



Impossible Gaze #1
Origin: Room L – The Carrand Room
Museo Nazionale del Bargello

The exhibition *Impossible Gaze* was created as a visual response to some of the theoretical issues underpinning the contemporary viewing experience in historic museums. This work concentrates on the individual's experience and the senses that come into play in the museum environment. It considers how art's architectural and historic contexts combine to elicit inarticulate, liminal, sensorial, physical, or emotional responses and acknowledges that museum viewing is formed at the intersection of cultures, histories, the past, the present, and the subjectivity of the viewer's own gaze.

The images of *Impossible Gaze* were photographed in the grand galleries of Palazzo Pitti, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, and the Galleria degli Uffizi, in Florence. These historic buildings, having undergone four centuries of reconstructions, renovations, and re-decorations, are presently used as public museums. Through the images created for this exhibition, I propose that these spaces and their decoration are as significant in the creation of the viewer's experience as the great artworks they hold. My images strive to evoke the phenomenon of these extraordinary places: the opulent galleries, sumptuous textures, ambient lighting, and cramped spaces of these once private places.

Seizing on fragments of artworks and objects layered with wall, floor and ceiling decoration, this exhibition shifts the viewer's focus to the spaces in-between the historic artworks. In this body of images the in-between becomes the centerpiece.



Impossible Gaze #3
Origin: Room XII – The Red Room
Appartamento del Re Appartamenti Reali
Palazzo Pitti

Norman Bryson describes the much theorized activity of the gaze and the glance: “vision is portrayed under two aspects: one vigilant, masterful, ‘spiritual,’ and the other subversive, random, disorderly.”¹ The gaze is an intelligible engagement and a contemplative state. It is the focus of attention, like the focus of a camera lens on its subject. The glance, however, is the more whimsical attribute of sight, rapidly consuming the veneer of a multitude of objects without engaging in analysis or reflection. In these photographs the roles of the gaze and the glance are effectively reversed. In the museum the glance’s continuous movement maps objects and architecture, but is also subordinated by space as the viewer moves through it. The gaze, in contrast, consciously punctuates this movement.

By focussing on the more ephemeral and ambulatory aspects of the glance in the museum, I have immobilized it for a new viewer’s gaze. The intuitive and idiosyncratic experience of museum viewing is made up of incessant ocular movement over walls and objects, through rooms, and between artworks. *Impossible Gaze* expresses Bryson’s observation that the path of the glance “is irregular, unpredictable, and intermittent.”² Here the images play with photography’s insistence on mimicking physiological vision, employing the camera’s viewfinder to intimate the viewer’s line of sight as they move through the corridors of the museum and capturing an image that traces precisely what lies in the path of their glance.

1. Norman Bryson, “The Gaze and the Glance” (*Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze*, London: Macmillan, 1983), 93.

2. *Ibid.*, 121.



Impossible Gaze #10
Origin: Room XII – The Red Room
Appartamento del Re, Appartamenti Reali
Palazzo Pitti

Impossible Gaze follows the direction and movement of the viewer's eyes as they traverse the museum and visually represents the two types of vision that the eye uses to process information: foveal and peripheral. Margaret Livingstone suggests that "foveal, or direct, vision is excellent at picking up detail but is less suited to picking up shadows." ¹ This not only affects how art is viewed but also how the viewer negotiates the layout of the museum, as they are instantly drawn to the paintings that appear brighter. Peripheral vision however, as James Elkins describes, is what happens at "the blurriest margins of the field of vision." ² Objects seen "peripherally are not just blurry but also differently proportioned. They are distorted and hallucinatory, and they need motion in order to exist." ³ Whilst perceiving objects in motion, vision occurs in a stream of continuity, constantly pulled between proximity and distance, and oscillating through the gaze and the glance. This idea of motion in museums is important as it intimates the different activities of vision, as well as expresses the ephemerality of viewing. Bryson suggests the transient, and often sideways, mobile demands of the glance are opposed to the duration of an immobilized gaze, which generally occurs straight ahead, "prolonged," and "contemplative." ⁴

Ross Harley refers to the idea of visual perception while moving as a "motion landscape." Harley describes this "mobilized vision" as a "multi-sensorial experience," where the effects of looking while moving involve "the body in panoramic perception." ⁵ This engagement of the senses enables the viewer not only to navigate the museum but also to viscerally experience the space they inhabit. For example, a viewer may feel the cold smoothness of the stone floor and sense the weight of the timber beneath the gilded frames and the softness of the velvet upholstery. They may smell and taste the mixture of scents in the age-laden air, and hear the murmuring of other viewers and their shuffling feet.



