

BETWEEN ART ACADEMY AND ENTERTAINMENT CULTURE: PHILIPPE JACQUES DE LOUTHERBOURG, JOHN MARTIN, AND THE SUBLIME

[ABSTRACT]

This article discusses the work and the reception of the artists Philippe Jacques de Loutherbourg (1740–1812) and John Martin (1789–1854), both in terms of their engagement with art as an academic discipline and in terms of their relationship to the emergent middle-class interest in the consumption of visual spectacle. A central concern in both respects was the aesthetic category of the sublime, which had been established around the mid-eighteenth century as the primary visual mode of experiencing the force and power of nature. De Loutherbourg successfully recreated sublime spectacles (for example, shipwrecks, volcanic eruptions, waterfalls, avalanches) within academy painting and stage design. Later, he invented the *Eidophusikon*, a multimedia device that was designed to stage dynamic natural phenomena. The *Eidophusikon* is thought to have influenced London's pictorial entertainment circle, which proved inspirational for John Martin around half a century later.

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Introduction

The works of the artists Philippe Jacques de Loutherbourg (1740–1812) and John Martin (1789–1854) oscillate between two notions of pictorial experience: on the one hand, an artwork to be consumed by a small elite; and on the other hand, a visual spectacle as middle class leisure activity within the emerging field of popular culture. In this article, I will attempt to locate the production and reception of both artists at this complex intersection. Martin and de Loutherbourg participated in certain 'popularization' processes in British culture, in the sense that their pictures reached out to urban middle class audiences and introduced them to traditional academic motifs and aesthetic categories (for example, the beautiful, the pastoral, the sublime, and the picturesque), as well as to particular mythological, scientific, and historical narratives.

A useful paradigm for describing and understanding the popularization of previously elite disciplines in early-nineteenth-century Britain is provided by the

literary scholar and cultural historian Ralph O'Connor in his book *The Earth on Show* (2007), in which he describes how various discourses surrounding the earth sciences were made increasingly available not just to a small, semi-professional elite but also to a wider range of social classes. In this context, the terms 'popularization' and 'popular' are thus to be understood as referring to what O'Connor describes as 'the presence (real or imagined) of a non-specialist public, whose identity and constitution varied', that is to say, a public which was interested in and willing to consume in remediated form the findings of semi-professional enquiry or productivity.¹

A central motif in both de Louthembourg and Martin's works is the aesthetic category of 'the sublime', which had a significant impact on their iconography, their formal repertoire, and the staging and reception of their work. The sublime is an offshoot of a varied theoretical tradition, reaching as far back as late antiquity, which has undergone numerous transformations over time and developed a vast variety of subtraditions and subcategories.² Because of the complex character of the sublime, critics have been at loss to find an exhaustive definition. On the basis of Edmund Burke's treatise *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), which contributed significantly to the popularization of the sublime in British culture in the course of the late eighteenth century, it is possible roughly to describe the sublime as a complex emotional response to a specific kind of external stimulus. In this process, according to Burke's formulation, terror (experienced vicariously, or at a safe distance) and pleasure become intertwined in a symbiotic relationship.³ According to Burke, the sublime functions as a counterpoint to beauty, which in this regard is conceived as a source of aesthetic pleasure devoid of any element of terror. Crucial for the understanding of the sublime as the pivotal element in the works of de Louthembourg and Martin is the way it was transformed during the eighteenth century from a rhetorical category (as it is found in Longinus's thesis *Peri hýpsous*, or *On the Sublime*) to an experiential one, that is, to its becoming the primary mode of experiencing extreme natural phenomena. This shift took place in the decades after the publication of Burke's treatise.⁴ No less significant is the extent to which, as part of this process, the sublime became associated with recurrent set of tropes and conventions, which were increasingly commodified and marketed within Britain's public culture of visual entertainment.

This transformation of the sublime made itself felt within a wide range of cultural phenomena and discourses, such as landscape art and its ascendancy as an academic discipline, fictional and non-fictional writing, the natural sciences, garden design, travel culture, tourism and so on. In addition to this, I will argue here that the developing interest in the sublime also prompted new developments in terms of the content matter, the formal pictorial features, and the media technologies associated with visual culture.⁵ Burke actually downplayed the role of visual media as a vehicle for sublime experience: in his account it was primarily (though not altogether only) an encounter with natural phenomena which could elicit the sensation of the sublime; works of visual art were at best considered

approximations and insufficient imitations of the sublimity found in the real-life object.⁶ However, I will argue that exactly this exclusion of visual media from theoretical descriptions of the sublime was countered by media-technological innovators who saw both aesthetic and commercial opportunities. What these new pictorial technologies had in common was the aim to overcome the limitations of traditional painting. As we shall see, Martin's monumental pictures of disasters and de Louthembourg's *Eidophusikon* were significant vehicles for this historical development.⁷

The mutual goal of the men responsible for these media technological innovations was the increase of affective intensity and visual dynamism. This was to take place through illusionistic immersion and multimedia technological interplay, violence against the viewer's sensibilities, and the disciplining of the viewer's body. These tendencies within the late eighteenth- and nineteenth centuries can be contextualized as part of the shifting social, epistemological, and media-technological environment. These are the overlapping strands that are brought out in Jonathan Crary's book *Techniques of the Observer* (1990), in which he takes a wide perspective on early nineteenth-century culture – encompassing scientific and aesthetical discourses, optical technologies, forms of visual entertainment, and social structures of capitalist modernity. Crary describes the production and establishment of a new type of observer in the nineteenth century. This observer is no longer part of a “free” private, and individualized subject’ (as represented by the paradigm of the *camera obscura*), but is turned into a disciplined subject.⁸ Within this new aesthetic paradigm, the body of this new observer ‘would be increasingly subjectified to forms of investigation, regulation, and discipline . . .’⁹ It is these practices of controlling perception on a physiological level (with the aim to create experiences of illusionistic immersion), arranging bodies in space, managing attention, as well as fixing and isolating the observer, that are at work within the developing art and media history of the sublime. It is also something we see in particular works of de Louthembourg and Martin, which are now to be discussed in more detail.

Philippe Jacques de Louthembourg and the *Eidophusikon*

Philippe Jacques (later: Philip James) de Louthembourg was born in Alsace in 1740, half a decade before Martin. The career of the artist is characterized by an astonishing diversity in terms of his production, which is perhaps one of the reasons why his impact on Western art and culture went unrecognized for a long time.¹⁰ His oeuvre encompasses the whole repertoire of the usual iconography connected with the sublime (as for example sea storms and shipwrecks, Alpine landscapes, volcanic eruptions, firestorms and waterfalls, and battles on land or at sea). The reception of these pictorial spectacles was European wide. Even more importantly, his work shows a willingness to provide an intersection between the conventions of the art produced in the traditional academy and urban middle-



ill. 1 [P. J. de Louthembourg, *Shipwreck*, 1767. Oil on canvas, 58 x 81 cm, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna]

class entertainment culture. Here, it was the bankable representation of the sublime landscape which provided the connecting link.

