

Titian Ramsay Peale II, The Long Room, Interior of Front Room in Peale's Museum, 1822.

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DEATH AND LIFE, IN THAT ORDER, IN THE WORKS OF CHARLES WILLSON PEALE

Any collection promises totality. The appearance of that totality is made possible by the face-to-face experience of display, the all-at-onceness under which the collection might be apprehended by an observer. This display, of course, marks the defeat of time, the triumph over the particularity of contexts in which the collected objects first appeared. In display, collected objects are gathered through dual processes of temporal diremption and the imposition of frame. The arrested life of the displayed collection finds its unity in memory and narrative. From the toys of the dead in Egyptian tombs to the moving statues of Daedalus described in *The Meno* and *De Anima* to the terror of infinite motion in the red shoes or the mechanical toy that will not stop, the reversed and anticipatory gesture to the situation of stasis in display is the dream of animation under which the collection's total world speaks or comes to life—and all-at-onceness becomes extension, movement, consequence, and reciprocity.[1] This dream of animation has thereby a kind of social/political claim, for it posits the collection as an intervention, or act of significance, and it compels the consciousness of the observer to enter into the consciousness of the collector—the opaqueness and fixity of the collection on display is transformed into the utopian republic of the fantasy where individual desire finds its fellow dreamer and recognizes itself.

This study explores the interrelations of display, arrested life, the attribution or erasure of cause and context, and absolute or totalized knowledge—the completion that is key for the collection and for the recollection it promises. Although the given qualities of such animated objects allow them to endure beyond flux and history, this very transcendence and permanence also links them to the world of the dead, to the end of organic growth and the onset of inaccessibility to the living. It is not surprising that mechanical toys and objects such as those I've mentioned express a repetition and infinite action that the everyday world finds impossible: mechanisms do not tire or feel, they simply work or don't work. As part of the general inversion

that the world of the dead represents, the inanimate comes to life in the service of the awakened dead. The theme of animation is itself a kind of allegory of memory and of the role willed memory plays in reawakening the obdurate material world, given the passage of time. Further, I am interested in the link between the collection and the portrait as devices for recollection—gestures of countenance designed to stay oblivion.[2] But rather than continuing in such general terms, let us focus on a particular historical moment, the end of the Enlightenment, and a set of aesthetic practices—the painting and collecting activities of Charles Willson Peale—where these issues appear, to continue our metaphor, with some vividness. Further, Peale's practices take place in a context of changing religious and political thought, which provides a suggestive supplement to any universal theory of collecting.

Charles Willson Peale was born on the eastern shore of Maryland in 1741, the son of a schoolteacher who had been a convicted felon in England. The family moved to various small Maryland towns until they settled in Annapolis when Peale was nine. Apprenticed as a saddler when young, Peale practiced various professions throughout his long life: repairer of bells, watches, and saddles, sculptor, miniature painter, portrait painter, Revolutionary soldier, propagandist and civic official, mezzotint engraver, museum keeper, zoologist and botanist, and inventor of such mechanisms as a portable steam bath, a fan chair, a velocipede, a physiognotrace for making silhouettes, a polygraph for making multiple copies of documents, a windmill, a stove, a bridge, and false teeth. He studied painting in London with Benjamin West for two years. When he returned he moved his family to Philadelphia; there at the height of the Revolution he served as both a soldier and a maker of banners and posters for the war effort.[3]

Most established artists of the eighteenth century had a painting room gallery for displaying works for sale or works in the artist's personal collection. In Peale's case this exhibition gallery eventually became the first American museum, embracing both cultural and natural history. During the War for Independence, Peale expanded his display gallery into an exhibition of portraits of Revolutionary heroes. Beginning with his first portrait of Washington in 1772, Peale had established by 1782 a tall and long skylighted chamber for showing full-length and bust-sized portraits. Here he arranged the portraits high on the wall in order to represent the primates, while those lower forms of life he had collected filled the cases and the floor below. A watercolor, delineated by Peale and painted in 1822 by his son, Titian Ramsay Peale II, shows the Long Room of the museum from the time it was located in the Statehouse in Philadelphia. Cases of birds line the left wall with the portraits hanging above. At the right are cases displaying insects, minerals, and fossils. On the cases rest busts of Washington, Benjamin Rush, and others. What cannot be seen here are the additional rooms and the table for exhibiting experiments with electricity and perpetual motion.

In addition to the vertical, hierarchical arrangement by principles of evolution, the materials were also organized according to what Peale knew of the Linnaean system. Peale explained that:

> an extensive collection should be found, the various inhabitants of every element, not only of the animal, but also specimens of the vegetable tribe,—and all the brilliant and precious stones, down to the common grit,—all the minerals in their virgin state.—Petrifaction's [sic] of the human body, of which two instances are known, and through that immense variety which should grace every well stored Museum. Here should be seen no duplicates, and only the varieties of each species, all placed in the most conspicuous point of light, to be seen to advantage, without being handled.[4]

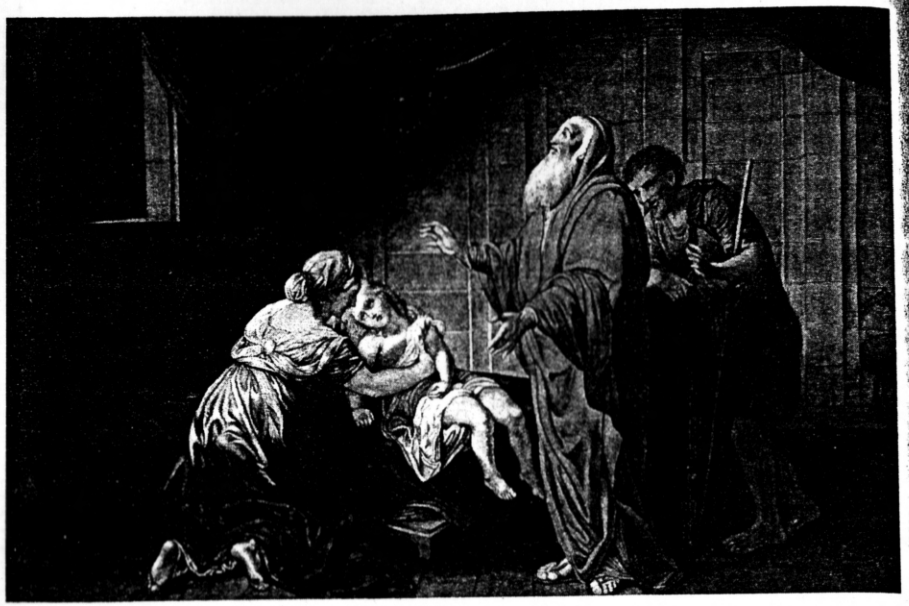
He proposes that the "gentle intelligent Oran Outang," lacking speech, should be placed nearer to the monkey tribe than to that of humans and that the flying squirrel, ostrich, cassowary, and bat will provide the connecting links between quadrupeds and birds. Further, Peale was an innovator in museum display techniques. Finding that ordinary taxidermy did not produce a lifelike effect, he stretched skins over wooden cores he had carved to indicate musculature,[5] and he offered painted backgrounds of the proper context for each specimen. The museum displayed both live and dead animals. When a live grizzly on display escaped and ran through the hall, Peale was forced to shoot him.[6]

By 1794, his collections had grown so enormous that the museum had to be moved to Philosophical Hall. Following Rousseauist principles of nature as the proper teacher of mankind and his deeply held Deist beliefs in a non-intervening God, Peale saw his enterprise as a "School of Wisdom" designed

to teach the public to follow the example of nature. Clearly, Peale's painting and collecting activity served the interests of postwar American society: his portraits memorialized the heroes and patrons of the war, while his collections of cultural and natural objects provided a synopsis of the New World in miniature, linking recent historical events to the grand context of Nature and providing evidence of a Natural providence legitimating those events. To this extent, Peale's collecting activity parallels that of such Renaissance antiquaries as John Leyland and William Camden, who provided a secular and nationalist narrative for England designed to supplant previous forms of religious authority. Yet if we turn to the particular details of Peale's aesthetic practices at large—his paintings and inventions as well as his collections—we find other interpretations possible that are linked to the psychological history of Peale himself and the religious and intellectual climate of his day.

Peale's Deism and rationalism can be discerned in the very names he gave to his children. He refused to give them family names or Biblical names; rather, he chose names for them from his copy of Matthew Pilkington's *Dictionary of Painters*: Raphaelle, Angelica Kauffman, Rembrandt, Titian, Rubens, and Sybilla after, obviously, the Sybils. And later he expanded to Franklin (after Benjamin), Aldrovand (after Ulisse Aldrovandi, the Renaissance museum keeper of Bologna), and Linnaeus. Moreover, he recorded their births, not in the traditional family Bible, but on the flyleaf of his Pilkington. Like Washington, Jefferson, and Franklin, Peale was attracted to British Deism, with its tenet of God as inventor and first cause without any justification for institutional religion and clericism, its interpretation of Christianity as a moral system akin to civic virtue, and its picture of nature as regular and predictable.[7] Yet there are two aspects of Deism as it was debated in Britain and the United States of particular relevance here. As a legacy of Newtonian physics (and before Hume's *Treatise* of 1739, with its critique of causality, gained popular currency), Deism held the external world to be material and composed of objects now moving, now at rest. Rest is their natural state, not motion; when such objects move, it is because an active force is moving them. Motion that seems to be initiated by purely material objects is simply transmitted motion, like billiard balls colliding with one another. Genuine autokinesis is found only in humans and animals. This motion is initiated by the will, and the feeling of causing motion is enough to give evidence that one causes it. If all motion originates in the will, then the motion studied by scientists must also originate in the will — eventually one must reach a first cause of motion, which is God.[8] Moreover, in Deism there was an ongoing conflict regarding life after death. Throughout the eighteenth century, some Deists contended that this world is the only world, while others believed in some afterlife in which moral virtue would be rewarded. Many argued with Calvinist notions of election, yet Franklin, for example, came at the end of his life to hold that the soul was immortal.[9] What remain central tenets of Deist thought are the denial of miracles, the denial of supernatural revelation, and the denial of any special redemptive interposition of God in history. These central theological arguments are of much consequence in the formal choices Peale made in his art: the material, knowable world can be organized by an empirical and reasoned science; human will is the source of all motion in the physical world and human motion is by divine agency; death is a material fact and the categories "life" and "death" are mutually exclusive; Biblical and mythological narrative cannot represent reality.