Impossible Gaze #12
Origin: Room 26 – Sala di Marte [Mars Room]
Galleria Palatina
Palazzo Pitti

Constricted by the confined spaces or guided pathways, the viewer is often forced to look at artworks from obscure angles with tilted heads and craning necks. These photographs intimately express the dynamics of vision with its vertiginous and disorienting optical illusions. Through the use of acute camera angles and close-ups that are intended to impress the proximity of the object to the viewer, these photographs assimilate looking in this environment and dislocate the frontal viewpoint generally associated with viewing art.

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Impossible Gaze #4

Origin: Room 5-6 – International Gothic
Detail: Lorenzo Monaco , *Coronation of the Virgin* , 1414
Galleria degli Uffizi

Alongside this angle-of-view, the image size, grain structure, method of display, and, most significantly, the exposure times of each photograph are integral to the exhibition's construction. The large size (39 x 47 in) and color saturation allow the finest details of each photographed subject, the irregularities of each brushstroke, chisel trail, embroidered stitch, and stain to be uncompromisingly and clearly seen. They express Walter Benjamin's concept of the optical unconscious:

the enlargement of a snapshot does not simply render more precise what in any case was visible, though unclear: it reveals entirely new structural formations of the subject...

Evidently a different nature opens itself to the camera than opens to the naked eye – if only because an unconsciously penetrated space is substituted for a space consciously explored by man. ¹

Impossible Gaze revels in this photographic trait. The ability to freeze time and produce a static image enables an uninhibited, slow examination. The photographs arrest the otherwise elusive details of an ephemeral experience, suspending a fragment and enlarging it for a new viewer to explore the intricate details that could not have been absorbed during the original encounter.

The exposure times for each of the images in *Impossible Gaze* are excessively long, as demanded by the low, ambient lighting of the museum. In this work, five or six minutes are required to render the detail to film. This slowness deliberately disrupts the desire for “photographic instantaneity” as it refuses the speed encouraged by technology. ² The extended time that passes in front of my lens’s open shutter signifies the time required to actually “see” the contextual details of these museum environments.

These photographs, in essence, reproduce an “impossible gaze” not only because of each long exposure, but also by virtue of the ever-flowing tide of museum visitors obstructing the viewer’s field of vision and making concentration for any duration practically impossible. Constantly confronted by battalions of tour groups jostling through the historic architecture, there is little choice but to shuffle along with fellow cultural devotees, peering over a sea of heads in search of universal icons. The pace of expeditious cultural pilgrimages, set by the flag-bearing tour guides, is militant. This ever-increasing tendency to move quickly through museums is endemic. Thoroughly conditioned to the flickering of images and messages across screens and billboards, viewing regimes have become fractured, superficial and diversely juxtaposed in an attempt to digest the vast quantity of visual information that inhabits our world.

Mediated by the milling crowds, the viewer’s gaze is rarely focused on one thing, as it is constantly interrupted by activity. The museum experience is a social spectacle, swarming with people engaged in the activity of viewing, albeit in varying degrees. It is paradoxically both a collective encounter and a solitary one, one of curiosity, confusion, and contemplation that simultaneously elicits a sense of lightness, rejuvenation, exhaustion, and loss.

1. Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations* , Hannah Arendt, ed., Harry Zohn trans. (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 236.
2. Paul Virilio, *Vision Machine* (London: B. F. I. Pub, 1994), 2.