Already at a young age, de Louthembourg made a successful career in the academic system of Paris. At 22 he was given the opportunity to show some of his paintings at the Academy Salon exhibition of 1763, an event that immediately catapulted the young artist to recognition among the higher echelons of the Parisian art scene. De Louthembourg became particularly known for his depictions of shipwrecks and storms at sea (ill. 1) in the style of his famous fellow painter Joseph Vernet (1714–1789), as well as for his landscapes and genre scenes of bucolic life.

Three years after his spectacular entry into the art business, de Louthembourg became an Academy member, even before he had reached the official mandatory age of 30.¹¹ At the peak of his success, de Louthembourg decided to leave behind his wife and children and start a new life in London. The motivation for this deci-



ill. 2 [E. F. Burney, *Eidophusikon*, c. 1782. Watercolour on paper, 21.2 x 29.2 cm, British Museum, London]

sion has been the subject of speculation. It seems likely, however, that it was de Louthembourg's scandalous (and expensive) lifestyle, which had already begun to affect his reputation as an artist. This made him cross over the English Channel.¹² He began working in London around 1773 as a stage designer for David Garrick's Drury Lane Theatre, a tightly run and profit-based institution whose audience ranged from nobility and critics to tradesmen and servants.¹³ Enjoying a comfortable salary and far-reaching creative freedom, which even encompassed costume design, de Louthembourg stayed at Drury Lane for almost ten years, turning theatre stages into landscape spectacles with great success.¹⁴

However, it was the invention of the *Eidophusikon* which allowed de Louthembourg to create the most intense simulations of sublime natural objects. Derived from Greek, the neologism *Eidophusikon* was advertised as 'various imitations of Natural Phenomena, represented by moving pictures'.¹⁵ This ostentatious use of the Greek language in designating new media apparatuses was meant to raise, emphasize, and advertise the equipment's cultural value – a convention which would become the norm in the subsequent history of European urban culture. The only preserved image of the *Eidophusikon* is a watercolour by Edward Francis Burney (1760–1848) (ill. 2); but since the device drew much public attention, it is





Designed by J. B. H. B. H.

possible to rely on numerous contemporary eyewitness accounts in order to get an idea of its appearance and operation.

The *Eidophusikon* was a framed pictorial, yet three-dimensional space that exhibited a variety of natural processes and landscapes during its performance. When it was first advertised, de Louthembourg did not promise too much, for the *Eidophusikon*'s pictures were literally moving (further on this phenomenon below). In terms of the measurements of the *Eidophusikon*'s screen-space, the numbers given in its critical assessments differ. The lack of consensus can perhaps be ascribed to the confused information given in primary sources (press articles, diaries, memoirs etc.); alternatively, the scale of the screen-space may have varied from location to location (the *Eidophusikon* was moved a couple of times).¹⁶ Based on an overview of the research publications, however, it is possible cautiously to estimate that the apparatus had a width of 1.8 to 2.5 meters, a height of 1 to 1.8 meters, and a depth of 2.5 to 2.7 meters.

The size of the audience-space certainly varied from location to location. The auditorium at de Louthembourg's home, where the device was first shown, could hold around 130 people. Later locations provided space for an even larger audience.¹⁷ The individual spectator was seated in front of the image in a spectator space darkened for the duration of the show. De Louthembourg used a range of devices in his shows, including painting and transparent visuals, magic lantern slides and lighting effects in different colours (with the source hidden), other special effects (smoke, fire, hail, and wind), sounds and music, mobile boards (depicting clouds and other objects), the mechanic imitation of swell and falling water, faux terrain and mechanical miniature figures. Each performance consisted of usually five, sometimes six, landscape spectacles. During the first season of 1781, transparent paintings as well as music performances were employed during the transition between the sceneries.¹⁸ One fundamental difference between the various visceral landscapes was that they alternated contemplative and beautiful landscapes with more sublime and terrifying spectacles. In its first season, the *Eidophusikon* presented a sunrise over London's Greenwich Park, the port of Tangier with the rock of Gibraltar seen at noon time, a sunset over the bay of Naples, the moonlit Mediterranean set against a campfire, and a sea storm with a shipwreck.¹⁹ While the sublime spectacle of the shipwreck represented the big climax of the first season, the second season of 1782 featured the alternation of beautiful, sublime, and picturesque landscape types: a sunrise in the fog over an Italian harbor, Niagara Falls, a sunset in the rain with a view of Dover (its castle, town, and cliffs), the moonlit coast of Japan with the phenomenon of a water-spout and the Pandemonium scene from Milton's *Paradise Lost* (*Satan Arming his Troops on the Banks of the Fiery Lake*).²⁰

With his *Eidophusikon* de Louthembourg – as he would explain himself – aimed to overcome one of the most crippling problems of traditional painting: the fact that even 'the most exquisite painting represented only one moment of time in action'.²¹ What traditional painting technology lacks, the *Eidophusikon* would make up for: it 'add[s] progressive motion to accurate resemblance [*sic*]'.²² What

de Louthembourg had in mind was an enhancement of painting's capacity for illusions. This also shows that his artistic thinking was underpinned by an understanding of pictorial discourses. First and foremost, he was a painter of images rather than a designer of theatre stages. In addition to this, de Louthembourg had good reason to want his *Eidophusikon* to be associated with painting's age-old endeavour to achieve illusionistic perfection. The opening of the *Eidophusikon* coincided with de Louthembourg's attempt to gain membership at London's Royal Academy. He depended on the goodwill of influential people, such as the artist Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788) and, most crucially, Academy President Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792). Hence, he had to prevent his popular and commercial device from becoming associated with London's public entertainment culture or his former undertakings in the theatre business.²³

In order to achieve his goal, de Louthembourg presented the *Eidophusikon* as part of an art gallery exhibition. He turned his home near Leicester Square into a gallery space with some of his most famous paintings on the walls. Furthermore, the high entrance fee of five shillings ensured that the audience comprised a select elite of nobility and other affluent people. Gainsborough and Reynolds were invited to experience and examine the *Eidophusikon*, and both artists were left with a feeling of deep fascination. In *The European Magazine*, de Louthembourg, for example, declared it a 'new species of painting' and 'one of the most remarkable inventions in the art'.²⁴ The *Eidophusikon* did not become an obstacle for gaining an academic title for de Louthembourg, rather it turned out to be quite the opposite. De Louthembourg became an academy member just a few months after exhibiting his *Eidophusikon* for the first time. Furthermore, the press reviewed the apparatus favourably as an exemplary artefact representing a sophisticated cultural taste. Its three-dimensional images were even compared to masterpieces by Vernet, Joseph Wright of Derby (1734–1797), as well as by de Louthembourg himself.