Peale's only true apprenticeship as a painter came during his stay with West in London in 1767 and 1768. But this influence is remarkable for its absence in Peale's ensuing work. Peale never chose to imitate the style of history painting and mythological painting practiced by West once West was unable to commission religious paintings from the Church of England.[10] This fact might be best explored by turning to an anomaly in Peale's oeuvre, his copy of West's painting *Elisha Restoring the Shunamite's Son*. The work was one of the first he completed upon arriving at West's London studio; he made a small (16-by-24–inch) watercolor copy of this Biblical composition and later took the copy with him when he returned to Maryland, eventually including the work in his exhibition galleries. The Biblical story of 2 Kings 4:8–37 provides the background for the work. It tells of a wealthy, childless woman who provides the prophet Elisha with food and rest; in return Elisha predicts the birth of a son to her. The prediction comes true, but the child later dies and when Elisha's servant Gehazi tries to revive the child, he fails. Elisha himself arrives and, putting his mouth on the boy's mouth, his eyes on the boy's eyes and his hands on his hands, miraculously makes the flesh of the child become warm. The child sneezes seven times and opens his eyes. West, and Peale after him, have shown the scene of revival. The mother is seen from



Charles Willson Peale, *Elisha Restoring the Shunamite's Son*, 1767.

behind as she bends over the child; the child's limbs are still limp and complete the triangular composition, with both mother and child held within the trajectory of the prophet's open hands. Gehazi is recognizable, holding the staff that failed to revive the boy, to the right.

Peale made very few copies of paintings during his career, and this is the only original painting of West's that he copied during his apprenticeship.[11] He preferred to paint "from life," and this tenet clearly is allied to his Deism, with its rejection of bibliolatry and textual evidence, and its turn to nature and the authority of sensory experience. In a copy of *Emile* owned by one of his heirs, Peale himself probably underlined a passage urging teachers never to substitute representation for reality, or shadow for substance, but to teach only from actual objects.[12] This tenet meant that, despite some rare exceptions, he always painted from life once his career began. Further, Peale's museum would be based upon the actual sample and not a replica or model. Yet just as Peale had subjected himself to West's prior technical authority in the copy of *Elisha*, so had he chosen as his model a subject that would have been an anathema to his beliefs—that is, the evidence of miracles and divine interposition.

This early copy/painting, so distant from Peale's religious and aesthetic principles, might be contrasted to Peale's painting *Rachel Weeping*, which he worked on intermittently from 1772 to 1776.[13] In contrast to the distanced miracle of the Elisha painting, this work stems directly from an immediate and personal tragic experience. Infant mortality was unfortunately common in the eighteenth century, and Charles and Rachel Peale lost their first four children in infancy. This picture records the death of the fourth of these children, Margaret, who was killed by the smallpox epidemic in Annapolis in 1772. Moved by a request from Rachel that he create a memorial portrait of the child, Peale first painted the infant alone, arms and chin bound down by white satin ribbons, as it is seen in the foreground. Between 1772 and 1776 he worked on the picture several times, adding his wife and a table of medicines in order to symbolize their futile attempts to save the child's life. Although this is one of the few noncommissioned, and therefore personal, works in Peale's collection, he nevertheless hung it in his painting room. Because Rachel could not bear to look at it, he eventually placed it behind a green curtain and for a time added a note: "Before you draw this curtain/ Consider whether you will affect a Mother or Father who has lost a child."[14] The story of Peale's painting is the opposite of West's. It is an account of the stubborn material truth of death itself. Rachel holds herself in a gesture of containment and the one source of eruption from such stillness—the tears that seem to bead on the surface of the paint, become material there and in the Biblical title later given the picture by members of the family.

This picture is only the first instance of Peale's working through, in his painting and collecting practices, an anxiety regarding death—as all anxieties do, of course, in the sense that anxieties appear around the impossibility of, or refusal of, an empirical or experienced reference. For Peale, the creation of new knowledge was a stay against death. And taxonomy, the organization of knowledge, served as an antidote to surplus meaning and emotion. His practices thereby mirror the famous passage in Freud's 1916 essay on mourning and transience where Freud writes:

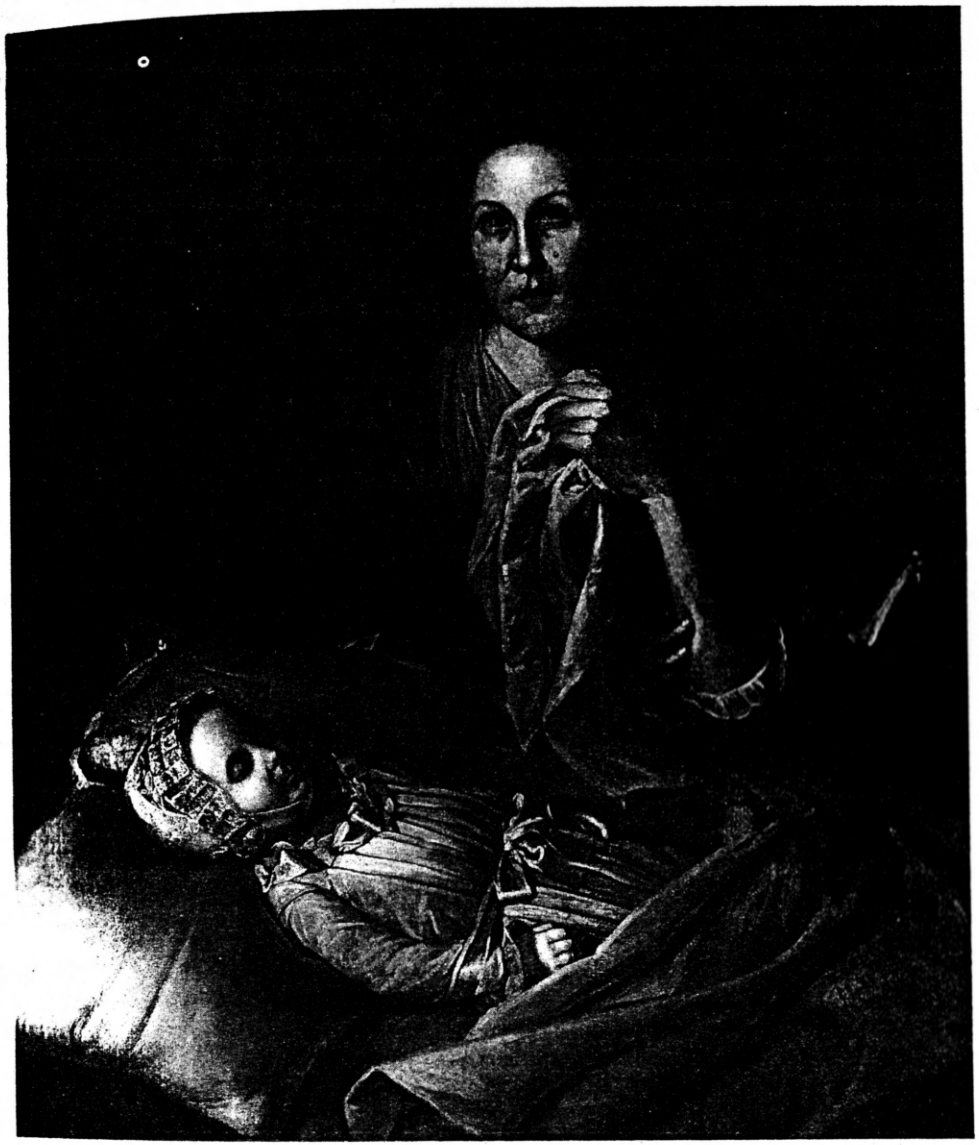
> We only see that libido clings to its objects and will not renounce those that are lost even when a substitute lies ready to hand. Such then is mourning... when it has renounced everything that has been lost, then it has consumed

itself, and our libido is once more free...to replace the lost objects....It is to be hoped that the same will be true of the losses caused by this war....We shall build up again all that war has destroyed.[15]

In common with his contemporaries, Peale lived in an environment of infant mortality, epidemic, and war. But the question for him becomes the meaning of suffering if divine interposition is not possible, and the meaning of nature's lessons when such lessons are unnatural and even monstrous. *Rachel Weeping* is a painting about the limit of nature and about the limit of science's capacity to intervene in nature. The other side of the Rousseauist doctrine of natural virtue is nature's indifference, ambivalence, and capacity for anachronism and disorder. The material representation of death helps to recollect the referent and bring it to the attention of knowledge.

Of all the facts science could provide, one that continued to escape verifiability and which was the center of much scientific debate at the time was the fact of death. Peale's family doctor during his Philadelphia years, Benjamin Rush, for example, had in his library two pamphlets on the problem of suspended animation. The first, "An Essay on Vital Suspension: Being an Attempt to Investigate and to Ascertain Those Diseases, in which the Principles of Life are Apparently Extinguished, by a Medical Practitioner," printed in London in 1741, explains that the best way to investigate the nature of death is to consider the "inherent properties of life." When this project of delineating properties results only in ambiguity, the doctor concludes that "all bodies in nature are *aut viva aut mortua*, there being no intermediate state." He also concludes that it must be a work of supernatural human art to recall to vital existence that which is dead.