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Impossible Gaze #14
Origin: Room II – Sala del Trono [Throne Room]
Appartamenti Reali
Palazzo Pitti

Each time *Impossible Gaze* is exhibited the interiors of Italian palazzi are dislocated from their original mooring and reinserted in another time and architecture. While not reconstituting the original experience, these photographs archaeologize the artworks and architecture of the museum to remake it with new emphasis. Using photography, history is reconstructed from the numerous images recorded by my camera lens. No longer able to move within the architecture of the original museum, the viewer is now confined by the edge of the photographs. Engaged in a “monocular vision,” their eyes can only move across the photographic surface, unable to penetrate the three-dimensional space depicted. ¹

Impossible Gaze has been exhibited in Italy at the Monash University Centre, Prato (2004-5); in Australia at the Western Australian Museum, Perth, (2003); the University of the Sunshine Coast Gallery, Maroochydore (2003); and the UTS Gallery, University of Technology, Sydney (2002). Each of these gallery spaces encouraged viewers to experience and consider not only the images but also the architectural context in which they are shown and how that might contribute to the experience of the work itself. Whether displayed in purpose-built pristine galleries or refurbished old buildings, these images of historic museum interiors not only play on the relation between the old and new materiality of the objects they picture and the environment in which they are located, but also create a strange weave of time and space – the past in the present, the distance of Italy’s museums, and their history and presence enlivened far from her shores.

The photographs' considerable size in the three-dimensional space of each of the galleries where they are hung encourages viewers to physically move back and forth, between a distance that allows them to see the image at a glance and close proximity, where they can study the details. The viewer's to-and-fro movement is dynamic as they move amongst the images and actively negotiate the gallery space.

The fragile skin of the ultra-glossy photographic paper used in *Impossible Gaze* emulates the delicate surfaces of the objects pictured. They are mounted on the gallery wall to create a flatness often like the decoration they portray. It seems irreverent to frame images that reflexively comment on the spectacular gilded frames of the past. Their detailed titles are another mechanism for interweaving the present exhibition space with the original historic locations. Each photograph pays tribute to the original artists and the date of their works and thus also maps the time and place in which the works exist today.

1. Victor Burgin, "Looking at Photographs," in *Thinking Photography* (London: The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1982), 152.

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Impossible Gaze #11

Origin: Room 26 – Raffaello and Andrea del Sarto

Detail: Raffaello, *Self-portrait*, 1506

Galleria degli Uffizi

This work is situated within an international tradition of contemporary artists who photograph within cultural institutions. Sophie Calle, Louise Lawler, Karen Knorr, Candida Höfer, and Thomas Struth have all produced significant bodies of artwork that scrutinize cultural institutions and draw on the framework of the museum as a source for both critical analysis and inspiration.

Calle, Lawler, and Knorr have each expressed similar interests to my own. Calle's subjectivity of viewing and memory, Lawler's images signifying the contextual frame, and Knorr's advocacy for slower viewing are all elements with which *Impossible Gaze* strongly identifies. These artists are, as am I, stirred by the parallels and incongruities to be found in the framework of the museum, often layering the art with museological devices and questioning the function of art in museums and galleries.

The images by Höfer and Struth are particularly pertinent to my inquiry. These photographers graduated from the renowned Becher school at the Düsseldorf academy in the 1970s, and both create formal, balanced, wide-angle views of architectural and institutional interiors in the Becher tradition. Höfer's photographed spaces, intended to accommodate large numbers of people, remain empty and dormant, whilst the *Museum* series by Struth departs from this tradition by embracing the museum audience. Even though their subject matter is at times similar to my own, my photographs remain intrinsically different. *Impossible Gaze* embraces the museum interior and describes it with acute attention to the minute details. Whereas Höfer and Struth's images are precise and ordered, mine are intimate and opulent, expressed as much through their intense color and size as their sumptuous content. Furthermore, *Impossible Gaze* is animated through the dizzying camera angles that are a significant departure from their formalist approach.



Impossible Gaze #18
Origin: Room XVI – Tapestry Room
Appartamenti Reali
Palazzo Pitti

Struth's work reveals a visual sensitivity that I also hope to reflect. Struth retains the alleged neutrality of the Becher school through his consummate use of photography, rendering his subjects as highly aesthetic artworks, beautifully rich in texture, color, and composition. His stunning, enormous color photographs show museum displays of monumental paintings overlaid with a diverse group of viewers. In the *Museum* series, his photographs are undeniably concerned with the presence of the audience, their engagement, and attitude in relation to the artworks.