In addition to de Louthembourg's goal of overcoming the static nature of painting, the technological setup of the *Eidophusikon* was deliberately aimed at merging various perceptual experiences for the spectator. The means by which this challenging task was to be achieved become clear when paralleled with another of the artist's projects. For Christmas 1781, de Louthembourg produced a coming-of-age happening for William Beckford (1760–1844), a young and wealthy bachelor, who shared de Louthembourg's interests in mysteries, cabbalistic rituals, and necromancy. For Beckford and his coterie of friends, de Louthembourg turned Beckford's mansion (ill. 3) into an ensemble of sinister grottoes, oriental temples, and chambers – a space filled with a multitude of sensations and events. The doors and windows were kept shut for three days, during which the guests were to explore and wander de Louthembourg's fantastical vision. Historian Iain McCalman and literary scholar Simon During both describe the event as an experience of immersion, virtual reality, and modern enchantment.²⁵

With his *Eidophusikon*, de Louthembourg aimed for very similar effects, yet he achieved them in a different manner. Instead of enabling the recipient to freely



ill. 3 [T. Higham after John Martin, *Views of the West and North Fronts of Fonthill Abbey*. Ill. in: John Rutter, *Delineations of Fonthill and Its Abbey*, 1823]

explore a concealed fantasy world and engage in it with his or her own body, the spectator is placed in front of a screen-space as part of a collective audience.²⁶ Because of the spectator's immobilized body and the dimmed light in the viewer-space, the awareness of his or her somatic presence in time and space is significantly undermined. This is quite different from traditional theatre performances, where the same time and space are shared by actor and audience (even though the play might be set in a different historical period).²⁷ At the Beckford event, the spectator became fully isolated from outside reality and was fully immersed in a virtual time and space, within which s/he was free to physically move around. The *Eidophusikon* aimed to do the same, yet with the important difference that even the receiver's physical body, in effect, became restricted. As the frame demarcates the border between the real and the virtual, this border is transgressed during the performance, because the presence of the virtual screen-space significantly surpasses the presence of reality, thereby enabling the spectator to be enchanted (and affected) by the sunrise over Greenwich Park, the sinking of a ship, or the erection of demonic architecture in Milton's vision of Hell. Ideally, the result would be an immediate experience of dynamic landscapes and events, which – instead of inviting standard receptive procedures of 'reading' and interpreting the image – is made possible through a sensual and bodily connection with the object of art. The writer and artist William Henry Pyne (1769–1843) describes his experience of the *Eidophusikon*'s shipwreck event as follows:

The effect of a Storm at Sea, with the loss of the Halsewell Indiaman, was awful and astonishing; for the conflict of the raging elements he [De Louthembourg] described with all its characteristic horrors of wind, hail, thunder, lightning, and the roaring of the waves, with such marvellous [*sic*] imitation of nature, that mariners have declared, whilst viewing the scene, that it amounted to reality.²⁸

Pyne proceeds to describe the exhibition of the shipwreck in minute detail, finding all elements in resembling nature closely. He puts particular emphasis on the motion and the temporal quality of the event: the movement of clouds, the flashing of lightning, the sinking of the ship, the waves' circular movement of rising, breaking, and falling. The cited passage above is just one among several descriptive accounts, which show that the experience of the *Eidophusikon*'s shipwreck was framed in the vocabulary of the sublime as it had been established and popularized in the eighteenth century. Viewed from this perspective, the *Eidophusikon* visualizes the Burkean notion of sublime 'power' through movement, thereby challenging the spectator's physiological-psychological apparatus of perception.²⁹ Pyne's mentioning of the mariners' approval of the scene's illusionistic features is a narrative typical for contemporary descriptions of immersive media. Statements such as Pyne's can be found throughout the history of immersive media.³⁰

Despite Pyne's invocation of the mariners' expertise, there may also be elements inherent in the *Eidophusikon*'s technological setup that could disturb the immersive and illusionistic experience of the sublime, the picturesque, or the beautiful. This is particularly so in regard to the size of the screen-space. Although the critic Rüdiger Joppien stresses that audience seats were situated at the appropriate distance from the screen to allow the viewer to gain the impression of looking outside a window, the fact is that the *Eidophusikon*'s images usually did not exceed the size of contemporary landscape paintings.³¹ Furthermore, if one considers the presentation of towering waves and satanic palaces, an unfortunate discrepancy between these sublime objects and their size would have troubled the spectator. But, apparently, this did not interfere with the spectators' ability to suspend disbelief – at least contemporaries did not express such criticisms. The effect of motion in pictorial landscape must have been overwhelming. More generally, we also ought to consider that perception is not simply representation but also construction, and eventually the result of conventional viewing habits. The relation between a sublime object represented on a screen and a spectator's experience is not contained solely in an act of affective immediacy but also in cognitive procedures and conventions of perception, a complexity which in principle renders any claims of pure receptive immediacy (as imagined above) impossible.

After the first two seasons, de Louthembourg sold the *Eidophusikon* to a Mr. Chapman, who reopened it at Exeter Change in 1786 and toured with it throughout Britain the following years.³² Under new ownership, its high-culture reputation gradually declined, or rather, the new management did not understand how



ill. 4 [P. J. de Louthembourg, *An Avalanche in the Alps*, 1803. Oil on canvas, 109.9 x 160 cm, Tate Gallery, London]

London cultural elite should be wooed. With lower entrance fees, a bigger location, and interludes with comic readings, imitations, and a dog, the *Eidophusikon* drifted in the direction of the ‘popular’, where it would delight middle-class audiences.³³ As for de Louthembourg, he continued to pursue his career as a painter of the Royal Academy, who focused on battle scenes, natural disasters (ill. 4), and a variety of other subjects.

De Louthembourg produced one last project for the theatre. This was the play *Omai; or, a Trip round the World* (1785). He furthermore illustrated books such as *Macklin’s Holy Bible* (1800, 1816) and David Hume’s *History of England* (1806). In addition to these artistic efforts, he also opened a mesmerist healing clinic for the poor in 1789. This was in collaboration with his second wife Lucy, working out of their house in Hammersmith Terrace. Offering their services for free and spurred only by their enthusiasm for cabalistic mysticism, mesmerism, and the occult, the couple purportedly treated their patients by the healing touch of their hands.

Although the enterprise attracted thousands of people during its six-month lifespan, it proved to have an adverse effect on de Louthembourg's reputation. He was consequently forced to distance himself from the project and finally to shut down the clinic.³⁴

That the *Eidophusikon* folded in the 1790s presumably had to do with the fact that visual entertainment culture was a fickle and swiftly changing landscape, which produced ever new media technologies with (literally) bigger and better attractions. However, these attractions seemed to build on de Louthembourg's achievements, as will be discussed in the following.