After the expression of further doubts and hesitations, the physician suggests that stimulants be applied to denudated muscle and if any contraction follows, life remains. "It is proof of the temerity and imbecility of human judgement that we have too many instances on record, wherein even the most skillful physicians have erred in the decisions they have pronounced, respecting the extinction of life, this should incite the practitioner never to be deterred."[16] A later pamphlet by David Hosack, a New York physician, "An Enquiry into the Causes of Suspended Animation from Drowning with the Means of Restoring Life," recommends the application of heat to the



Charles Willson Peale, *Rachel Weeping*, 1772–76.

body's system much in the style of Elisha reviving the Shunamite's son.[17]

Given the ambivalent status of signs of life and death and their capacity for misrepresentation, eighteenth-century folkloric practices accompanying death are of particular relevance. Often in the house of the dead, clocks were stopped at the hour of decease, mirrors were turned to the wall, and black cloth was thrown over pictures and over any beehives in the garden.[18] These gestures of stopping time and stopping the motion of representation can be connected to the imperative of viewing the corpse. Death is signified in these instances by a halting of motion, a stilling of context and multiplication and by attention to the empirical reality of sense impression regardless of the physician's doubts about the validity of such impressions. In *Rachel Weeping* the mother's gaze does not enter the frame of the picture of the dead child. By placing the work behind a curtain, Peale permanently continued the mourning practice, and by showing the child and mother withheld from gesture and motion, he painted the end of human will and autokinesis. This presentation, in fact, continues, for the viewer of Peale's exhibition gallery, the experience of display and burial—the mourner's experience of viewing. When Rachel herself died in April of 1790 (either from a lung disorder or from the complications of her eleventh pregnancy), Peale refused to have her buried for three or four days because of his fears about premature burial. Her death was made much more difficult for Peale by the concurrent death of his friend Benjamin Franklin.

A year and a half later Peale added a relevant set of remarks to his initial address to the Board of Visitors appointed for his new museum. He explained that he planned to follow the Linnaean system and then added a rather startling point. Explaining that "good and faithful painting" can make the likeness of man available to posterity, he said that nevertheless he would like to find a way to use "powerful antisepticks" to preserve the remains of great men, thereby keeping their bodies from becoming "the food of worms" and making them available for reverence and memory. He continued that he was sorry he "did not preserve the remains of Benjamin Franklin in this way."[19] Lillian Miller adds a note to the Peale papers that:

> although [Peale] never exhibited embalmed people in the museum, his proposal was serious and follows from two central tenets: that as a species in the order of natural history, human beings should be treated like other species, and that moral values could be transmitted to posterity by the physical representations of exemplary men. For Peale death was an event in the economy of nature and no special sanctity was attached to the corpse.[20]

Despite Miller's statement regarding the typicality of Peale's Enlightenment attitude toward death, there remains in his work a persistent theme of anxiety concerning the death of children and the possibility of war as a cause of human extinction. Although natural death is reconcilable to Enlightenment values, the death of a child is in a profound sense *unnatural*, a death that most radically arrests the progress of time. In March 1806 Peale attempted to obtain an embalmed child from a New York church.[21] Peale's request for the child's corpse comes many years after the death of his first child, but echoes another moment of trauma in his life. In the chaotic aftermath of the Revolutionary defeat at the Battle of Trenton, Peale had not been able to recognize his brother James. He wrote in a letter to Thomas Jefferson, "I thought it the most hellish scene I have ever beheld." When a man walked out of the line of soldiers toward Peale, "He had lost all his clothes. He was in an old, dirty, blanket jacket, his beard long and his face so full of sores he could not clean it, which disfigured him in such a manner that he was not known to me at first sight." What war had destroyed here—clothes and face—are those qualities of person making portraiture intelligible.[22] Furthermore, the disfigurement of countenance, of the lineaments of the total person, which Peale had so carefully learned to represent in his portraits, presents a severe blow to totality and to the possibility of knowledge and recollection, which was key to all of Peale's aesthetic and epistemological values.

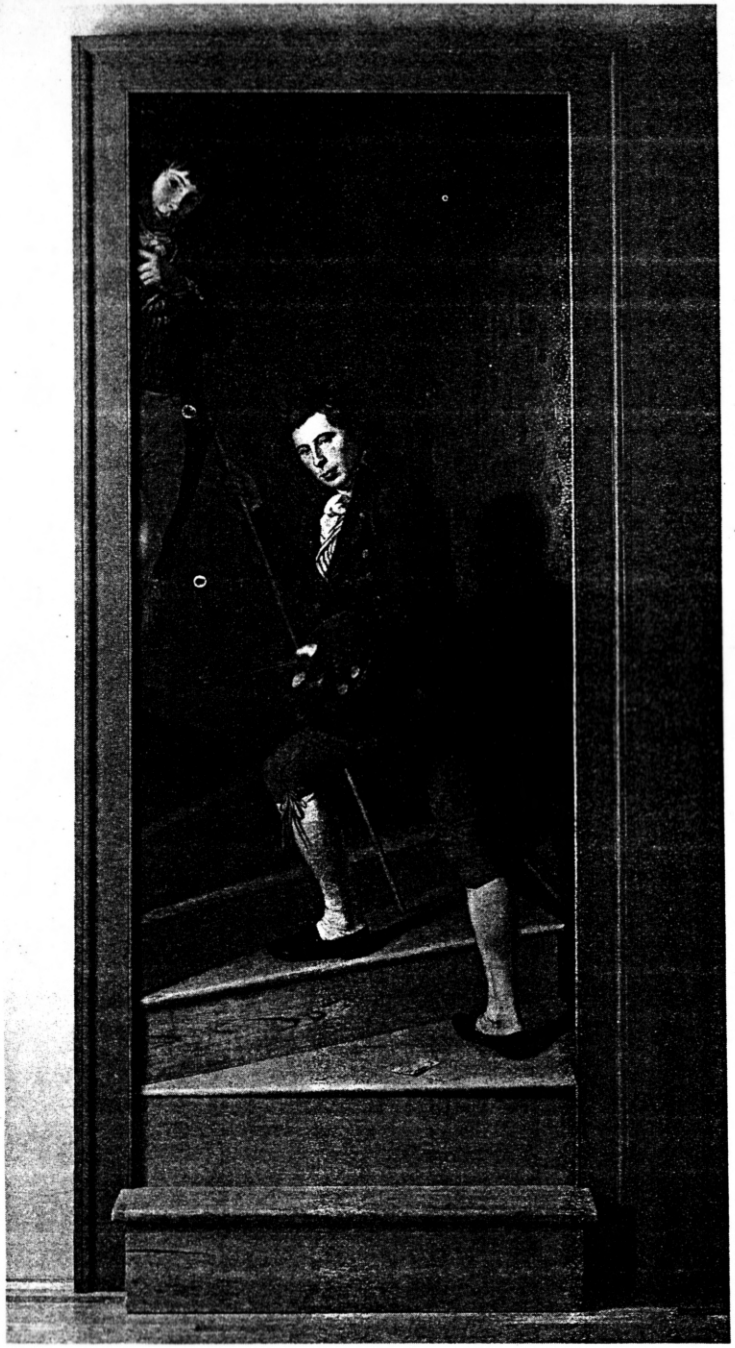
After the war and a brief period of public service, Peale suffered a kind of nervous breakdown—the symptoms were an inability to move and an inability to remember—specifically, Peale's memory loss centered around the order and number of his children and the status of death. Toward the close of 1782, he decided to hang the painting of *Rachel Weeping* in his gallery behind the curtain with the message beginning "Draw not this curtain." He added a poem that he said was anonymous, but that also appeared on the last page of his letterbook for 1782–95. The poem warns that the death is

"no more than moulded clay," but that the display might evoke an excessive response in anyone viewing the mother's unceasing mourning:

> Draw not the Curtain, if a Tear
> just trembling in a Parent's eye
> Can fill your awful soul with fear,
> or cause your tender Breast to sigh
>
> A child lays dead before your eyes
> and seems no more than moulded clay
> While the affected Mother crys
> and constant mourns from day to day.[23]

A month or so later Peale experienced a breakdown, writing on January 15, 1783, that for more than two years he had been in a kind of lethargy marked by dramatic memory loss: "some short time past," he wrote, "I was sitting by the fireside musing within myself when a thought struck my fancy, i.e. how many children have I. Four, I answers as if it were by Instinct, four! Let me see if I am right and looking round (and) began to name them as they appeared before me, as my not seeing Raphaelle, I was puzzled for a some moments to make out my number." He then recounts another instance occurring just the day before when he "chanced to be looking at the picture of my mother-in-law" and he instantly remembered her person, but could not recollect whether she were dead or not and the circumstances of her will.[24]

It is significant that it is the painting that induces in this latter case the ambiguity of the mother-in-law's life or death. The painting is a kind of presence, a bringing to mind if not to sense, but what kind of presence is it? One of the ways in which a painter can explore the cognitive boundary between displaying death and displaying life is through various devices of trompe l'oeil—the kind of fool-the-eye that suspended animation, or an exaggeration of the conventions of realistic art, can bring about. Trompe l'oeil, itself a kind of material and secular miracle of animation, appealed to Peale in various ways throughout his career and later became the device used by Raphaelle, his most troubled child, in his paintings. Following eighteenth-century aesthetic conventions, the older Peale ranked the various forms of



Charles Willson Peale, *Staircase Group: Rafaelle and Titian Ramsay Peale I*, 1795.