Although Struth photographs in museums around the world, it is his work in Italian museums that is of fundamental interest to me as these pieces raise questions about not only the notion of viewers and viewing, but also the architectural contexts and social conditions of such distinctive museums. The images in *Impossible Gaze*, however, depart from the social contexts of Struth's audience to focus on the physicality of the Italian museums themselves. This exhibition emphasizes the historic spaces that surround both artworks and viewers, revelling in the "pastness" that is infused in the very stones of the architecture. These places, once privately inhabited by historic figures of Renaissance times, invoke the transient and poetic qualities of Benjamin's aura, that "strange weave of space and time: the unique appearance or semblance of distance, no matter how close the object may be."¹ Steeped in such illustrious history, the auras of the museum collections are constructed by these extraordinary locations.

1. Benjamin, 250.



Impossible Gaze #17

Origin: Room 27 – Sala di Apollo [Apollo Room]
Galleria Palatina
Palazzo Pitti

Significantly, Calle, Knorr, Höfer, and Struth share a post-war European background and are producing work from inside a landscape of European education and cultural establishments. This, I would suggest, reflects a particular sensibility in their art, one that expresses an intimate familiarity with the museums and history of Europe. However, my visuality and perception as a post-colonial artist geographically removed from the cultural centers of Europe, where the very idea of the museum is constantly undergoing scrutiny and restructure, places my work apart. Working outside a European tradition grants me an opportunity to re-interpret historic European culture and portray it with a pervading sense of wonder and curiosity. My images filled with veneration—their photographic framing and angle of view—brand me as an outsider; they are a sign of my own identity, representing my vision as different from those who have been exposed to this architecture for a lifetime.



Impossible Gaze #7
Origin: Room II – Sala del Trono [Throne Room]
Appartamenti Reali
Palazzo Pitti

The presence of the past is tangible in the hallways of what were once municipal buildings and private palaces. The visitor is surrounded in these rooms, with no cornerstone left unadorned, every inch of wall, floor, and ceiling space crammed with decoration – so different from the austerity characterized by post-modern tastes. Curved and triangular pediments cover the doorways, windows, niches, and console tables interrupt the composition of frescoes, while the vaulted ceilings and architectural elements are barely distinguishable from their *trompe l'œil* replications. The devotional paintings and portraits with recurring *putti* and flowing robes are in deep gilded frames, surrounded by marble fireplaces and sumptuous tapestries. Heavy drapes once used to retain warmth now serve as a reminder of former daily habitation. Decorative floral swags, acanthus leaves and shells echo the furniture legs, chair backs and armrests, while the heavy drapes once hung to conserve warmth now serve as a reminder of former daily habitation. No longer animated by use, the gilded chairs are covered with polyurethane. Amongst the grandeur, patches of near threadbare wall coverings and frescoes with areas of water damage and lost pigment explicitly communicate the abrading effects of time.

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Impossible Gaze #9
Origin: Room L – The Carrand Room
Museo Nazionale del Bargello

This historic architecture with its opulent interiors appears incongruous with recent refurbishment and modern service demands. For example, the contemporary aesthetics of stainless steel and glass designs utilized in the museum cafés are now also part of the visitors' experience, a homogenising décor of current global styles that leaves the viewer in strangely familiar surroundings. This blended architecture provides the backdrop for the residing collections. Here historic artworks are continuously interwoven with the preceding and succeeding styles of furniture, furnishings and ornamentation, reaffirming that each period is not a break with the past nor a single entity, but part of a continuum that is embodied by its surroundings. The changes from one artist to another, and one period to the next mark the social and artistic continuity of inseparable pasts that reflect the discernment of successive generations of art collectors.

Presented amongst the Baroque decoration of the Palazzo Pitti, its Galleria Palantina and Royal Apartments, each artwork and object is afforded no separate space for contemplation, but is immersed in the interior decoration. *Impossible Gaze* depicts the palazzo's interiors that are richly layered with textures and patterns on every surface from the elaborate wall-coverings, carpets, and curtains, to the frescoed ceilings. This visually overwhelming environment is an extension of the medieval aesthetic *horror vacui*. *Horror vacui*, the "fear of empty spaces," as Ernst Gombrich describes, is the "urge which drives the decorator to go on filling any resultant void." A particular aesthetic style, *horror vacui* leaves no architectural space free of design, decoration or ornament. In Palazzo Pitti the painted grotesques of earlier periods are accompanied by Renaissance tapestries, Baroque silk wall coverings, and Mannerist paintings in Palazzo Pitti. In these rooms mirrors are skillfully placed to reflect endless repetitions of symbolic, religious, and allegorical motifs. Gombrich adds that with "this method of successive enrichment or elaboration... Maybe the term *amor infiniti*, the love of the infinite, would be a more fitting description." ¹ In discussing this desire for "richness and splendour" Gombrich remarks,

that inner worth should be acknowledged by an appropriate display of outward show. Not only the splendours of kings and princes, but also the power of the sacred has been universally proclaimed by pomp and circumstance...there can never be too much of love and sacrifice expended on respect and veneration...[here] decoration is seen as a form of celebration...²

1. E.H. Gombrich, *The Sense of Order: A study in the Psychology of Decorative Art* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979), 80.

