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Commemorating Tintoretto? On the Nature of Anniversaries

The 500th anniversary of Tintoretto's birth has been an occasion for commemoration. It has been marked and celebrated through exhibitions, symposia and publications, of which this book is one. What exactly are we commemorating? What function does commemoration have for our thinking of Tintoretto and for art history's practice? The questions begin with the value given to the 500 years. Are we celebrating the birth of a canonical figure, affirming a discourse of "great masters" and artist biographies? Are we celebrating the fact of the passing of half a millennium and demonstrating our veneration of age, the antiquity of our objects of study and historical continuity? Is the length of time in fact incidental and is what matters that the anniversary is a special type of occasion? How do scholarship's acts of commemoration relate to and implicate the object commemorated? Is the anniversary primarily an occasion for scholarship to reflect upon and celebrate its own achievements? We see that even before we consider how or whether to commemorate, a host of questions concerning disciplinary practice are posed to art history by the fact of a 500th anniversary. However, anniversaries are not generally invested for such problematisating inquiry. Rather, the occasion of commemoration affirms the institutionalised framework by which the object commemorated is *already* the recognised object of a discipline.

I argue that, rather than simply a rites of passage, the anniversary offers a moment for pause. This is signalled by its dual temporality, both a singular occurrence (a 500th anniversary will never happen again), and recurrent (there will be future anniversaries). It recurs differently each time. As the content of this event, Tintoretto presents not simply as a given object of study, but that which returns as a problem for art history, "beginning again when time is past".[1] In this paper, I draw upon Gilles Deleuze's writings on the nature of thought, event and the ontology of the artwork to rethink the concept of the anniversary and the provocation posed by the *versus* ("against; turned") of its name.

1. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, transl. by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchill, London-New York, Verso, 2003, p. 158.

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Introduction

A "bringing to remembrance" (from Latin *commemorationem*: "reminding, mention"), commemoration suggests a deliberate act of remembrance with respect to the past. Embedded within the milieu of custom, commemoration is typically expressed through ceremony, ritual or embodied within an object such as a monument or a memorial.[2] As a collective process of recollection, it is entwined with the dynamics of historicisation. A number of scholars have described the study and writing of history itself as fundamentally commemorative – the bringing to memory of the past.[3]

Anniversaries (from the Latin *anniversaries*, meaning "returning yearly", from *annus*, year, and *versus*, a turning) are types of commemoration, defined both by their regularity (their annual occurrence) and their recursivity (their annual return). They depend at once on chronology and the recursive structures (years, months, days, hours) that give time social value and render it measurable. Often marked through rounded chronological intervals, such as a decade, a centenary or millennium, or jubilee years like 25th, 50th, 60th, or 75th, the packaging of the past in a bundle becomes a way of magnifying the sense of occasion, intensifying the gravitas associated with the quality of age upon which so much historical scholarship depends and derives its status.

In its dual marking of the linear passage of time and its cyclical return, simultaneous forward motion and recurrence, the anniversary is an intriguing registration of time. Something happens again and again, but differently each time. The question of what changes and what stays the same is to my mind one of the most compelling that is raised by the phenomena of historical recurrence as posed by the anniversary.

Like all commemorations, the anniversary is a social construction of time. As anthropologists from Emile Durkheim to Alfred Gell have argued, such constructions, at once imposed and dependent upon the flow of mechanical

2. See David Sherman's definition of commemoration as a "practice of representation that enacts and gives social substance to the discourse of collective memory"; David Sherman, "Art, Commerce and the Production of Memory in France after WW1", in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, ed. by John R. Gillis, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1994, pp. 186-211: 186.