nature morte, which he referred to as "deceptions," low in his hierarchy of painting because they teach no moral values. Yet he saw such work as potentially crowd-pleasing or, more charitably perhaps, as being attractive to afficionadi of painterly technique. The painting most often called *Staircase Group: Raphaelle and Titian Ramsay Peale I* was finished for the "Columbianum, or American Academy of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, and Engraving" at the Philadelphia Statehouse in 1795. It shows Peale's two sons in life-size, climbing a winding stairway. The deception was designed to fool the viewer into believing in its reality. Peale insisted that the picture be hung in a doorway rather than on the wall and he had an actual step built into the room at the base of the painted step. According to Rembrandt Peale, George Washington, on a later visit to the museum, bowed politely to the figures, for he thought they were "living persons."[25] As early as 1787, Peale had placed a life-sized wax figure of himself in his museum as a way of fooling the public into assuming his presence there. And there are other accounts of Peale traveling through Maryland in a carriage harnessed simultaneously with living horses and stuffed fawns, as well as several other taxidermic specimens. This project, he reported in his *Autobiography*, "excited much curiosity along the road."[26]

Peale's "deceptions" may be seen in classic psychoanalytic terms as "derealizations." They serve, like all derealizations, as means of defense, keeping the irreducible fact of a boundary between life and death at bay. The second characteristic of derealizations—their dependence on the past, on the ego's store of memories and earlier painful experiences—is also evident here. The theme of animations centers around issues of the preservation of meaning in the face of its traumatic disturbance.[27] As Peale recovers from his postwar breakdown, his first project is an effort to create an exhibition of moving pictures.

Peale decided to invent a spectacle similar to Philippe de Loutherbourg's miniature theater of sound and light in London. He created six pictures, which he advertised in 1785 as "perspective views, with changeable effects, of nature delineated in motion." He chose scenes of dawn rising over a rural landscape, night sinking on Market Street in Philadelphia, a Roman temple battered by a thunderstorm that ended in a rainbow, a view of Satan's fiery palace as described by Milton, and a historical painting of the Revolutionary War's sea battle between the *Bonhomme Richard* and the *Serapis*.[28]

In such works, Peale experimented with light, painting, sculpture, and the use of natural objects. Carved waves were worked by cranks, while real spray spurted out of concealed pipes. Painted transparencies were passed across one another before candles in order to produce airy effects. Foreground objects were either flat cut-outs or three-dimensional props, and Peale sustained the phantasmagoric mood with music he played on a specially built organ. He soon discovered, however, that the public wanted perpetually new works—all of which cost a great deal in time, labor, and materials. In a letter to Benjamin West in 1788, Peale told him that for two or three years he had studied and labored to create this exhibition of moving pictures; consequently he had "injured his health and straitened his circumstances."[29]

It was at this time that he turned fully toward his project of a museum, or, as he called it, a world in miniature. He began by building a landscape out of turf, trees, a thicket, and a pond situated on the gallery floor. On the mound he placed those birds that commonly walk on the ground, as well as a stuffed bear, deer, leopard, tiger, wildcat, fox, raccoon, rabbit, and squirrel. The boughs of the trees were loaded with birds, and the thicket was full of snakes. On the banks of the pond he placed shells, turtles, frogs, lizards, and watersnakes, while in the water stuffed fishes swam between the legs of stuffed waterfowl. A hole in the mound displayed minerals and rare earths.

Peale's two major sources for his collection were gifts, largely of curiosities or items that were in some way souvenirs of historical events and famous persons, and those items he and his sons gathered as they traveled in search of specimens. In his search for varieties of every species, with no duplicates, he promulgated Linnaeus' system in the interest of universal laws.[30] Although he would later imagine, as his own dynasty grew, his museum's world as one of paired specimens for reproduction, his wish that there be "no duplicates" is connected to the concepts of uniqueness, individuality, and character, which inform his portraiture: the republic of the New World was to be built from the singular actions of singular individuals.

Peale's *Discourse Introductory to a Course of Lectures* (1800) is perhaps the fullest statement of his philosophy of collecting. He links himself in a great chain of largely unrecognized founders of national museums, from the Alexandrian Library and repository of Ptolemy Philadelphus (a kind of historical pun on his

own name and location) to contemporary British and European museums. By 1800 Peale's collections were overflowing Philosophical Hall, and Raphaelle and Rembrandt's museum in Baltimore, begun in 1797, had already failed. Peale's *Discourse* is in fact a somewhat hysterical document, full of elevated scientific claims and sudden plunges toward dark lyrical effects. In recounting the history of museums, he includes a dirge to Aldrovandi before he goes on to tell of the British Museum and how hard it is for the public to view it. A recurring theme of the document is the idea that science is a cure for war. Peale tells how "the chiefs of several nations of Indians," who before had been bitter enemies, met by chance when visiting the museum and were inspired to resolve their differences.[31] But most jarringly, as Peale presents his philosophical and political rationale for the museum, he weaves into the lecture the story of the death of his son Titian in 1798. Titian Ramsay Peale the First's death occurred in September of that year and two months later Raphaelle Peale's first child died in infancy. In 1799 Charles Peale named a son by his second wife after Titian. Thus he connects the rebirth of the museum with the rebirth of his son. The lecture includes the performance of two musical interludes with words written by Rembrandt Peale. The first is called the "Beauties of Creation" and suggests:

> Mark the beauties of Creation,
> Mark the harmony that reigns!
> Each, supported in its station,
> Age to age unchang'd remains.

The second is an "Ode on the Death of Titian Peale":

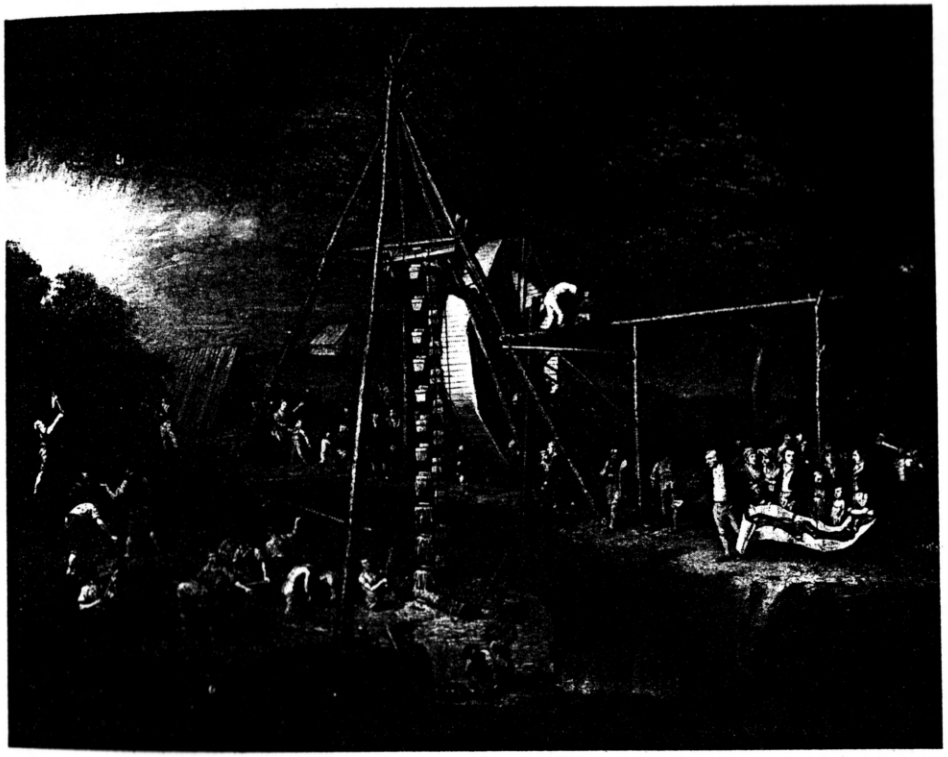
> His early loss let Science mourn
> Responsive with our frequent sighs,—
> Sweet flower of genius! That had borne
> The fairest fruit beneath the skies![32]

Again, taxonomy is seen as an antidote to emotion and surplus meaning. Charles Peale attached a note to his lecture explaining:

> This early devoted and much lamented youth, died with the Yellow Fever in New York in 1798. It might be excused if the fondness of a parent indulged in the eulogium of his son; yet the testimony of numerous friends and acquaintances confirm his worth...and the plans which he had commenced, to the prosecution of which his whole soul was devoted, far beyond his years, raised the greatest expectation of his becoming the Linnaeus of America...[33]

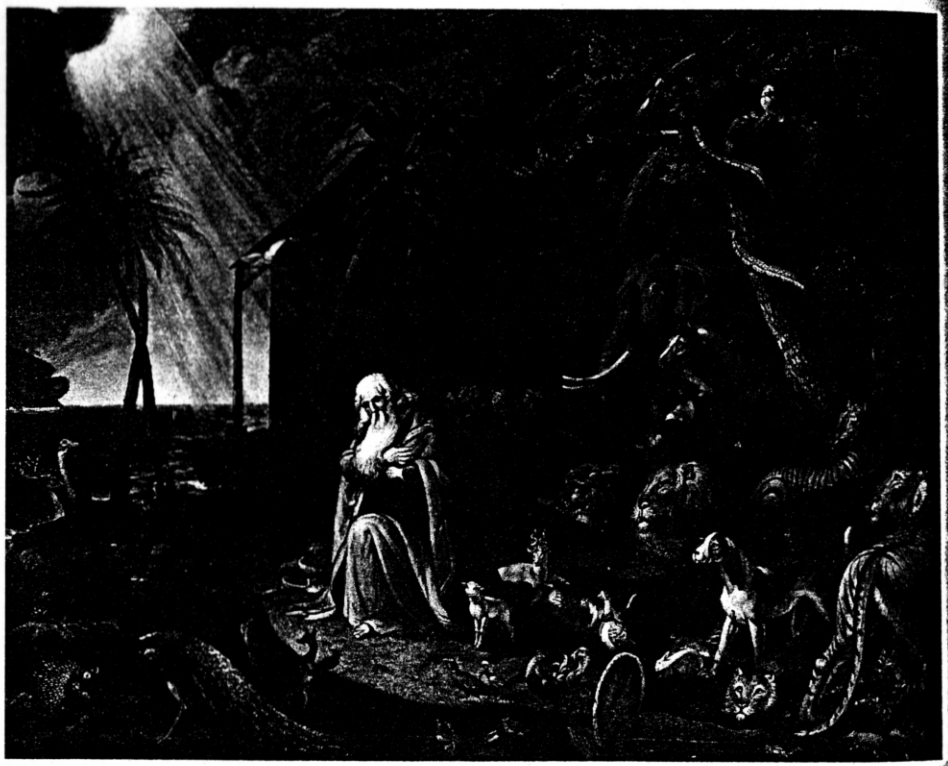
In ensuing years, as the yellow fever made periodic reappearances, Peale advertised the museum in the *Philadelphia Repository and Weekly Register* as a place where lost children could be kept until called for.[34]