2. *Ibid.*, 17.



Impossible Gaze #2
Origin: Room II – Sala del Trono [Throne Room]
Appartamenti Reali
Palazzo Pitti

These elaborate rooms are now also punctuated by contemporary lighting, museum signage indicating visitors' routes, and emergency exits. The humidity and temperature monitors and laser-beam security guard against visitors, keeping their curiosity, lumbering bags, and body heat at a safe distance from the artworks and furnishings. Even the velvet curtains are protected by silk netting, while the burgundy silk cords foil any desire to caress the luxurious surfaces. The sensuous images in *Impossible Gaze* rekindle this palpability, yet offer no tactile gratification. Although the viewer cannot touch the objects in the photographs, they can, as Vivian Sobchack proposes, feel their "texture and weight."¹

In a strange act of doubling, *Impossible Gaze* creates another intense visual experience as it concentrates on the sensorial act of viewing. This work constructs much more than the communion between the viewer's eye and the singular artwork by alluding to the other senses that come into play in this environment of historic museums. Ironically, Jean Baudrillard suggests that "to make an image of an object is to strip the object of all its dimensions one by one: weight, relief, smell, depth, time, continuity and, of course, meaning."² Yet these are the very qualities these photographs call upon. They are "haptic" images in that, as Laura Marks explains, they "engage the viewer tactilely."³ In *The Skin of the Film* Marks elaborates on the difference between optical and haptic vision.

Haptic looking tends to move over the surface of its object rather than to plunge into illusionistic depth, not to distinguish form so much as to discern texture. It is more inclined to move than to focus, more inclined to graze than to gaze... While optical perception privileges the representational power of the image, haptic perception privileges the material presence of the image.⁴

This materiality is brought to the fore in *Impossible Gaze* as the camera lens dwells on the delicate textures belonging to history and re-presents them in the fragile form of photographic paper. Importantly, as Marks notes, depending on the viewer's "own sensoria," experiences in museums, and by extension in my exhibition, will be different.⁵ The encounter is transformed for each individual visitor as the art viewed is imbued with the sum total of experience and encumbered by myriad eccentricities that govern audience engagement and response.

1. Vivian Carol Sobchack, "What My Fingers Knew: The Cinesthetic Subject, or Vision in the Flesh," *Special Effects/Special Affects: Technologies of the Screen*, Symposium, (conference paper) Melbourne, March 25, 2000.

2. Jean Baudrillard, "For Illusion Isn't the Opposite of Reality," in *Fotografien – Photographies – Photographs: 1985-1998* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Publishers, 1999), 130.

3. Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment and the Senses*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 22.

4. *Ibid.*, 162-3.

5. *Ibid.*, 23.



Impossible Gaze #5
Origin: Room II – Sala del Trono [Throne Room]
Appartamenti Reali
Palazzo Pitti

The bodily experience of the museum viewer is not dictated solely by vision, but is an inclusive sensorial engagement. Sobchack proposes that “we possess an embodied intelligence that both opens our eyes far beyond their discrete capacity for vision,” and explains “our capacity not only to hear, but also to touch, to smell, to taste, and always to proprioceptively feel our dimension and movement in the world...[is] informed by the full history and knowledge of our sensorium.” ¹ In the museum sensorial perception precedes any analytical or reflective thought. However, with fleeting viewing periods there is little time for contemplation of the individual artworks and it is perhaps the total sensorial experience, the *feeling* of the museum that will be most remembered: the visual confusion of artworks and decoration, the hushed tones of other visitors combined with the shrill beeping of infrared sensors, the texture, substance, and scent of ancient pigment mixed with oil, and the crowds and stifling heat that engender the viewing experience.