3. Classic texts include Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*", *Representations*, 26 (Spring 1989), pp. 7-24. See also: Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, transl. by David Pellauer, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2006; and Patrick Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*, Hanover, VT, University of Vermont, 1993. For a good overview of the concept of commemoration and the field of commemorative studies, see Elizabeth Whittenburg Ozment, *The SAGE International Encyclopedia of Music and Culture*, ed. by Janet Sturman, Thousand Oaks, SAGE, 2019, pp. 596-598: "Commemoration is the act of negotiating one's relationship to the past and present through remembrance. People perform commemorations in order to engage with moments that are already in the past but retain socio political relevance in the present".

time, function both as a way of giving time meaning and regulating it.[4] Whilst the culture of anniversaries emerged in the West in the middle ages, with the tradition of saints' days, the impulse towards recurrence and periodicity as social constructions of time have their origins in the cultic cycle of feasts and other festivities bound to primitive forms of religious life. The imprinting force of continual recurrence has long been a way of fixing historical events in memory and keeping the past in mind.[5]

From the late nineteenth century onwards, such collective constructions of temporal rhythms – now secular rather than religious – began to be harnessed for political, and often nationalist ends, and rendered part of official culture.[6] As that century drew to a close, commemorations of heroic individuals and historical events became an increasingly important part of social custom, part of a deepening historical consciousness of public thought and life in Western culture. In turn, the anniversary became a construct of historical time – the chronological and linear form of time in which the events of the past can be positioned in intelligible sequences of succession or simultaneity.[7] Writing in the 1980s, the French historian

4. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, transl. by Karen E. Fields, New York, The Free Press, 1995, p. 10; Alfred Gell, *The Anthropology of Time: Cultural Constructions of Temporal Maps and Images*, London, Routledge, 2001. Periodic recurrence is discussed from a sociological perspective by Eviatar Zerubavel, *Hidden Rhythms: Schedules and Calendars in Social life,* Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1981, p. 10. Zerubavel analyses how calendars and other collective structurings of time – some of which have astronomical foundations, others being cultural constructs – have produced the experience of temporal regularity. See C. H. Firth, "Dates and Anniversaries", *History*, 16/62 (Jul. 1931), pp. 97-105.

5. Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, argues how these rhythms of time were affirmed through constructs of ritual in the early modern period, including the liturgical calendar, arguing that "the early modern period was the most crucial moment in history for ritual theory" (*ibid*., p. 9). Building on the insights of Emile Durkheim, Clifford Geertz, Claude Lévi-Strauss and Pierre Bourdieu, Muir defines ritual as "a social activity that is repetitive, standardised", a form of behaviour that creates social solidarity and social identities, or a kind of communication, collectively created performance, "a specific kind of practice that constructs, maintains, and modifies society itself" (*ibid*., p. 6). Muir goes on to analyse the importance of ritual in the lay festivals (such as the Carnival) and civic rituals of early modern Venice, such as the annual processions of the Doge and the marriage of the sea ceremony (celebrated in iconic paintings by Gentile Bellini and Vittore Carpaccio), which "represented the complete appropriation of liturgical forms and ties to sanctify the ruling regime" (*ibid*., p. 258).

6. Examples include the commemorations of the Napoleonic wars, the American Civil War, the Battle of Waterloo, the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation. T.G. Otte describes how this nineteenth century "cult of the centenary" was accompanied by a surge in preservation of historic buildings, architectural revivalisms, and the growth of monument and memorial culture. T.G. Otte, "Centenaries, Self-Historization and the Mobilization of the Masses", in *The Age of Anniversaries: The Cult of Commemoration, 1895-1925*, ed. by T.G. Otte, London, Routledge 2019, pp. 1-11.

7. Nora, "Between Memory and History", pp. 8-9, conceptualises the shift from memorial to historical culture with respect to relations of space and time: "Memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects; history binds itself strictly to temporal continuities, to progressions and to relations between things".