In 1801 Peale heard of the discovery of huge bones by a farmer near Newburgh, New York. He and Rembrandt traveled quickly to the farm,



Charles Willson Peale, *The Exhumation of the Mastodon*, 1806.

examined the bones and purchased rights to dig further in the marlpit where they had been found.[35] Cuvier had published the mastodon as an example of an extinct species. The discovery of this specimen was dramatic evidence that species could become extinct over geological time.[36] The American Philosophical Society gave the Peales a loan to conduct the excavation and the family eventually put together two mastodon skeletons, which went on to a wide and varied career as exhibitions, from P.T. Barnum to the American Museum of Natural History in New York to Peale's Museum in Baltimore, where one set is currently on display. In 1807 Peale wrote to Benjamin West of his progress in painting a picture of the site: "Although I have introduced upwards of 50 figures, yet the number of spectators in fine weather amounted to hundreds. Eighteen of my figures are portraits, having taken



Charles Willson Peale, *Noah and His Ark*, 1819.

the advantage of taking most of this number of my family..."[37]

This picture is in fact a kind of summa of Peale's career, offering a counterpoint to a copy he made in 1819 of Charles Catton's picture of *Noah's Ark*—just as the realism of *Rachel Weeping* was in counterpoint to the copy of *Elisha Restoring the Shunamite's Son*. The copy of Catton's *Noah* and the picture of the exhumation provide a number of insights into the relations between mourning and taxonomy, memory and animation. As Peale continued to add to the canvas of the exhumation through 1808 he delineated more and more family members and friends to be included in the glory of his momentous discovery. Just as Noah's sons, in the face of extinction, would help their father gather members of each species and begin a new world, so would Peale's aesthetic dynasty continue his scientific project. Rembrandt's 1803 pamphlet on the mastodon proclaims, "The bones exist—the animals do not!" He goes on to explain that science has awakened this literally buried fact of "stupendous creation."[38] Science's triumph over death is quite literally demonstrated as Peale includes in his painting both the living and the dead. The painting dramatizes a critical moment in the excavation when a violent thunderstorm threatened to flood the pit and end the search. The painting forms both a complement to, and inversion of, the Noah's Ark theme. Here the dead—extinct species and those of Peale's family and friends who are gone—are awakened and brought back into the light. Yet flooding threatens, just as it did in the picture of the Ark, and the family is once again the focus for regeneration and recollection. Of the Noah's Ark painting, Peale wrote that he admired very much the innocence of the venerable old man, the sweet idea of parental love, the peacock and other birds whose lines of beauty are so richly tinted. "I can only say," he wrote, "that it is a Museum in itself and a subject in the line of the fine arts and that although I have never liked the copying of pictures, yet should I wish to make a copy of it."[39]

Of course it has long been a convention of the conversation piece, a genre Peale knew well and often practiced, to evoke mourning in a scene by including allusions to, or representations of, the dead in a picture of the living. Mario Praz has pointed out that these conventions frequently rely on portraits accompanied by busts, as is the case in Peale's play on such conventions in his *Peale Family Group*, which he worked on from 1770–1773 and again in 1809.[40] Here the family gathered around a scene where Charles, stopping

at his easel with face lowered from view, and James, pointing with a small stick, are giving their brother St. George advice, as St. George tries to draw a portrait of their mother holding Charles's daughter Eleanor. The family is flanked by busts of Benjamin West, Peale himself, and his early patron Edmund Jennings, and by an oil sketch of the muses on the easel: those customarily in the place of the dead are, in fact, living immortals. And the children, who in such conversation pieces are usually those who receive whatever lessons the dead have to teach, here are infants who died in their first year. This quality of death pushed forward is emphasized by the placement of the still life in the foreground of the picture and by the nonreciprocity of the gazes depicted. One of Peale's last additions to the painting was the dog, Argus, placed in the foreground. At the same time, Peale painted out the words *Concordis Anima* (harmony embodied), which had once before been written there. Peale wrote in 1808 to Rembrandt that he had erased these words because "the design was sufficient to explain the theme."[41]

But we can also see that it is time that erased the truth of the legend.

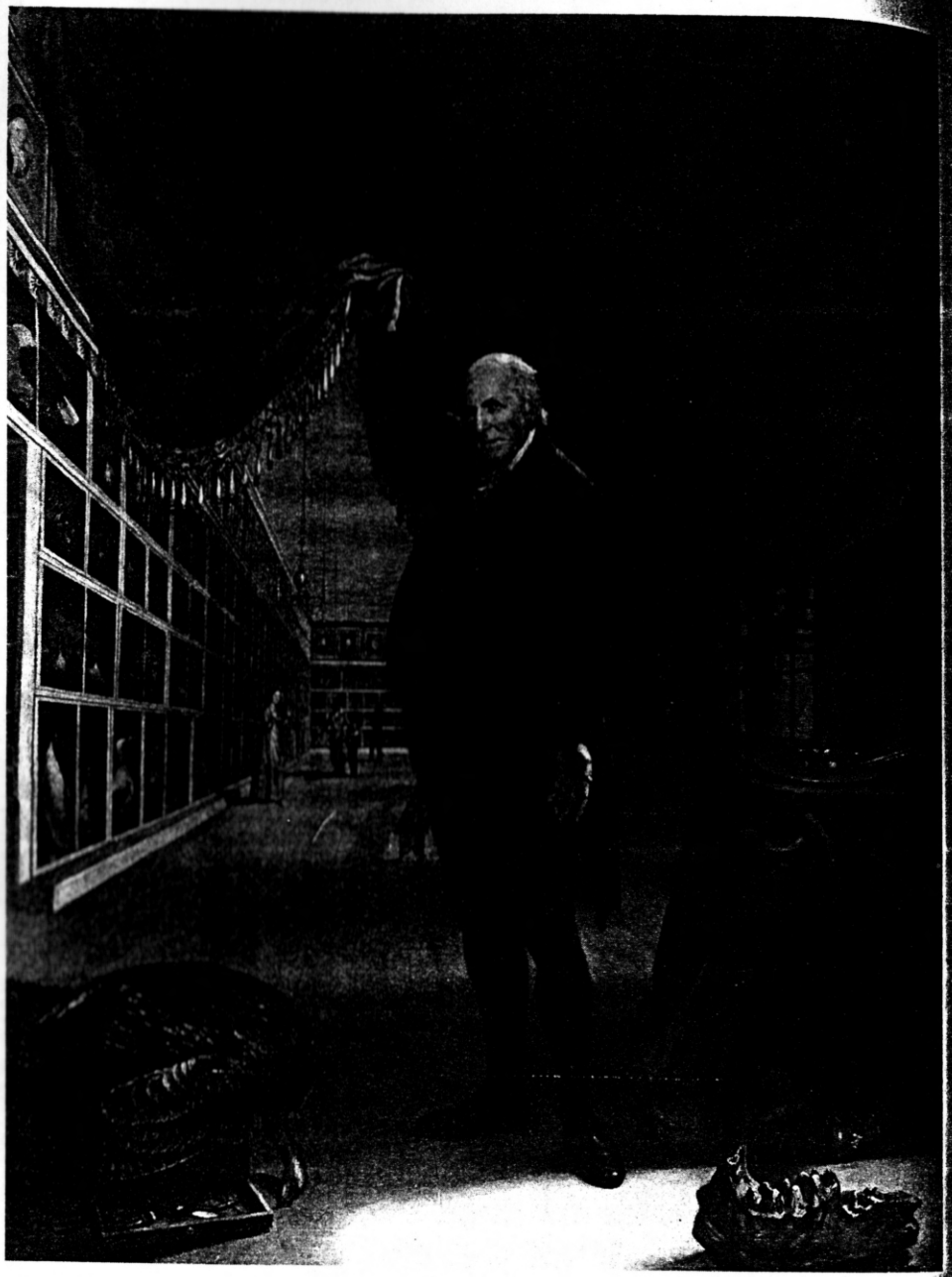


Charles Willson Peale, *Peale Family Group*, 1773–1809.