John Martin: Sublime Stagings of the Apocalypse

It will probably come as no surprise to some scholars that John Martin will be included in an article on de Louthembourg. In William Feaver's monograph from 1975, for example, it is presented as a twist of fate that Martin was to produce the painting *Sadak in Search of the Waters of Oblivion* (ill. 5), which gave him his commercial breakthrough, the very month de Louthembourg's passed away in March 1812 – as if Martin, 'perhaps unconsciously, took up the succession'.³⁵

Barbara C. Morden, Raymond Lister, and Iain McCalman, the leading expert on de Louthembourg, all point out de Louthembourg's influence on Martin's work, yet without evidence to justify their claims.³⁶ Another more implicit connection regards the potential impact of de Louthembourg's *Eidophusikon* on London's visual entertainment scene. It has been claimed that the technology triggered the development and emergence of succeeding multimedia entertainment devices such as the Diorama, different panorama variations as well as firework spectacles and landscape designs within the stage arts.³⁷ Martin certainly had the opportunity to familiarize himself with this urban public culture when he moved to London in 1806 and may therefore have picked up inspiration from de Louthembourg.³⁸ On the other hand, there seems to be no clear evidence for such an influence, only the probability that a device as innovative and celebrated as the *Eidophusikon* must have left traces in London's cultural scene and affected subsequent media technologies. What we do know is the inspiration that Martin's colleague, the painter Joseph Turner (1775–1851) drew from de Louthembourg's work, and Turner is known to have had a decisive influence on Martin.³⁹

As it should be clear, the question of the extent to which de Louthembourg had any direct or indirect influence on Martin's art deserves further scrutiny. In my assessment, what primarily links both artists together is their participation as significant agents within the art and media history of the sublime and their close association with the media history of immersion, as well as their role in influencing the development of the modern observer, as described by Crary.⁴⁰

Just like de Louthembourg, Martin was looking for means to radicalize the already established iconography of the sublime (as principally displayed by artists such as Vernet, Caspar Wolf [1735–1783], Pierre-Jacques Volaire [1729–1799],

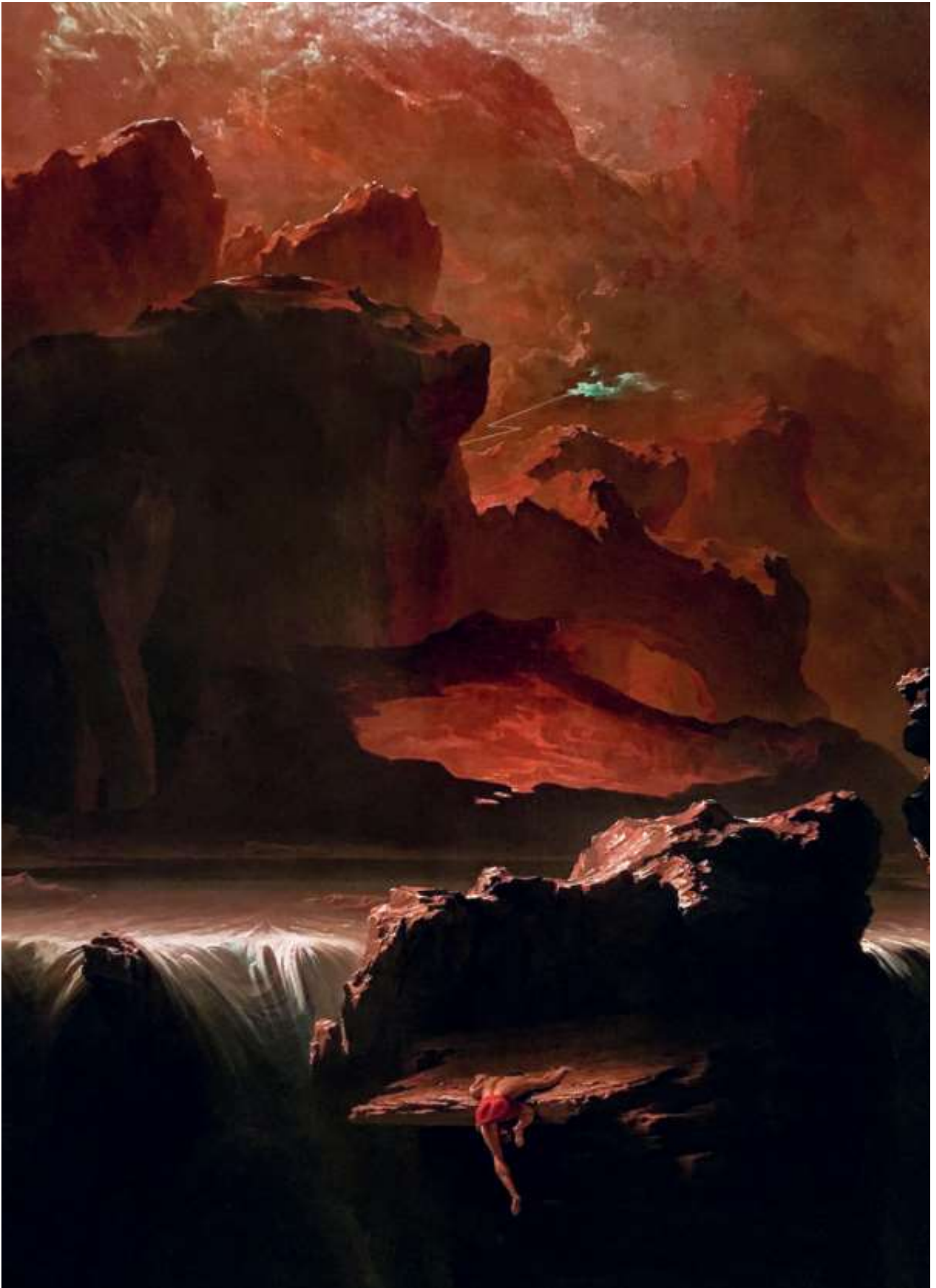
and Wright of Derby). Martin's efforts to create intensified pictorial experiences of the sublime are to be located and contextualized both within London's visual entertainment culture and within the tradition and conventions of the relatively young academic genre of landscape painting (rather than within the genre conventions of history painting). This places Martin's monumental images of historical, mythological, and literary disasters in the tradition of landscape depictions by artists such as Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665), Claude Lorrain (1600–1682), Salvator Rosa (1615–1673), and Vernet. In the paintings of these predecessors, the element of landscape often becomes the main subject, which is foregrounded to the extent that it completely overwhelms the embedded human figures. However, what distinguishes Martin's 'historical landscapes' from these predecessors is his tendency drastically to intensify this overwhelming effect.⁴¹

What de Louthembourg and Martin further shared was their commitment to bettering the lot of their fellow men. While de Louthembourg's occupation as a *pro bono* faith healer only lasted six months or so, Martin devoted over two decades of his life and a great part of his fortune to a project on improving London's water supply and sewage system – an enterprise whose several attempts all eventually failed.⁴²

An interesting difference between the two artists can be noted in the way they were received by their contemporaries. Both men attempted to gain recognition in London Royal Academy circles and at the same time capitalize on London's emerging entertainment scene aimed at the urban middle-classes. On the other hand, there was a certain permeability between elite art and popular culture. The annual academy exhibitions, for instance, already made artists' works accessible to broader swathes of audiences and received considerable press coverage. In addition to this, London society witnessed during the eighteenth century the establishment of a commercial art market with galleries and exhibitions independent of the Royal Academy. Nonetheless, the relation between art and entertainment was often regarded as dichotomous, and it was discursively employed and instrumentalized within the games of power played on London's cultural scene, as we shall see.⁴³

De Louthembourg succeeded both in the environment of London's Royal Academy and on the public entertainment scene. He understood that he had to represent his *Eidophusikon* as an investigation into the progression of landscape painting in order to convince the Academy of his artistic integrity. In comparison, Martin fruitlessly tried to gain recognition from the Academy leaders with a landscape style that drew inspiration from the visual entertainment devices of London's public culture. In this regard, it is not surprising that Martin's works were ridiculed and scathingly compared to the entertainment media panorama, the phantasmagoria, and the theatrical genre of melodrama.⁴⁴

ill. 5 [J. Martin, *Sadak in Search of the Waters of Oblivion*, 1812. Oil on canvas, 183.2 x 131.1 cm, Saint Louis Art Museum, St. Louis, MO]





ill. 6 [J. Martin, *Bridge Over Chaos*, 1824–1826. Mezzotint for: John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 25.2 x 34.6 cm.]