Pierre Nora classified anniversaries as one type of "lieux de memoire" (sites of memory) , "a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community" that emerged with the increasing historicization of nineteenth century Western culture alongside the dynamics of nation-building and nationalism. As Western culture moved away from the collective memorial traditions of the past, Nora argued, techniques of memorialisation were constructed to keep the past from disappearing. That is, a "commemorative vigilance" enabled the preservation of a past that was no longer part of lived experience.[8]

Such dynamics, as well as the development of history as a discipline, fostered the increasing participation of scholars in what has been called the "cult of commemoration".[9] Despite the criticisms launched against practices of memorialisation and commemoration in the early twentieth century, practices of collective remembrance intensified in the post-war years as a way to interrogate and express collective mourning for catastrophes of the recent past.[10]

8. Nora, "Between Memory and History", pp. 7-12, argues that modernity brought about a shift from memorial consciousness of living, collective societal structures to the culture of history governed by the representation of the past. With this loss of memory, man had to create "Lieux de mémoire", mediators that enabled him to access and represent the past: "a *lieux de mémoire* ['site of memory'] is any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community"; "*Lieux de memoire* originate with the sense that there is no spontaneous memory, that we must deliberately create archives, maintain anniversaries, organise celebrations, pronounce eulogies, and notarise bills because such activities no longer occur naturally"; "Museums, archives, cemeteries, festivals, anniversaries […] these are the boundary stones of another age, illusions of eternity [that] mark the rituals of a society without ritual"; "Lieux de memoire" are "moments of history torn away from the movement of history, then returned; no longer quite life, not yet death, like shells on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded".

9. Tim Grady gives as examples the flurry of publications that appeared in Germany in 1898 to mark to the 50th anniversary of the 1848 march revolution, and the plethora of new biographies and source collections published for Goethe's 150th birthday celebrations in 1899. See Tim Grady, Jorg Arnold, Dan Healey and Fearghal McGarry, "Anniversaries", *German History*, 32/1, (Mar. 2014), pp. 79-100: 80. This special issue is interesting for its declared intention: "Rather than commission special issues or other features to tie into individual anniversaries centred on or relevant to German history in a manner which repeats unthinkingly the conventions of scholarly and popular culture, the editors elected to reflect more fundamentally on what might be at stake in major anniversaries for professional scholars of history" (*ibid*., p. 79).

10. See: Dominick La Capra, *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1994; James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1994. The notion of collective memory emerged in the early twentieth century, first theorised in 1925 with the claim that memory is socially acquired. As Maurice Halbwach puts it, "no memory is possible outside frameworks used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections"; Maurice Halbwach, *On Collective Memory*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992, p. 43. On the way repetition blurs the differences between individual interpretations of events and leads to a composite image, see Katharyne Mitchell, "Monuments, Memorials, and the Politics of Memory", *Urban Geography*, 24/5 (2013), pp. 442-459: 443. William M. Johnston, *Celebrations: The Cult of Anniversaries in Europe and the United States Today,* London,

The scholarly engagement with such phenomena culminated in the flourishing of memory studies in the 1970s, and what has commonly been referred to as the "memory boom" – described by one scholar as "the Western world's seemingly insatiable appetite for memorials, museums, exhibitions and anniversaries".[11] Anniversaries continue to function as a coordinated celebration of cultural values, historical traditions and social identity. At the same time, commemorative culture has continued its expansion into a major industry with the power to attract mass public, media, commercial and government interest.[12] Municipal authorities turn anniversaries into special festive events, investing them to promote tourist agendas. The historian Tim Grady has remarked that "Museums, public institutions and even cities have long seen historic anniversaries as an opportunity to promote themselves more widely" and that historians "albeit on a lesser scale, have always been quick to connect themselves" to major public commemorations – something that, he adds, has been encouraged through the deepening impact agenda of UK research councils.[13]

Scholarship and anniversaries

What are the implications of scholarly participation in commemoration?