Once more the lesson nature has to teach is an unnatural one. When the picture was finished only Charles and James Peale (d. 1831) remained alive from the scene. And we cannot help but remember that the dog is named "bright-eyed" after the giant who was put to death by Hermes and whose eyes were then placed in a peacock's tail. Nature's lesson is the production and reproduction of nature, not the production of order and sequence; and nature calls for vigilant observation, not the construction of moral aphorisms.[42]

Further, Peale recognized that he was himself pressed to complete works such as *Peale Family Group* in preparation for death.[43] Among his last works are his 1822 portrait of James studying a portrait miniature by lamplight and his self-portrait of the same year, *The Artist in His Museum*. Peale had been asked by the museum trustees to paint a life-sized, full-length portrait of himself. Peale wrote to Rembrandt on July 23, 1822: "I think it is important that I should not only make it a lasting ornament to my art as a painter, but also that the design should be expressive that I bring forth into public view the beauties of nature and art, the rise and progress of the Museum."[44] Peale holds back the curtain so that the collections might be seen, and places in the foreground the giant mastodon jaw and tibia—the mounted skeleton can be discerned to the right just above the set-aside palette. A Quaker woman holds up her hands in astonishment at the mastodon, while a father talks with his son, who is holding an open book, and another figure looks at the birds. At eighty-one, Peale conducts here an experiment with the relation between artificial and natural light, the latter coming from behind in the museum and the former coming from a mirror which reflects a secondary light onto his head. The light of painting thus turns back from the foreground of the picture, the light of nature moves forward from the back with Peale outlined by their interrelation. Yet the curtain reminds us of the collected and staged qualities of this nature, and as well of the curtain hiding a scene of death and extinction in *Rachel Weeping*. And the life-sized "deception" of Peale's figure appears realistically on the most artificial side of the curtain.[45]

This work does little to resolve for us the status of the animated taxonomy and does perhaps even less to define the boundary where life ends and art begins. There are few pictures of knowledge farther from Platonism than the Enlightenment's skeptical empiricism on the one hand, and psychoanalytic concepts of latency and the unconscious on the other. Yet in the case of Peale



Charles Willson Peale, *The Artist in His Museum*, 1822.

we see the limit of Enlightenment taxonomy at the threshold of inarticulate emotion. Peale frequently referred to himself as a "memorialist," meaning by this that he was painting the dead in the service of a future memory. Further, just as Freud's theory of mourning is developed around the traumatic consequences of war, so does Peale develop his museum as an antidote to war's losses and as a gesture against disorder and the extinction of knowledge. In this nexus of motion and emotion, arrested life and animation, loss and memory which Peale has left for us, we can begin to recollect, with both a sense of difference and a sense of urgency, a central issue regarding representation.

NOTES

Stephen Bann

Translations from the French by the author.

1. See M. F. Hearn, "Canterbury Cathedral and the Cult of Becket," *Art Bulletin* 74, no. 1 (March 1994), pp. 19–52. The author explicitly makes the point that no serious consideration previously had been given to the fact that Canterbury Cathedral developed architecturally as a specific response to the need to accommodate both the monastic foundation and the visiting pilgrims. See also the fascinating contemporary analysis of an early guide to the shrine of Loreto in Pierre-Antoine Fabre, "En quête d'un lieu: Remarques sur *Le Pélerin de Lorette* de Louis Richeome," in *Genius Loci*, ed. Judith Barry, et al. (Paris: La Différence, 1993), pp. 185–206.

2. Norman Bryson, *Word and Image: French Painting of the Ancien Regime* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 3.

3. Ibid., p. 5.

4. Louis Marin, *Des pouvoirs de l'image: gloses* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1993), p. 224.

5. Ibid, pp. 224–25.

6. Erasmus, "*Peregrinatio Religionis Ergo*," in *Colloquies*, trans. Craig R. Thompson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 295.

7. Ibid., p. 308.

8. Much interesting work has been done in recent years, notably by David Freedberg, on the phenomenon of iconoclasm in Northern Europe.

9. Erasmus, p. 292.

10. Ibid., p. 288.

11. Krzysztof Pomian, *Collectors and Curiosities: Paris and Venice 1500–1800* (Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 64.

12. Richard Culmer, *Cathedral Newes from Canterbury* (London, 1644), p. 7.

13. John Bargrave, *Pope Alexander the Seventh and the College of Cardinals with a Catalogue of Dr. Bargrave's Museum*, ed. J. C. Robertson (London: Camden Society, 1867), pp. 130–31.

14. Ibid., p. 118.

15. Ibid., p. 117.

16. Ibid., pp. 123–24.

17. Ibid., p. 133. For further discussion of Bargrave's collection, see Stephen Bann, *Under the Sign: John Bargrave as Collector, Traveler, and Witness* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

Susan Stewart

I would like to thank the Getty Center for Art History and the Humanities, Los Angeles; the Center for Literary and Cultural Change at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville; and the Dia Center for the Arts, New York, where preliminary versions of this essay were read.

1. See Plato's *Meno*, ed. R. S. Buck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961). For discussion of Daedalus, see, especially, pp. 408–11. I have discussed the theme of animation more generally in *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984, and Durham: Duke University Press, 1993). A suggestive parallel to the case considered here is Annette Michelson's study of the iconography of Lenin's death, "The Kinetic Icon in the Work of Mourning: Prolegomena to the Analysis of a Textual System," *October* 52 (Spring 1990), pp. 16–51.

2. The relation between countenance and oblivion is outlined in Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961).

3. Peale's biography and the material history of the Peale family's activities have been exhaustively researched by Peale's lineal descendent, Charles Coleman Sellers, and by Lillian B. Miller. The major groups of the Peale Family papers are held at the American Philosophical Society and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. Additional materials used in this essay are located at the American Philosophical Society Library and the Library Company in Philadelphia. See also *The Selected Papers of Charles Willson Peale and His Family*, ed. Lillian B. Miller (New Haven: Yale University Press, The National Portrait Gallery and the Smithsonian Institution, 1983–88); Charles Coleman Sellers, *Charles Willson Peale* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969); Charles Coleman Sellers, *Mr. Peale's Museum: Charles Willson Peale and the First Popular Museum of Natural Science and Art* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1980); Charles Coleman Sellers, *Charles Willson Peale with Patron and Populace: A Supplement to "Portraits and Miniatures by Charles Willson Peale" with a Survey of his Work in Other Genres*, vol. 59, pt. 3 in *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1969); Charles Coleman Sellers, *Portraits and Miniatures by Charles Willson Peale*, vol. 42, pt. 1, in *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1952); *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Portraits by Charles Willson Peale and James Peale and Rembrandt Peale* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1923); *Charles Willson Peale and His World*, ed. Edgar P. Richardson, Brooke Hindle, and Lillian B. Miller (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1983); James Thomas Flexner, *America's Old Masters: First Artists of the New World* (New York: The Viking Press, 1939), pp. 171–244; *New Perspectives on Charles Willson Peale: A 250th Anniversary Celebration*,

ed. Lillian B. Miller and David C. Ward (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press and the Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C., 1991).

4. Charles Willson Peale, *Discourse Introductory to a Course of Lectures on the Science of Nature with Original Music Composed for, and Sung on, the Occasion: Delivered in the Hall of the University of Pennsylvania, November 8, 1800* (Philadelphia: Zachariah Poulson, Junior, 1800), p. 34.

5. Richardson, et al., p. 101. See Sellers, *Mr. Peale's Museum*, p. 19. Peale's skill at mounting skins on woodwork stemmed from his apprenticeship as a saddler.

6. Zebulon Pike had given two grizzly cubs, male and female, to President Jefferson who in turn gave them to Peale for the museum zoo. One severely injured a monkey and later entered the Peale kitchen in the Hall basement. Peale contained the animal and shot it. He later killed the mate and mounted the two. See Sellers, *Mr. Peale's Museum*, pp. 206–07. Peale himself recounts the story in his *Autobiography*, p. 373.

7. For surveys of Deism, see *Deism, Masonry, and the Enlightenment*, ed. J. A. Leo Lemay (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1987); Peter Byrne, *Natural Religion and the Nature of Religion: The Legacy of Deism* (London: Routledge, 1989); Kerry S. Walters, *The American Deists: Voices of Reason and Dissent in the Early Republic* (Lawrence, Ka.: University of Kansas Press, 1992); Kerry S. Walters, *Rational Infidels: The American Deists* (Wolfeboro, N.H.: Longwood, 1992).

8. See "Profession de foi du Vicaire savoyard (1762)," in *Rousseau: Religious Writings*, ed. Ronald Grimsley (London: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 107–200. Peale mentions that he is reading Rousseau's *Confessions* in his *Autobiography*, p. 12.

9. See Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711), ed. John M. Robertson, vol. 1 (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), pp. 268–69, who holds the belief in future rewards and punishments to be immoral, and Benjamin Franklin, letter to Ezra Stiles, 9 March 1790, in Walters, *The American Deists*: "the soul of Man is immortal, and will be treated with Justice in another Life respecting its conduct in this" (p. 105).

10. See James Thomas Flexner, *The Light of Distant Skies: History of American Painting, 1760–1835* (New York: Dover, 1969), p. 12.

11. Peale also copied West's copy of Titian's *Venus*. See *Charles Willson Peale: Artist in Revolutionary America, 1735–1791*, vol. 1 of *The Selected Papers of Charles Willson Peale and His Family*, ed. Lillian B. Miller (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 87.