He was further mocked by the Academy's established personalities and art critics, who previously had nothing but praise for de Louthembourg's dalliances in the popular realm.⁴⁵ They found the extravagance and bombastic visual appeal of Martin's work both vulgar and tasteless.⁴⁶ Pigeonholed as a populist, Martin found that his paintings were accused of being merely an amalgamation of cheap effects and lacking both substance and subtlety. Moreover, his painter colleagues, John Constable (1776–1837) and Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786–1846), accused Martin of painting from a misunderstood notion of the sublime. For instance, Martin was charged with replacing 'a "deep" or "profound" sense of grandeur with mere repetitiousness or simple scale'.⁴⁷ As a result of repeated rejection, Martin built his career mainly outside the academy system, putting all effort into appealing to the market for popular visual entertainment. He also sought (and occasionally received) support from Europe's aristocratic patrons.⁴⁸ But his rejection by the Academy also freed him from the usual treadmill of production and exhibition and led him to develop a set of business strategies to promote, distribute, produce, and reproduce his work. On account of these strategies and the international network he built, Martin became, arguably, the best-known painter



ill. 7 [J. Martin, *The Destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, 1822.
Oil on canvas, 161.6 x 253 cm, Tate Gallery, London]

of his time. A striking example of Martin's significant role in the emerging practices of the modern culture industry is his illustration of Milton's *Paradise Lost* (published between 1825 and 1827) through masterly executed mezzotints (ill. 6).⁴⁹

These blockbuster visualizations of Milton's visions were printed in large numbers and distributed around the world.⁵⁰ The downside was that these production and distribution practices also led to cases of piracy and plagiarism, which Martin tried to stop through legal prosecution.⁵¹ In the particular case of the Milton illustrations, the art of painting and subsequent exhibition were given a minor role, and often Martin's paintings functioned merely as templates for reproduction.⁵² In other cases, his large-scale paintings and their particular staging became what made his reputation as a creator of apocalyptic visual spectacles.

Like his celebrated colleague Turner, Martin took advantage of the interplay between image and text. For his exhibitions, he produced accompanying pamphlets which alluded to a variety of textual sources and philosophical discourses. For example, for the painting *The Destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum* (ill. 7), he quoted from literary descriptions of the historical event of AD 79, as well as providing archeological, philological, and geological information which he used

to explain the main narrative elements of the event (for instance the death of Pliny the Elder).⁵³

In order to achieve an even closer intertwining of image and text, he showed a black and white sketch cropped to match the outlines of the painting with reference numbers for identifying and elaborating on singular elements of the picture.⁵⁴ William Feaver correctly identifies a 'scholarly aura' in Martin's pamphlets.⁵⁵ Furthermore, Ralph O'Connor points to the fact that accompanying text was not only 'integral to early-nineteenth-century visual culture' but also to the mediation and popularization of scientific (in particular geological) phenomena and discourses.⁵⁶ Martin's aim was to give his exhibitions the appearance of a serious and distinguished discourse. He wished to signal that there was more than just spectacle to the visual experience of his work.

Another aspect of this text-image interplay is the narrative and temporal depth added by the pamphlets. Through the careful application of text, the experience of the paintings was meant to go beyond the confines of the scenes depicted. That is to say, the text guided the spectator's imagination to transcend the visual scene. As a result, Martin created tension between visual spectacle and textual narration: the overwhelming effect of the picture elicited a reaction in the spectator, appealing to a more comprehensive and cognitively adventurous mode of perception. The spectator's first encounter with the monumental canvas was of crucial importance to Martin. He was therefore deeply concerned with how his pictures were exhibited and involved himself actively in curatorial decisions.⁵⁷

The attention to hanging pictures and other exhibition choices were most likely considered closely in connection with Martin's self-curated retrospective (1822) at the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly, London. The location was a commercial exhibition space for art, curiosities, and all manner of entertainments. With its Egyptian temple style of architecture, it provided the appropriate atmosphere for Martin's depictions of ancient disasters. Among 24 other paintings, *The Destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum* was presented as the exhibition's centrepiece.⁵⁸ Another work exhibited on this occasion was *The Fall of Babylon* (ill. 8).

With its monumental architecture – the infinite rows of columns, long-stretched bridges, and bare wharf facilities – one could almost imagine that Martin followed Burke's passages on magnitude, succession, and uniformity in buildings in his *Philosophical Enquiry*.⁵⁹ This architectural excess was another of Martin's pictorial inventions which was clearly perceived as a phenomenon of the sublime. *Belshazzar's Feast* provided another display of architectural sublimity. It garnered attention for its 'geometrical properties of space, magnitude and number, in the use of which he [Martin] may be said to be boundless'.⁶⁰ The critic Edwin Atherstone even stated that 'No painter has ever, like Martin, represented the immensity of space; none like him made architecture so sublime, merely through its vastness'.⁶¹

The focus on large-scale visualizations, which has been discussed above, is indeed one of the most decisive features of Martin's disaster scenarios. In order to elucidate this, we are going to take a closer look at his painting *The Great Day*



ill. 8 [J. Martin, *The Fall of Babylon*, 1819. Oil on canvas, 155 x 244 cm, private collection]

of *His Wrath* (ill. 9). It was one of Martin's last works, exhibited in 1853, together with *The Last Judgment* (ill. 10) and *The Plains of Heaven* (ill. 11).

The three pictures form a triptych depicting the biblical narrative of the Last Judgment. The event is narratively divided in three tableaux: judgment (middle), doom (right), and grace (left). Upon its exhibition in London, the triptych travelled on a nationwide, and subsequently worldwide, tour, which lasted until the late 1870s.⁶² In the accompanying pamphlet that was issued with the exhibition of the triptych; Martin, rather loosely, cites Revelation 6:12–17, where the opening of the sixth seal is described:

Lo, there was a great earthquake and the Heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places; and the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and every bondsman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains. And said to the mountains of rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of His wrath is come: and who shall be able to stand?⁶³





< **ill. 9** [J. Martin, *The Great Day of His Wrath*, c. 1851–1853. Oil on canvas, 196.5 x 303.2 cm, Tate Gallery, London]

< **ill. 10** [J. Martin, *The Last Judgment*, c. 1849–1853. Oil on canvas, 196.8 x 325.8 cm, Tate Gallery, London]

ill. 11 [J. Martin, *The Plains of Heaven*, c. 1851–1853. Oil on canvas, 198.8 x 306.7 cm, Tate Gallery, London]

In this description of the biblical event, Martin hints at some of the central aspects in *The Great Day of His Wrath*. Apparently, it depicts an earthquake that moves otherwise solid and firmly-rooted topographies ‘out of their places’ and even turns them upside-down. Arranged in two C-shapes, we witness the rupture of the earth crust and a black abyss opening up at the mid-bottom of the canvas. On both sides, steep mountains are piling up, driving what seems to be thousands of doomed people towards the chasm. They seem to appear as if they were breaking waves. On the left-hand side, mountain-sized boulders explode and throw matter towards the centre of the picture. On the right, an ancient town rains down on the people. The painting captures precisely the moment before the breaking waves collapse completely and obliterate ‘the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and every bondsman, and every freeman’. The

dynamics of the image are created by these violent movements of falling, exploding, bending, piling up, and crashing down.