First, there is an affirmation of the historicity of scholarship's objects, and the embedding of these within historical time and space. In celebrating a 500th anniversary we acknowledge the fact that our object is 500 years old. A historicising outlook implicates veneration for the past, for origins, for the passing of time and the quality of age. It exposes the hold of chronology over thought, since the numeral 500 is a marker of historical time that makes sense only with

Routledge, 1991, has argued that the cult of anniversaries reached its height in the 1980s. He attributes this to 3 causes: 1) human need for repetition and stability; 2) postwar erosion of Europe's economic boundaries, which makes each nation more eager to assert its distinction and cultural boundaries; 3) the fragmenting tendencies of postmodern culture – celebrations are pastiches of ideologically neutral, even contradictory, elements. Johnston did not conceal his disdain of what anniversaries had become – a sub-branch of the heritage industry. Another incisive account of the contemporary culture of commemoration and its relation to collective trauma is David Simpson, *9/11: The Culture of commemoration*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2006. Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*, London, Routledge, 1995, discusses the obsession with memory at the turn of the twenty-first century.

11. Grady, in Grady, Arnold, Healey and McGarry, "Anniversaries", p. 79. An excellent overview of the complex character of the memory boom is Jay Winter, "The Generation of Memory: Reflections on the 'Memory Boom' in Contemporary Historical Studies", *Archives & Social Studies: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, 1 (Mar. 2007), pp. 363-397.

12. The British economic historian Alan Milward memorably described the media as "the hypermarket outlet for the consumption of memory"; Alan S. Milward, "Bad Memories", *Times Literary Supplement*, 14 April 2000, p. 8.

13. Grady, in Grady, Arnold, Healey and McGarry, "Anniversaries", p. 92. He gives as an example the flurry of scholarship that appeared alongside the 2011 commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Berlin wall.

respect to the sequence of dates inscribed by the linear form of chronology. Second, anniversaries expose predilections of scholarship that affirm its character as social practice. They are one feature of a nexus of structures, rituals, customs and patterns that foster and participate in the collective exchange of knowledge. A scholarly community is itself a type of social community, exhibiting and participating in collective rituals and habits, traditions and customs, inhabiting what the anthropologist Clifford Geertz called, writing about disciplinary cultures, "a cultural frame".[14] To be an ethnographer of one's own discipline, Geertz argued, is to study its conceptions and practices of thought – including those repetitive and recurrent practices called rituals. Comparing disciplines to tribes, the sociologist Tony Becher similarly characterised academic cultures in terms of their habitual and recurrent behaviours, describing them as "sets of taken-for-granted values, attitudes and ways of behaving, which are articulated through and reinforced by recurrent practices".[15] It is not difficult to see how an object of disciplinary investigation – Tintoretto, for instance – becomes established over time through repeated study until it is "taken for granted". The recurrent structure of the anniversary supports such a process of establishment and habit-formation. Through repeated confirmation that he is an object of the discipline, Tintoretto becomes part of the habit of art history, part of its collective memory, a recognised object for a community of scholars.

Differences exist, however, between the general features of a commemorative culture and what we are here describing as scholarly commemoration. The latter does not primarily engage in remembrance but rather concerns the confirmation, extension and dissemination of knowledge. In commemorating an anniversary, scholars are not only celebrating the subject of the occasion; they are celebrating the production of knowledge about that subject. Scholarly commemoration is the celebration of scholarship. That is, anniversaries act as platforms for shining light on scholarship, enabling scholars to collectively reflect on progress in the field. In this sense, one might say that *Tintoretto 500* is commemorating less the fact of Tintoretto's birth or life than the continuity of Tintoretto scholarship; that what is being celebrated is neither birth nor death but perpetuity. The element of

14. Clifford Geertz, "The Way We Think now: Toward an Ethnography of Modern Thought", in Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*, New York, Basic Books, 1983, pp. 147-163: 155-157. Geertz calls for scholars to become ethnographers of their disciplines: "the various disciplines (or disciplinary matrices), humanistic, natural scientific, social scientific alike, that make up the scattered discourse of modern scholarship are more than just intellectual coigns of vantage but are ways of being in the world, to invoke a Heideggerian formula, forms of life, to use a Wittgensteinian, or varieties of noetic experience, to adapt a Jamesian". To be part of a discipline is "to take on a culture frame". This calls for an "ethnography of modern thought": "those roles we think to occupy turn out to be minds we find ourselves to have". Geertz draws attention to how "the vocabularies in which the various disciplines talk about themselves to themselves" is a way of providing access to the mentalities at work in them.