1. Sobchack.



Impossible Gaze #8

Origin: Room X – Appartamento del Re [King's Bedroom]
Appartamenti Reali
Palazzo Pitti

The material surfaces represented in my photographs signal generations of past viewers. There are countless people etched into the fabric of these buildings. Their rooms, now animated in a different way from the past, are crowded with visitors clutching guidebooks, city maps, and museum catalogues. These galleries witness the secreted life of artworks, an industry that takes place under constant surveillance and monitoring, without the viewer's knowledge and never in their presence. Outside the museum's visiting hours the art handlers are ghostly figures with ladders that dust, pack, move, vacuum, and hang, reordering the museum space and displays. In navigating the rooms of museums it is not uncommon to find traces of their activity - plaques or empty frames in place of paintings, indicating their transferral to conservation departments, where they are assigned a priority status for restoration, or are packed for loan to another institution. Censored from the public eye are the scores of conservators busily revealing vibrant pigment under centuries of grime, candle smoke, and dust, exposing the layers of previous restorations and mending the damages caused by storage, time, and atmospheric conditions.



Impossible Gaze #6

Origin: Room 26 – Raphael and Andrea del Sarto
Detail: Andrea del Sarto, *Madonna of the Harpies* , 1517
Galleria degli Uffizi

The layering of time evident in the royal apartments of Palazzo Pitti is less tangible in the more discreet interiors of the Uffizi and Bargello. In the Uffizi, art history unfolds through the museum's orderly, chronological hanging arrangement – it is the skeleton that defines art's evolution and provides a structure and context in which the viewer can engage with each work. Progressing through Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, and Rococo galleries, this chronological installation of paintings constitutes a given path for visitors to negotiate the stylistic changes of art and the evolving complexities of both technique and subject matter. It reinforces the continuity of artistic periods with few conspicuous divisions. Yet it is easy for the viewer to disrupt the Uffizi's intentions by choosing their own path, threading back and forth through the maze of history. Although the museum encourages the viewer to “make meaning,” assisting them with written guides and floor plans designed by the cumulative efforts of historians, curators, and conservators, visitors inevitably construct their own narrative, as Carol Duncan suggests:

[I]n reality, people continually “misread” or scramble or resist the museum's cues to some extent; or they actively invent, consciously or unconsciously, their own programs according to all the historical and psychological accidents of who they are. ¹

1. Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 13.



Impossible Gaze #13

Origin: Room 5-6 – International Gothic
Detail: Lorenzo Monaco , *Coronation of the Virgin*, 1414
Galleria degli Uffizi

Impossible Gaze brings the viewer face-to-face with the past. The artworks and their adornment are pre-mechanized, unique, and handcrafted, all of which contribute to the aura and authenticity that has been so debated by authors from Walter Benjamin to contemporary theorists like Susan Stewart and Celeste Olaquaiga. Though Benjamin is in favor of the disintegration of aura associated with original artworks, he commented that “even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be.”¹ Here Benjamin confirms the significance of the contextualizing space. Museums like Palazzo Pitti, impregnated with history, intensify the viewer’s experience of art and foster the *sense* of authenticity. Even though the works may not have been originally intended for Pitti, nor are the interiors completely original, a “unique existence” remains. The relationship between the artwork and its physical location is a palpable, “authenticating” and “auratic” context , one that *Impossible Gaze* attempts to evoke. These images constitute another uncanny act of doubling, where the strangeness of making a photographic reproduction - which by its very nature according to Benjamin, strips away the notion of aura - also somehow represents it.

The color of pigment and fabric, the textures of lustrous gilding and threadbare seams, the inevitable wear, and obvious repairs weave an intricate pattern of individuals, culture, craftsmanship, and history. The evidence of those who have cared for the art through the centuries is seen in every hand-carved acanthus leaf, stitch of brocade, fabric-covered wall, and extravagant frame. And in each painting, its warped panels, over-painting, pentimenti, sgraffito, brushstrokes, gilding, surface texture, and restorations immortalise the architects of these interiors. The chipped furniture with upholstery is worn and cracked, and the stains and frayed edges signal that time has helped author their appearance. Inscribed with the weight of the past, these decorative surfaces speak implicitly of the humanity that created it.

1. Benjamin, 220.



Impossible Gaze #15

Origin: Room X – Appartamento del Re [King's Bedroom]
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