Looking into the distance, the view is restricted by impenetrable smoke and a range of dark mountains with buildings on top, set against the glowing red of volcanic activity. These mountains, blocking the beholder's view, mark the end of the valley. Thus, there is no way to escape the ongoing destruction, neither visually for the spectator nor existentially for the painting's human figures. Moreover, the composition's pictorial movement from the background to the foreground underlines this enclosure, and as the image places the spectator right above the canyon, the waves of the earthquake appear to be coming towards us, as well as the humans in the picture. The interpretation of this motion is further accentuated in the expressions of the figures: the depicted bodies bend with the waves, they hide their faces in fear, call for death, or throw themselves into the abyss. With this detailed depiction of a mass panic, Martin also presents an ensemble of bodies about to be annihilated. It is the spectator who engages with his or her bodily self, as a bodily being in the threatening event. Frozen – like the depicted sufferers – in the critical moment before annihilation, the spectacle is set in motion by the viewer's imagination. In short, Martin makes it possible for the viewer of his work vicariously to experience terror and suffering, for them to have, in other words, the aesthetic distance from the awful spectacle which, according to Edmund Burke's account, makes possible the experience of the sublime.

In order to achieve a deeper understanding of the nineteenth-century spectator's affective participation in the visualized event, we should also take into account the scale of the canvas: 196.5 x 303.2 cm. While part of a travelling exhibition, the painting was shown in numerous locations of various kinds and sizes, thus we cannot clearly determine how the spectator would encounter this sizeable work (compared with the usual standards of landscape painting). Was it seen from a far distance or up close, with enough room for the spectator to move about and take it in from different angles? Was it lit in a room otherwise darkened or was it bathed in daylight? Such essential questions of curatorial staging, which were a primary concern for Martin, were no longer under his control, when exhibitions were not overseen by him. It can generally be said about Martin's use of scale that it functioned first of all to condense the sheer unrepresentable scale of the sublime event to a manageable scenario that could be visualised. In addition to this, it was his aim to expand (or even dissolve) the borders of the canvas for the spectator in his or her act of perception. Such strategic considerations were implemented in the production of the paintings to immerse the viewer into another world beyond the spatio-temporal reality. On the other hand, given the painting's size, it only permits the observer's engagement with one element of the artwork at a time. A follower of the highly popular discipline of geology could identify details like the fossil of a fish and the fine textures of the depicted boulders.⁶⁴ On the basis of the geological clues, the spectator might interpret the narrative of the image as pointing to a reemerging antediluvian and primordial past, with the earth returned to a state of chaos – the volcanic and tectonic activi-



ill. 12 [Film Stills from *The Ten Commandments*; 1923 (top), 1956 (bottom). Directed by Cecil B. DeMille; written by Jeanie Macpherson (1923), Æneas MacKenzie, Jesse Lasky Jr., et al. (1956); cinematography by Bert Glennon, J. Peverell Marley, et al. (1923), Loyal Griggs (1956).]

ties ravaging the surface of the earth. Another detail guiding a scientific reading is the alliance of sun, moon, and a comet, which Martin had already presented in his *Deluge* trilogy. It is interesting to note here that the contemporary geologist Georges Cuvier believed the movements of such celestial objects to be responsible for catastrophes on earth.⁶⁵

By contrasting the two modes of perception available to the spectator – the sensual and immersive experience of the sublime vistas with the scientific reflections that the painting could also engender, it is possible to sketch out the painting's encoded script for experience as a linear development. It moves from visceral immersion towards an iconographic-iconological interpretation of the painting's details. This is what we identified in the analysis of *The Great Day of His Wrath* as the affective shock of the sublime, which was offset by references to well-known astronomical phenomena. The scientifically oriented content provided a framework that abated the most violent affection and a losing of the mind into the sublime of no return.

To reach a conclusion, I will give two specific examples of this alternating ce-

rebral movement that the painting invites. The first example concerns the painting's geological elements. Through the recognition of geologic traces, the time scale presented itself to the Victorian viewer, who was likely to be familiar with, or even fascinated by the concept of geology and the vastness of time, which itself belongs to the repertoire of the sublime.⁶⁶ This idea of geological sublimity embodies in the painting's detailed rendering of geological phenomena, is, in turn, channelled back to the sensual and affective experience of the work and vice versa. Thus, the distinction drawn out above dissolves itself: the painted abyss does not only have immediate affective appeal to the irrational senses but also identifies an 'abyss' discussed in the scientific discourses of natural history. The concept of the geologic time scale (deep time) was for the most part shaped by the geologist James Hutton. John Playfair, Hutton's friend, contributed significantly to the popularization of his theories. In *Illustrations of the Huttonian Theory of the Earth* (1802), Playfair describes the revelation of the immense geologic time scale as 'looking so far into the abyss of time'.⁶⁷ In regard to the second example, we depart from the immediate sensual impact of the picture. We note how this experience of affective immediacy informs, and transforms, the understanding of the painting's biblical narrative. While the accompanying pamphlet underlines certain topics within the biblical event – the decadence of man, moral corruption, punishment through God – it is the painting's sensual and affective qualities that make this familiar plot (re-)emerge as a sublime performance; the apocalypse takes place in the here and now. The picture does not merely offer a re-reading of the biblical text; the text itself is being incarnated and transformed, conveying a bodily connection between the embodied experience of the here and now and the immaterial and timeless sphere of John's *Book of Revelation*.

Viewed in a broader perspective, Martin's work and de Louthembourg's moving images of the *Eidophusikon* contributed to the art and media history of the sublime and, more generally, to the social and epistemological establishment of Cray's modern subject. Both these historical processes eventually led to the emergence of cinema and its popular presentations of disaster. This adumbration of longterm developments allows for a final brief juxtaposition of de Louthembourg and Martin's painted disasters of the sublime and the disaster images from the early decades of cinema. Just like Martin's *The Great Day of His Wrath*, early historical epic films, such as *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei* (1908, 1913, 1926), *The Ten Commandments* (1923, 1956) (ill. 12) or *Noah's Ark* (1928) also stage biblical or ancient narratives as immediately affecting and intensified events. Yet, while the 'producers' of these films were already entrenched within the entertainment industry and widely separated from the discourses of the elite art world, Martin and de Louthembourg's production and their reception were entangled within a complex set of relations that blurred the distinction between the notions of art and entertainment, the high-brow art academy and the low-brow tastes of public culture.