15. Tony Becher, *Academic Tribes and Territories: Intellectual Enquiry and the Cultures of Disciplines*, Buckingham, The Society for Research into Higher Education-Open University Press, 2001, 2nd edition, p. 23.

recurrence is here subsumed into continuity. The returning again and again of an anniversary becomes a means for scholarship to affirm its continual advance.

Reflecting on such matters, recent scholars have been divided about the scholarly value of anniversary and other commemorative occasions. Some have felt that "anniversary moments do not seem to be the best time for scholarly innovation", that the "combined pressures of working under strict deadlines and the anticipation of heightened public interest both appear to be rather inimical to producing something genuinely new".[16] Instead, anniversaries can be "good moments for a general synthesis, a conference report or a major exhibition, which draws on and assesses the more specialist scholarship," setting of benchmarks for future research.[17] Others have felt that commemoration and critique are fundamentally incompatible.[18]

There have also been scholars who have argued that rather than for their impact on scholarly agendas, the potential of anniversary moments for scholarship might reside in their impact on public understanding: "these will be moments when historians are called upon to explain complex realities they know intimately to non-expert audiences in broad brushstrokes. There will be elements both of 'business as usual', so reporting on what we know confidently, and of 'scholarly light' illuminating new paths. The timing of anniversaries and the progress of scholarship, aren't perfectly synchronised, and […] we have to be honest about what we can and cannot bring to commemorative events".[19]

Anniversaries have also been seen in a more positive light: opportunities for scholarship to reassess subjects, project new agendas, bring scholars together (including at a large scale) to share findings and insights, develop research through securing material funds, galvanise international collaboration and mobilise a level of interest that can drive new projects. It is with this optimistic outlook that Janet Browne remarks on the history of the commemoration of Charles Darwin's anniversaries:

16. Dan Healey, in Grady, Arnold, Healey and McGarry, "Anniversaries", p. 99.

17. Jorg Arnold and Dan Healey, in Grady, Arnold, Healey and McGarry, "Anniversaries", pp. 96, 99.

18. See the analysis of the commemorative exhibition at the Smithsonian Gallery (Washington, DC), to mark the 50th anniversary of the flight of the Enola Gay, the plane that dropped the atomic bomb over Hiroshima, provided by James Cuno, "Whose Money? Whose Power? Whose Art History?", *The Art Bulletin,* 79/1 (Mar. 1997), pp. 6-9. The original exhibition concept proposed to raise the question of whether it was necessary to drop the bomb. After consultation, the secretary of the gallery, Michael Heyman, stated, "bringing off a celebration and commemoration of the 50th anniversary and doing a historical analysis at the same time is very hard; it is exceedingly difficult to do this and be fair to the millions of veterans who believe that dropping the bomb saved their lives". The museum consequently cancelled the original exhibition and replaced it with "a simple display of portions of the restored plane with text labels honouring the mission uncritically". Cuno concludes: "Museums, it would seem, are more suited for commemoration than for critical inquiry" (*ibid*., p. 7).

19. Fearghal McGarry, in Grady, Arnold, Healey and McGarry, "Anniversaries", *German History*, p. 97.

> Anniversaries are big business in the cultural world and have long been convenient events for promoting agendas. Tourism, commerce, education; all of these can be boosted in the name of an anniversary. In science, anniversaries help us explore the implications of truly important achievements, confirm shared ideas, highlight the value of key players and look forward to new problems to resolve […]. Scientific anniversaries also provide an opportunity to push an agenda, and even to adapt the past.[20]

The historian Tim Grady addresses the opportunities of anniversaries for scholarship in a different way. Anniversaries are not, he argues, just one example of the "memory boom". Rather, they "demand something very different from the historian". Since they are, for the most part, ongoing, historians need to "engage with them not just as examples of past memory cultures, but also as moments that are very much alive in the present". It is what they reveal of and demand of scholarship in the present, as a reflection on the present conditions of thinking, that matters. One way, Grady contends, for historians to move away from the stale practice of commemorating "great" historical figures, and away from commemoration as a practice grounded on what is familiar of the past, is to emphasise "the marginal or more problematic aspects of the past". This would "diversify" anniversary moments and "rethink existing ones".[21]