12. Sellers, *Mr. Peale's Museum*, p. 101.

13. The most important essay on this painting is Phoebe Lloyd's "A Death in the Family," *Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin* 78, no. 335 (Spring 1982), pp. 3–13. Lloyd connects the painting to European mourning portraits and the conventions Peale may have drawn from Charles LeBrun's 1649 tract on the depiction of the emotions, *Traité des Passions*. She adds a detail which links the painting back to the artifice of *Elisha Restoring the Shunamite's Son*: "The telltale indication that Peale did not observe his wife from life is to be found in the whites of the eyes visible below the rolled up iris, after the example of LeBrun. This glance is nearly impossible to hold, especially with the head held straight" (pp. 3–5). An interesting parallel to the separation of Rachel's figure from the foreground can be found in Peale's complex *Self-Portrait with Angelica and a Portrait of Rachel* (1782–85), where the portrait of Rachel, slightly larger than the scale of the other two figures, is positioned beyond the picture plane. David Steinberg relates the structure of this work to "images of supernatural aid to the artist in the moment of creation," connecting the pun between *Angelica* and *angel* as the daughter reaches to guide her father's hand. But such an interpretation of divine intervention would seem to be contrary to Peale's Deism, unless perhaps it can be read as a playful allusion or parody. See David Steinberg, "Charles Willson Peale: The Portraitist As Divine," in *New Perspectives on Charles Willson Peale*, ed. Miller and Ward, pp. 131–44, 132. John Adams was "prodigiously" affected by the picture of Rachel mourning when he saw it on August 20, 1776. See *Selected Papers*, ed. Miller, vol. 1, p. 382n and *Adams Family Correspondence (June 1776–March 1778)*, vol. 2 of *The Adams Papers*, ed. Lyman Butterfield, et al., series 2, (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 103: "Yesterday Morning I took a Walk, into Arch Street, to see Mr. Peele's [sic] Painters Rooms. Peele is from Maryland, a tender, soft, affectionate Creature... He showed me one moving Picture. His wife, all bathed in Tears, with a Child about six months old, laid out, upon her Lap. This Picture struck me prodigiously." In the same letter Adams says Peale's head "is not bigger than a large Apple... I have not met with any Thing in natural History much more amusing or entertaining than his personal Appearance."

14. Richardson, et al., p. 66.

15. Sigmund Freud, "On Transience," in *Freud, Character, and Culture*, ed. Philip Rief (New York: Collier, 1963), pp. 148–51.

16. "An Essay on Vital Suspension," medical brochure (London, 1741), pp. 7–11.

17. Peale himself records several incidents of ambiguous death in his account of Rachel's death in his *Autobiography*. He writes: "The custom of burying the dead too soon, has often been found a dreadful consequence. There once lived in Maryland a Mr. Chas. Carrol who very narrowly escaped being buried alive. He was supposed to be dead, and was laid out in the usial [sic] manner and persons employed to set up with the corpse—among them was a schoolmaster who had lived in the family. At a late hour when they had become inebriated, or as we might say, drunk, the schoolmaster said, our friend there used to love a drop while living, suppose we should now give him some grog, they poured it down his throat and it produced motions of life and he lived some years after this event. A Dr. Corson revived his daughter with a glass of madeira when she was supposedly dead of yellow fever" (pp. 135–36).

18. See John McManners, *Death and the Enlightenment* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), for a survey of French eighteenth-

century practices regarding death; Margaret M. Coffin's *Death in Early America* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1976), is an anecdotal account of a variety of folkloric customs regarding death, mourning, and burial; see also *Death in America*, ed. David E. Stannard (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975), especially Philippe Aries's survey "The Reversal of Death: Changes in Attitudes toward Death in Western Societies," pp. 135–58, which sees the eighteenth century as the turning point in the historical movement toward the denial of death and suppression of mourning characteristic of modern society. Yet Peale explicitly rejected common mourning customs of his day. In his *Autobiography*, he wrote "If we are free agents to act as our best reason shall direct, then to [not] follow any custom which we deem absurd or even useless, must be laudable" (p. 137). The ambivalent status of the corpse is given much attention in chapters 5–7 of Charles Brockden Brown's 1799 novel on the yellow fever epidemic in Philadelphia: *Arthur Mervyn or Memoirs of the Year 1793* (Boston: S. G. Goodrich, 1827).

19. *Selected Papers*, ed. Miller, vol. 2, part 1, pp. 14–15.

20. Ibid., p. 21 n. 4. She continues: "Only one incident of the exhibition of an embalmed body is known, that of the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832), who, toward the end of his life, suggested that people have themselves exhibited after death so that their remains would become a statue, or 'auto-icon.' On his death, Bentham's corpse was mummified, dressed, and placed in a chair for display at the University of London." Among the miscellaneous papers relating to Peale's Museum at the American Philosophical Society Library is a document attesting to the authenticity of two mummies sold to the museum. Dated July 28, 1825, from Trieste and signed N. Mireoville, the note claims the mummies were collected in Alexandria by the signer and shipped from Trieste on an Austrian vessel and later sold to a W. B. Hight, from whom Peale may have purchased them.

21. Ibid., p. 21 n. 4.

22. Flexner, *America's Old Masters*, pp. 195–96.

23. *Selected Papers*, ed. Miller, vol. 1, p. 380.

24. Charles Willson Peale, letter to Joseph Brewer, Philadelphia, 15 January 1783, in *Selected Papers*, ed. Miller, vol. 1, pp. 382–83. Peale had four children by this time: Raphaelle, Angelica Kauffman, Rembrandt, and Titian Ramsay. His worries about his mother-in-law's will may stem, writes Miller, from financial difficulties. Questions of inheritance in fact haunt Peale all his life, since his early trip to study with West marked his final understanding that he would not, as he had hoped, be receiving an inheritance from England. Further, he learned, during the time of that sojourn, of the true, disgraceful circumstances of his father's emigration to America. Phoebe Lloyd in "A Death in the Family" sees this period as a key to the ways in which Peale concentrates on "making the most of a loss," including the altered mourning portrait of Rachel and Margaret, throughout his career (see p. 5).

25. See Richardson, et al., p. 88.

Issues of trompe l'oeil often appear in the discourse around Peale. See, for example, *Life, Journals, and Correspondence of Reverend Manasseh Cutler*, ed. William Parker Cutler and Julia Perkins Cutler (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke, 1888). In his account of a journey to New York and Philadelphia in 1787, Cutler tells of how he visited Peale with Dr. Gerardus Clarkson. As they entered Peale's studio, they saw "a gentleman...standing with a pencil in one hand and a small sheet of ivory in the other and his eyes directed to the opposite side of the room, as though he was taking some object on his ivory sheet." They decide that Peale must be busy and they retreat to wait. But in turning around, they meet Peale, who shows them that the "gentleman" is a sculpture of himself, life-sized, in wax. Cutler remarks "To what perfection is this art capable of being carried? By this method our particular friends and ancestors might be preserved in perfect likeness to the latest generation. We seem to be able in some degree to disappoint the ravages of time, and prevent mortality itself, the common lot of man, from concealing from us in its dreary retreats our dearest connections" (pp. 259–60). Peale writes in his *Autobiography*: "If a painter... paints a portrait in such perfection as to produce a perfect illusion of sight, in such perfection that the spectator believes the real person is here, that happy painter will deserved to be caressed by the greatest of mortal beings" (p. 338).

26. Flexner, *The Light of Distant Skies*, p. 140.

27. See *Psychiatric Dictionary*, ed. Leland E. Hinsie and Robert Jean Campbell, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 205.

28. Peale describes the moving pictures in his *Autobiography*, pp. 79–83. The presentation of *Pandemonium*, after Milton's description, is accompanied by a note that "Before the scene opened the following words were sung with musick": "To raise by art the stately pile/ we will essay our skill/...Yet great the task to make the glow/ that burning sulphur does bestow/ Yet great the task to make the glow/ That burning, that burning sulfur/ Does bestow..." (p. 81). In the American Philosophical Society copy of the typescript, a 1785 notice of the exhibit of moving pictures is inserted between pp. 79–81.

29. Charles Willson Peale, letter to Benjamin West, 17 November 1788, in *Selected Papers*, ed. Miller, vol. 1, p. 544.

30. Charles Willson Peale, *Discourse Introductory to a Course of Lectures on the Science of Nature with Original Music Composed for, and Sung on, the Occasion*, p. 48.

31. Ibid., pp. 39–40.

32. Ibid., pp. 6–7.

33. Ibid., p. 47.

34. Sellers, *Charles Willson Peale and His World*, p. 305.

35. Charles Willson Peale, letter to Elizabeth DePeyster Peale, 28 June 1801, in *Selected Papers*, ed. Miller, vol. 2, part 1, p. 335.

36. Charles Willson Peale, letter to Andrew Ellicott, 12 July 1801, in *Selected Papers*, ed. Miller, vol. 2, part 1, pp. 343–44.

37. Charles Willson Peale, letter to Benjamin West, 16 December 1807, in *Selected Papers*, ed. Miller, vol. 2, part 2,

pp. 1052–54. This letter is discussed briefly in an article in the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 9 (1885), pp. 130–32. At the left of the tent, standing with arms folded, is Peale's fellow naturalist Alexander Wilson (author of *American Ornithology*). Climbing a ladder in the foreground is John Masten, the farm's owner. Peale himself stands with arm extended, holding a large drawing of the bones. Next to him, from left to right, are Mrs. Hannah Peale in Quaker cap, possibly Mrs. Rembrandt Peale, and members of the Peale family: Rembrandt, Sybilla, who is pointing up to heaven to explain God's plan for the universe and the meaning of the discovery to her little sister Elizabeth, Rubens (with glasses) and Raphaelle. James Peale stands between the two poles at midpicture. In the group to the right of Wilson, Peale's deceased second wife, Elizabeth DePeyster, scolds her youngest son, Titian Ramsay II; her sister and brother-in-law, Major and Mrs. John Stagg, stand behind her. Other relatives are behind the green umbrella and the two younger Peale boys, Linnaeus and Franklin, push a log into the pit with a long pole.

38. Rembrandt Peale, *An Historical Disquisition on the Mammoth, or Great American Incognitum, an Extinct, Immense, Carnivorous Animal, Whose Fossil Remains Have Been Found in America* (1803), in *Selected Papers*, ed. Miller, vol. 2, pp. 544–81.

39. Peale's statement is in the *Autobiography*, pp. 428–29. See also Sellers, *Mr. Peale's Museum*, p. 246. It is interesting to note that Manasseh Cutler's journal of his 1787 visit also draws an analogy between Peale and Noah. See *Life, Journals, and Correspondence of Rev. Manasseh Cutler*, ed. Cutler and Cutler, p. 261.

