

The New Criterion

Dispatch July 13, 2018 01:34 pm

Week in review

by Hannah Niemeier

Recent links of note:

“Farewell to Claude Lanzmann”

Bernard-Henri Lévy, *Tablet*

Claude Lanzmann was the Holocaust’s Orpheus, the French philosopher Bernard-Henri Lévy claims in his funeral oration for the Jewish author and filmmaker, who died last week at the age of ninety-two. Like the Greek poet, Lanzmann spent much of his life in a twentieth-century Underworld: he devoted eleven years to his documentary *Shoah*, which is widely regarded as the definitive film about the Holocaust for its nearly ten hours of interviews with survivors. Lanzmann pressed his interviewees to share their painful memories, despite the views of those who agreed with Theodor Adorno that “to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric.” Many preferred to mourn in silence. But Lanzmann, a hero of the French Resistance, faced the atrocities of the Holocaust straight on, just as he approached everything else: the friend of Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir later became a staunch supporter of the modern state of Israel. For more on Lanzmann, read Paul Berman’s homage and Ewa Kuryluk’s *New Criterion* review of *Shoah* after its release in 1985.

“A Modern Portraitist, Ahead of His Time”

J. S. Marcus, *The Wall Street Journal*

Rediscovering a neglected artist requires a strange sort of mental patchwork. One has to stitch him into the fabric of his contemporaries and influences, and the new addition inevitably alters one’s sense of the whole. This is the case for the art world’s relationship with the portraitist Lorenzo Lotto; the Renaissance giants Titian and Raphael, with their depictions of Renaissance heroes, obscured his work for centuries. But in the late-nineteenth century, the art historian Bernard Berenson helped define Lotto as the “first modern portraitist” for the way he depicted the poor and merchant classes, and for the way his mastery of detail and character echoed Dürer and anticipated Rembrandt. “Lorenzo Lotto. Portraits” (at the Prado Museum in Madrid until September 30 and London’s National Gallery from November 5 to February 10) is the first major show devoted to Lotto’s portraits, and one that promises to enrich the larger scene of Renaissance art. For more on

Lotto from *The New Criterion*, read [Marco Grassi's essay](#) on religious elements in his work and [Karen Wilkin's review](#) of a 1998 exhibition at the National Gallery in Washington, D.C.

[“The Harvard Color Detectives”](#)

Katy Kelleher, *The Paris Review*

Problems with paintings come in all sizes, shapes, and colors, according to Narayan Khandekar, the head of Harvard's art conservation center. Khandekar gave a tour of the center's pigment library and told a few tales about restoring damaged paintings. Rothko's Harvard Murals, which faded soon after they were finished in 1964, are a picture-perfect example of the innovative techniques Khandekar and his team of art rescuers use to save art from the ravages of time and light (Louis Menand [described](#) the unique set-up, which employs a light projector to restore the original colors, in *The New Yorker*). The conservationists have discovered a scam or two in their day, as well: they took down a whole slew of fake Pollocks in 2002. But amid all the drama, the conservation center's greatest resource is the colors themselves. Kelleher vividly describes the rainbow of paints and the raw materials housed in the pigment library—a vibrant work of art in itself, with its viridians, emeralds, lapis lazulis, and a whole “bevvv of blues.”

From our pages:

[“Traviata alle terme”](#)

Eric C. Simpson

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