Notes

- 1 Ralph O'Connor, *The Earth on Show. Fossils and the Poetics of Popular Science, 1802–1856* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 12, doi: 10.7208/chicago/9780226616704.001.0001.
- 2 For a general introduction to the theory of the sublime, see Christine Pries, ed., *Das Erhabene. Zwischen Grenzerfahrung und Größenwahn* (Weinheim: VCH, 1989), doi: 10.1515/9783050082899; and Timothy M. Costelloe, ed., *The Sublime. From Antiquity to the Present* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), doi: 10.1017/cbo9780511978920.
- 3 Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. Adam Phillips ([1990] New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).
- 4 For the popularization of the sublime in the eighteenth century, see Samuel H. Monk, *The Sublime. A Study of the Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960 [1935]); Andrew Ashfield and Peter de Bolla, eds., *The Sublime: A Reader in British Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1996), doi: 10.1017/CBO9780511620409; and Andrew Wilton, *Turner and the Sublime* (London: British Museum Publications, 1980), chapters 1 and 2.
- 5 This thesis represents a central component of my forthcoming monograph provisionally entitled *The Sublime in Disaster Movies. The Cinema's Sublime Disasters Discussed within the History of Images, the Media and Ideas*.
- 6 Burke's argument is based on the premise of obscurity (of ideas), which cannot be presented in painting, 'because the images in painting are exactly similar to those in nature'. A painting 'can only affect simply by the images it presents' (Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 58). Hence, the pictorial presentation of sublime objects of nature always entails a degeneration of its affective force. There is no genuine contribution by painting to the sublimity of the object.
- 7 Other media to be named in this regard are the 'Great Pictures' of the American Hudson River School, the Diorama, a variety of panorama devices, as well as cinema and its different technological stages.
- 8 Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer. On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* ([1990] Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 137–50.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 73. Later, this production of a new observer and subject represents the common foundation and initiation for phenomena and narratives such as impressionism's overcoming of perspectival space and mimetic codes vs. the media of realism (photography, cinema), which have falsely become to be regarded as the oppositional founding myths of modernity.
- 10 This regards the art historical discipline, in particular. Theatre studies, meanwhile, acknowledged De Louthembourg's significance for their field at an earlier point. However, there was an important single exhibition of De Louthembourg's work in 1973 and more recently Oliver Lefeuvre published the first major monograph on De Louthembourg: *Philippe-Jacques de Louthembourg. 1740–1812* (Paris: Arthena, 2012).
- 11 Iain McCalman, 'Conquering Academy and Marketplace: Philippe de Louthembourg's Channel Crossing', in *Living with the Royal Academy. Artistic Ideals and Experiences in England, 1768–1848*, ed. Sarah Monks, John Barrell, and Mark Hallett (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2013), 76–8.
- 12 After praising the bucolic landscapes of De Louthembourg in highest tones, even Denis Diderot expressed his concerns about the unruly character of the painter (*ibid.*, 80–82).

- 13 David Garrick (1717–1779). Kalman A. Burnim, *David Garrick. Director* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973), 4; George Winchester Stone and George M. Kahrl, *David Garrick: A Critical Biography* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979), 82.
- 14 Christopher Baugh, 'Philippe de Louthembourg: Technology-Driven Entertainment and Spectacle in the Late Eighteenth Century', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 70, no. 2 (2007): 251–68, doi: 10.1525/hlq.2007.70.2.251.
- 15 Quoted in McCalman, 'Conquering Academy and Marketplace', 84. Whether the Eidophusikon's invention was based on the words 'eidōs' and 'physikon' (as claimed by Raymond Lister in his *British Romantic Painting* [Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1989], pl. 28), or on the words 'eidoion', 'phusis', and 'eikon' (a position taken by Christopher Baugh in his 'Philippe de Louthembourg: Technology-Driven Entertainment and Spectacle in the Late Eighteenth Century', 259, n. 14), I have not been able to resolve.
- 16 This second scenario is rather unlikely though. Since de Louthembourg was able to spontaneously reincorporate a landscape from the programme for the first location into the second (on the audience's demand), so it seems that the scale of the screen-space remained the same (see Iain McCalman, 'Magic, Spectacle, and the Art of de Louthembourg's Eidophusikon', in *Sensation and Sensibility. Viewing Gainsborough's Cottage Door*, ed. Ann Bermingham [London: Yale University Press, 2005], 181–211, quotation on 192). In terms of the *Eidophusikon*'s different locations, see Rüdiger Joppien, *Die Szenenbilder Philippe Jacques de Louthembourg. Eine Untersuchung zu ihrer Stellung zwischen Malerei und Theater* (PhD diss., Cologne University, 1972), 342–66; Gloria Groom, 'Art, Illustration, and Enterprise in Late Eighteenth-Century English Art: A Painting by Philippe Jacques de Louthembourg', *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 18, no. 2 (1992): 124–35, doi: 10.2307/4101557; and McCalman, 'Magic'.
- 17 Sybil Rosenfeld in her 'The *Eidophusikon* Illustrated', in *A History of Pre-Cinema*, ed. Stephen Herbert, vol. 2 [London: Routledge, 2000], 79–81, estimates 200 people for the last location in the Strand.
- 18 Joppien, *Die Szenenbilder*, 356; McCalman 'Conquering Academy and Marketplace', 85.
- 19 Joppien, *Die Szenenbilder*, 348.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 357.
- 21 Philippe Jacques de Louthembourg, 'A View of the Eidophusikon, with Anecdotes of Mr. Louthembourg', *The European Magazine, and London Review* 1 (March 1782): 180–82.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 180–82.
- 23 The following deliberations are widely based on the information given in McCalman 'Conquering Academy and Marketplace', 2013, 84.
- 24 Louthembourg, 'A View of the Eidophusikon', 180.
- 25 Simon During, 'Beckford in Hell: An Episode in the History of Secular Enchantment', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 70, no. 2 (2007): 269–88, doi: 10.1525/hlq.2007.70.2.269; Iain McCalman, 'The Virtual Infernal: Philippe de Louthembourg, William Beckford and the Spectacle of the Sublime', *Romanticism on the Net* 46 (2007), accessed 27 March 2016, <http://www.erudit.org/revue/ron/2007/v/n46/016129ar.html>, doi: 10.7202/016129ar.
- 26 Rumour had it that black masses and orgies were performed there (McCalman, 'Virtual Infernal').
- 27 De Louthembourg's contributions to theatre, however, sought to overcome this lack of illusionism by means that ultimately led him to the Eidophusikon.