40. Mario Praz, *Conversation Pieces: A Survey of the Informal Group Portrait in Europe and America* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971), pp. 209–23.

41. Charles Willson Peale, letter to Rembrandt Peale, 11 September 1808, in *Selected Papers*, ed. Miller, vol. 2, part 2, p. 1136. By the time the picture was finished, St. George had died in 1778; Peale's mother had died in 1791; his young daughter Eleanor (here on his mother's lap) had died in 1772 in infancy; Rachel had died in 1790; Margaret had died in infancy in 1788; Peale's sister Margaret Jane had also died in 1788; and the family's old nurse, on the right, Margaret Durgan had died in 1791.

42. Several times in his career Peale was called upon to paint memorial portraits of dead or dying children. See *Selected Papers*, ed. Miller, vol. 1, p. 415. It is a theme we see not only in the relation between Titian's death and the museum's establishment, but also in the controversies surrounding the life and death of Raphaelle Peale. In his thorough analysis of *The Artist in His Museum*, Roger B. Stein adds a note that poses a somewhat ironic reading of Peale's citation of Luke 15 ("For thy brother was dead, and is alive again, and was lost and is found") in his 1812, "An Essay to Promote Domestic Happiness." Stein sees the quote as an admonition to Peale's own prodigal son, Raphaelle. Raphaelle died in 1825 after years of physical and mental instability probably brought on by arsenic poisoning as a result of taxidermic work. (See Stein, "Charles Willson Peale's Expressive Design: The Artist in His Museum," in ed. Miller and Ward, *New Perspectives on Charles Peale*, pp. 167–218, p. 217 n. 95.) For an account of Raphaelle's poisoning, see Phoebe Lloyd, "Philadelphia Story," *Art in America* 76 (November 1988), pp. 154–71, 195–203. Further, there is an uncanny echo between the passage from Luke and the 1783 breakdown, for it is Raphaelle who cannot be remembered at the time. And it is obviously Raphaelle's drinking and tumultuous marriage, which are the thinly veiled referents of passages on the "hideous form of drunkenness" which makes "the proud form of man… degraded below the brutes," described in Peale's *An Essay to Promote Domestic Happiness by Charles W. Peale* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum, 1812) Library Company copy, p. 4. The meaning of the Luke passage can also be taken to refer to the position of St. George in *Peale Family Group* where Peale's painting situates himself and James in conversation and positions of observation in relation to the dead, but here revived, St. George. And the theme of the lost brother recurs as well, of course, with the traumatic aftermath of the Battle of Trenton—James's disfigurement and Charles's inability to recognize him.

43. See *Selected Papers*, ed. Miller, vol. 2, part 2, p. 1136.

44. Charles Willson Peale, letter to Rembrandt Peale, 23 July 1822.

45. It is suggestive to consider that in his last years Peale in fact seemed to undertake a repetition or review of his earlier work. In January of 1821 he began a large historical work on a theme directly in contrast to the Deist tenets on miracles and revealed religion, *Christ Healing the Sick at the Pool of Bethesda*. The work returned to the issues of miracles and Peale's legacy from West. West had treated the subject, even though Peale was working on an adaptation from a print by Christian Wilhelm Ernest Dietrich. In 1823 Peale made a new version of the *Staircase Group*. In this now-vanished piece, eight feet by six feet, he showed himself full-length, descending a short flight of steps with a palette and maulstick in hand and his saddler's hammer in the foreground. His movement is the opposite of the earlier staircase group, inverting the generations and inverting the direction of movement. His painting room and the Museum could be seen behind him. He wrote in his *Autobiography*, "I mean to make the whole piece a deception if I can…The frame is to be a door case with 2 steps and in the painting two other steps, and with my left foot on the lower step and the other behind as coming downstairs. This may be truly emblematical of his desending [*sic*] in life, with his pallet and pencils in his left hand and the mallstick in his right. Behind an easel with your Mother's portrait and her child asleep, from the idea of a picture which he painted early in his life, and which was much admired, so much that a poet wrote the following verses on it" (pp. 452–53). Peale characteristically talks of himself in the third person. In this passage he conflates the two pictures: the now-lost portrait of Rachel holding a sleeping Margaret, finished about 1771 (see Lloyd, "A Death in the Family," p. 3)

and the funerary portrait called *Rachel Weeping* to which he appended his verses. He forgets himself, rather slyly, as he forgets the pictures in time. "The steps will certainly be a true illusion, and why not my figure? It is said that Apelles painted grapes so natural that the birds came to pick them, that he then painted a boy to protect them, but the birds still came to take the grapes"—Peale recorded in a letter to Rubens of August 25, 1823, that Thomas Sully was fooled by the new *Staircase* painting, thinking the bottom step was a real step as in the first *Staircase* group. See Sellers, *Charles Willson Peale and His World*, pp. 409–11.

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During the discussions at this conference, several participants proposed various reasons for the constant return to the topic of displayed bodies, body fragments, and disease in various presentations. I did not offer my own response then—it seemed more personal than the others—but I have always regretted my silence. Until I moved to Texas in 1991, I lived in New York and attended most of Dia's "Discussions in Contemporary Culture." This symposium on visual display reminded me of all of the individuals now deceased or dying from AIDS, whom I'd seen and heard at these conferences over the years. This essay is dedicated to the memory of Eugene Santomasso, a mentor and beloved friend.

1. "U. S. Gives Go Signal For Superjets," and "Your Read and Study Guide," *My Weekly Reader* 48, no. 4 (5 October 1966), pp. 1, 8.

2. The designers also reveal their indifference to visual appearances by mistakenly switching the captions for the images of the two jets reproduced with the article.

3. "Packaged Power" and "Your Read and Study Guide," *My Weekly Reader* 48, no. 6 (19 October 1966), pp. 1, 8.

4. "Where the Buffalo Roam," *My Weekly Reader* 48, no. 7 (26 October 1966), p. 1.

5. "Your Read and Study Guide: 'Where the Buffalo Roam,'" *My Weekly Reader* 48, no. 7 (26 October 1966), p. 8.

6. John Kennedy, "Philanthropy and Science in New York City: The American Museum of Natural History 1868–1968" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1968), pp. 226–32.

7. Ibid., p. 231. Kennedy notes that this was the conclusion drawn in a survey taken by the Council of the Scientific Staff in March 1936, n. p., Archives of the American Museum of Natural History, New York.

8. Kennedy, p. 232.

9. Ibid., p. 234.

10. Ibid., p. 238.

11. Parr was an oceanographer and the former director of the Peabody Museum of Yale University. The scientists of the AMNH were disappointed by his appointment because they did not consider oceanography to be a museum science, and some of the staff believed that Parr was not appropriately impressed by the natural stature of the AMNH or the prestige of his position. Many also did not approve of his well-known advocacy of new, unorthodox exhibition methods that disregarded the pre-existing traditions and strengths of individual institutions and collections (Kennedy, pp. 239–40). In a letter to Kent Leavitt dated October 10, 1947, the AMNH's president, F. T. Davison, noted that Parr developed his basic ideas for new exhibition halls long before he came to the AMNH and "he brought them with him to the museum" (Archives of AMNH).

12. Kennedy provides a useful summary of the AMNH's commitment to evolutionary studies and taxonomic zoology, Parr's opinions on this history, and his ignorance of the revolutionary developments occurring within these areas during the very period he called them moribund fields. (See Kennedy, pp. 241–44.)

13. In a letter to the museum's president dated February 5, 1942, A. P. Osborn stated that the trustees established the Plan and Scope Committee in January 1942 to develop a new "philosophy of purpose" for the AMNH (Archives of AMNH). This committee reported to the director, but Parr also took over as the committee's chair in March, three months before he officially became the museum's new director; he skillfully used the committee's meetings to draft new policies sympathetic to his goals.

14. Minutes from the meeting of the Administrative Committee on Plan and Scope (9 March 1942), n.p., Archives of AMNH.

15. The Plan and Scope Committee's review was initiated approximately one month before the opening of the North American Mammals Hall on April 8, 1942, the last traditional habitat group hall to be built in the museum.

16. For a slightly more in-depth discussion of my interpretation of this process see my "Reproducing Nature: The Museum of Natural History as Nonsite," *October* 45 (Summer 1988), pp. 109–27.

17. George H. Sherwood, "The Story of the Museum's Service to the Schools," *Natural History* 17, no. 4 (July–August 1927), p. 332.

18. "The Habitat Group" (6 May 1942), p. 1, Archives of AMNH. Although the author of this text is not indicated, Parr attributes it to Dr. Clark Wissler in a memo concerning exhibitions for the Plan and Scope Committee (July 1942), p. 8, Archives of AMNH. Wissler may have based his contribution to the Plan and Scope review on his own, earlier survey of the museum's needs, begun at the request of the Council of the Scientific Staff in 1940 and completed sometime in 1942. For a brief discussion of the history and purpose of Wissler's survey, see Kennedy, pp. 233–34. Parr later wrote several articles on the history and general premises of habitat groups. See, for example, "The Time and Place for Experimentation in Museum Design," *Curator* 1, no. 4 (1958), pp. 36–40; "The Habitat Group," *Curator* 2, no. 2 (1959), pp. 107–28; and "Dimensions, Backgrounds, and Uses of Habitat Groups," *Curator* 4, no. 3 (1961), pp. 199–215.

19. "The Museum's Visitor" (6 May 1942), pp. 1–2, Archives of AMNH.

20. Alfred Parr, letter to Clark Wissler (12 March 1942), n.p., Archives of AMNH.

21. Untitled document, (ca. 12 March 1942), n.p., Archives of AMNH.

22. Ibid.