

TRANSFER

The physical recontextualization of an artifact, whether a painting or a building, is conceptually continuous with the practice of citation, or the transfer of parcels of coded meaning from one text to another. In the one case, the reused element is material; in the other case, the transferred element is only a representation, a virtual relic. Virtual reuse repeats a form or combination of forms; or brings to life again a fictional character. An original shaping labor is valued and preserved. In both modes, real and virtual, recycling is able to generate meaning if a perceptible hierarchy, a comparison, is established between the alien element and its new host, its container.

All production of artifacts, all art making, meaning making, and manipulation of codes, all histories of building and painting are histories of reuse. In fact, the true rarity is the opposite of reuse, namely, pure creation *ex nihilo*. Artistic creation *ex nihilo* may not exist at all, for an expression without any ties to the past would be incomprehensible. One could say that citation, the *imitatio* of prior models, is the basic condition of expression; whereas citation by means of literal, physical transfer of materials is the special case. Physical citation is a special, especially eloquent, version of ordinary citation.

Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance* (Zone Books, 2010), p. 178-9