- 28 Ephraim Hardcastle, *Wine and Walnuts; or, After Dinner Chit-Chat. Volume 1* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1823), 292. Ephraim Hardcastle was a pseudonym used by Pyne.
- 29 As for instance, Burke repeatedly mentions a ‘tension, contraction, or violent emotion of the nerves’ as a result of the perception of sublime objects (Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 120).
- 30 Legends as such are for instance documented in Stephan Oettermann, *Das Panorama. Die Geschichte eines Massenmediums* (Frankfurt on the Main: Syndikat, 1980), 81; Erkki Huhtamo, *Illusions in Motion. Media Archaeology of the Moving Panorama and Related Spectacles* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), 16, 150–52.
- 31 Joppien, *Die Szenenbilder*, 346.
- 32 McCalman, ‘Magic, Spectacle, and the Art of de Louthembourg’s Eidophusikon’, 195; Groom, ‘Art, Illustration, and Enterprise’, 128; and John Gage, ‘Louthembourg: Mystagogue of the Sublime’, *History Today* 13, no. 5 (1963): 332–39.
- 33 Gage, ‘Louthembourg: Mystagogue of the Sublime’, 337; McCalman, ‘Magic, Spectacle, and the Art of de Louthembourg’s Eidophusikon’, 197.
- 34 For a detailed description of the whole incident, see Iain McCalman, ‘Spectres of Quackery: The Fragile Career of Philippe de Louthembourg’, *Cultural and Social History* 3, no. 3 (2006): 341–54, doi: 10.1191/1478003806cs0650a.
- 35 William Feaver, *The Art of John Martin* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 15.
- 36 Barbara C. Morden, *John Martin. Apocalypse Now!* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Northumbria Press, 2010), 11; Lister, *British Romantic Painting*, pl. 46; Iain McCalman, ‘Mystagogues of revolution: Cagliostro, Louthembourg and Romantic London’, in *Romantic Metropolis. The Urban Scene of British Culture, 1780–1840*, ed. James Chandler and Kevin Gilmartin (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 177–203.
- 37 See Susanne B. Keller, *Naturgewalt im Bild. Strategien visueller Naturaneignung in Kunst und Wissenschaft 1750–1830* (Weimar: VDG, 2006), 313.
- 38 Morden, *Apocalypse Now!*, 11.
- 39 Groom, ‘Art, Illustration, and Enterprise’, 135; Christopher Johnstone, *John Martin* (London: Academy Editions, 1974), 11; Wilton, *Turner and the Sublime*, 37, 72.; McCalman, ‘Mystagogues of revolution’, 2005, 195.
- 40 By mentioning this media historical strand, I refer primarily to Oliver Grau’s heavily influential account on the history of immersion: Oliver Grau, *Virtual Art. From Illusion to Immersion*, trans. Gloria Custance (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001).
- 41 Ralph O’Connor describes the ‘historical landscape’ genre as ‘human figures [being] dwarfed by sublime landscapes, colossal buildings, and weather effects’ (O’Connor, *The Earth on Show*, 273).
- 42 Feaver, *The Art of John Martin*, 114–29; Lars Kokkonen, ‘The prophet motive? John Martin as a civil engineer’, in *John Martin. Apocalypse*, ed. Martin Myrone (London: Tate Publishing, 2011), 35–41.
- 43 David H. Solkin, *Painting for Money. The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 1–3, 247.
- 44 O’Connor, *The Earth on Show*, 273.
- 45 Martin Myrone, ‘John Martin: art, taste, and the spectacle of culture’, in *John Martin*, ed. Martyn Myrone (London: Tate Publishing, 2011), 11–21. John Ruskin neatly summed up Martin’s reputation by regarding him merely as a ‘workman’, not as a ‘painter’ (Feaver, *The Art of John Martin*, 173), a notion typical for the perception of the popular entertainment sector in the

nineteenth century (and one of the main factors for the loss of the main bulk of these works, since they slipped through the valuation sensors of museum culture).

- 46 Morton D. Paley, *The Apocalyptic Sublime* (London: Yale University Press, 1986), 134.
- 47 Myrone, *John Martin*, 13.
- 48 Paley, *The Apocalyptic Sublime*, 135.
- 49 Feaver, *The Art of John Martin*, 72–83.
- 50 Martin Myrone and Anna Austen, 'Catalogue', in *John Martin*, ed. Martin Myrone (London: Tate Publishing, 2011), 123–28. For a more general view on Martin's commercial practices as a printmaker, see: Michael J. Campbell, 'John Martin as a commercial printmaker', in *John Martin*, ed. Martin Myrone (London: Tate Publishing, 2011), 23–33.
- 51 O'Connor, *The Earth on Show*, 311–13.
- 52 To name an example, the French writer Théophile Gautier was greatly disappointed when he finally got to see the painted original version of *The Deluge* in 1835, a work that he formerly deeply admired in the form of a mezzotint reproduction (Feaver, *The Art of John Martin*, 86). In opposition to this, John Ruskin criticized Martin's works for losing their receptive force when reduced in size (Feaver, *The Art of John Martin*, 139).
- 53 Keller, *Naturgewalt im Bild*, 315.
- 54 The sketch is shown in: Myrone/Austen, *John Martin*, 111.
- 55 Feaver, *The Art of John Martin*, 42.
- 56 O'Connor, *The Earth on Show*, 287.
- 57 Myrone, *John Martin*, 18.
- 58 Feaver, *The Art of John Martin*, 55.
- 59 Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 69 and 128.
- 60 Johnstone, *John Martin*, 16.
- 61 Atherstone's article was published in the *Edinburgh Review* 49 (1829), 144, and quoted in Feaver, *The Art of John Martin*, 102. For further information on Martin's reception as a painter of the sublime, see: Paley, *The Apocalyptic Sublime*, 122–54.
- 62 Myrone/Austen, *John Martin*, 173.
- 63 *Ibid.*, 174.
- 64 The popularity of the geological sciences in Victorian Britain is documented and described in Michael Freeman, *Victorians and the Prehistoric. Tracks to a Lost World* (London: Yale University Press, 2004).
- 65 It is documented that Cuvier visited Martin, who was very interested in geology, in his atelier. Cuvier turned out to be very pleased with the artist's depiction of the biblical Deluge, particularly with his staging of sun, moon, and comet. See Lynn R. Matteson, 'John Martin's "The Deluge". A Study in Romantic Catastrophe', *Pantheon* 39 (1981): 220–28.
- Martin's *Deluge* trilogy consists of the following paintings: *The Deluge*, 1834. Oil on canvas, 168.3 x 258.4 cm, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven; *The Assuaging of the Waters*, 1840. Oil on canvas, 143.5 x 219.1 cm, Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco; and *The Eve of the Deluge*, 1840. Oil on canvas, 142.9 x 218.4 cm, The Royal Collection, Windsor Castle, Windsor.
- 66 Geological phenomena and subjects as well as the geologic time scale in particular were addressed and presented within the so called 'heroic age' of the geological sciences (the decades around 1800) in alliance with the aesthetic particularities and iconography of the sublime – a phenomenon labelled by Georg Braungart as a third type within the Kantian typology: the

Geologisch Erhabene [Geological sublime], in addition to the *Mathematically* and *Dynamically Sublime*; see Georg Braungart, 'Die Geologie und das Erhabene', in *Schillers Natur. Leben, Denken und literarisches Schaffen*, ed. Bernhard Greiner (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2005), 157–76.

- 67 See Stephen Jay Gould, *Time's Arrow, Time's Cycle. Myth and Metaphor in the Discovery of Geological Time* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), Playfair quotation on 62. See also Daniel Bernoulli, 'Tiefenzeit. Hutton entdeckt die Geologie', *Du. Die Zeitschrift der Kultur* 57, no. 10 (1997), no pagination.