five years ago, Giorgione did not have a biography. We now have new details from Venetian archives and even Sydney, which enrich our knowledge of the painter.⁵ Some people might have preferred Giorgione to have remained mysterious, but the knowledge of his dramatic life will change our view of him permanently. Interestingly, scholars are initially quite resistant to archival novelties, and it takes a long time to change conventional narratives.

⁴ Jaynie Anderson, 'Otto Mündler and his Travel Diary', in 'The Travel Diaries of Otto Mündler 1855–1858', ed. C. Dowd and B. Fredericksen, *Walpole Society*, 51 (1985), pp. 7–64.

⁵ Jaynie Anderson, Kim Wilson, Nerida Newbigin and Julie Sommerfeldt, 'Giorgione in Sydney', *The Burlington Magazine*, 161.1392 (2019), pp. 190–99.

Edgar Wind's biography reveals much about why he wrote. Let us take just one example. The books that I edited in the 1980s, *The Eloquence of Symbols* and *Hume and the Heroic Portrait*, contained essays written at the time of the transfer of the Warburg to London. They propose a philosophical interpretation of eighteenth-century British art and Italian Renaissance painting. For two years Edgar edited the *Journal of the Warburg Institute* with Rudolph Wittkower, and the first two years of the journal were remarkable in the intensity of their ambitions and the quality of the articles.

The archive has already inspired two recent books on Edgar Wind: Bernardino Branca's *Edgar Wind: Filosofo delle Immagini, La Biografia intellettuale di un discepolo di Aby Warburg* (2019), a biography that reveals why and how Wind became a philosopher and art historian, and Ben Thomas's *Edgar Wind and Modern Art: In Defence of Marginal Anarchy* (2020), which details the importance of Wind's contribution to understanding contemporary art. Our book is the third, and there will be many more to come.

The book will be launched by two scholars who attended Wind's lectures when they were undergraduates and, intellectually, were indelibly marked by the experience: Professor Emeritus Peter Burke, Life Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and Dr Oswyn Murray, Emeritus Fellow of Balliol College, Oxford. After they have spoken, Bernardino Branca and Fabio Tononi will chair a Q and A session.

Peter Burke is a cultural historian with long-standing interdisciplinary interests that have led, among many other things, to six books on the history of knowledge. Studying the Renaissance at Oxford (including attending Wind's lectures and seminars) led him to art history. Peter is currently writing a book on the history of connoisseurship that combines the history of knowledge with art history by focusing on the 'eye'. It will be published by Reaktion.

Oswyn Murray is a distinguished classical scholar and a historian of ancient Greece; he is an Honorary Member of the Scuola Normale Superiore of Pisa. As an undergraduate, he heard Edgar Wind lecture and was inspired to devote himself to cultural history and the history of the classical tradition. He was a Senior Research Fellow of the Warburg Institute from 1967 to 1968, which gave him special insight into the Warburg. Oswyn is a founder of the discipline of sympotic studies in art and literature, to which end he published *The Symposium: Drinking Greek Style, Essays on Greek Pleasure* (Oxford 2018). His next book, a polemical history of scholarship, *The Muse of History: the Ancient Greeks from the Enlightenment to the Twentieth Century* (Allen Lane and Harvard University Press, 2024), will be launched in Oxford next month. There are already three foreign editions in preparation. Both scholars are remarkable for many reasons, not the least being how they interpreted the methodologies of Edgar Wind.

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Figure 1. Edgar Wind in his flat at 27 Belsyre Court, Oxford, 1970. Photograph by Michael Dudley. Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, courtesy of Jonathon Dudley.

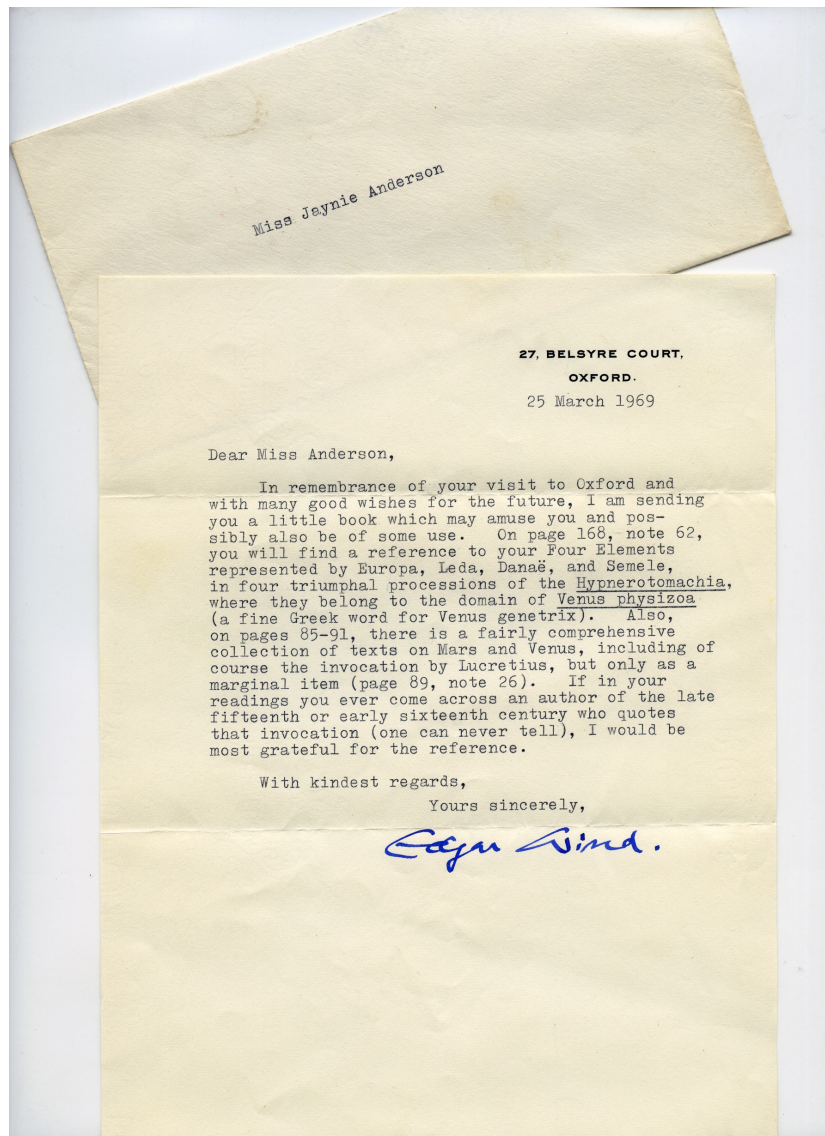


Figure 2. Letter from Edgar Wind to Jaynie Anderson, 25 March 1969. Archive of Jaynie Anderson, Melbourne.



Figure 3. Jaynie Anderson and her daughter Alicia Pau at the child's christening at Trinity College, Oxford, 1975.



Figure 4. Margaret and Edgar Wind playing the piano at Smith College, Northampton, 1948. Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.