Tintoretto 500

How has the 500th anniversary of Tintoretto's birth been approached? Under the collective title *Tintoretto 500*, the occasion has been marked by a series of major commemorative events, most of which were conceived as public from the outset. These centred around three international exhibitions: *Il giovane Tintoretto* (Gallerie dell'Academia, Venice); *Tintoretto 1519-1594* (Palazzo Ducale, Venice) and *Tintoretto: Artist of Renaissance Venice* (National Gallery of Art, Washington). *Tintoretto 1519-1594* was the first major survey of the artists' work in Venice since 1937, and the Washington exhibition was the first retrospective of Tintoretto ever held in North America.[22] We see how, as Janet Brown remarked, the occasion of

20. Janet Browne, "Birthdays to Remember", *Nature,* 456/7220 (2008), pp. 324-325: 324.

21. Grady, in Grady, Arnold, Healey and McGarry, "Anniversaries", pp. 79-80, 93, draws on the 150th anniversary of the Indian Rebellion in 2007 and describes it as not just "another stale offering of heroic narratives" but a new examination on "colonial excesses" and its victims.

22. *Il giovane Tintoretto* (Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice, 7 September 2018-6 January 2019)) presented 26 works from Tintoretto's early career alongside prints, drawings and paintings from 1530s and 1540s Venice, culminating with *The Miracle of the Slave* of 1548. *Tintoretto 1519-1594* (Palazzo Ducale, Venice, 7 September-6 January 2019) and *Tintoretto: The Artist of Renaissance Venice* (National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, 24 March-7 July 2019) included highlights from both Venice shows and featured nearly 50 paintings and more than a dozen works on paper spanning the artist's entire career. A number of smaller exhibitions were also staged, including: *Drawing in Tintoretto's Venice* (Morgan Library and Museum, New York, 12 October-6 January 2019; National Gallery of Washington, DC, 3 March-26 May 2019); *Venetian Prints in the Time of Tintoretto* (National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, 24

a major anniversary provides the opportunity to push international collaboration and galvanise the institutional support and commitment required for this.

Tintoretto 500 also involved conservationist activities. The US conservation charity, *Save Venice*, funded over two million dollars for the restoration of nineteen Tintoretto paintings in Venice, as well as the artist's tomb. It supported multiple exhibitions, educational initiatives, and publications – including a publication for the SS Giovanni e Paolo exhibition and a guidebook of Tintoretto itineraries around the city – as well as a series of "special events that bring the city's permanent treasures into focus".[23] In this way, the celebration of one of "the greatest painters of the Venetian Renaissance" united Venice's civic, private and commercial institutions, and the local community, offering both commercial and self-promotion opportunities and opportunities for broad public engagement with the Venetian people.[24] Commemorative coins and stamps were issued; a new lighting system was installed in the Scuola Grande di San Rocco; sponsorship benefitted local businesses.[25] All these are signs of the notable public impact of a major commemorative event.

How did the curators and museum directors articulate their vision for the exhibitions? The directors of the Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia, the Gallerie dell'Accademia and Washington's National Gallery of Art noted that, "The 500th anniversary of [Tintoretto's birth] offers an extended opportunity […] to explore and honor his accomplishments", to provide "an up-to-date overview of Tintoretto's entire oeuvre", and celebrate his legacy.[26] Of *Drawing in Tintoretto's*

March-9 June 2019); *Arte, Fede, Mediciona nella Venezia di Tintoretto* (Scuola Grande di San Marco, Venice, 6 September-6 January 2019); *La Venezia di Tintoretto* (Palazzo Mocenigo, Venice, 6 September-6 January 2019); and *Celebrating Tintoretto: Portrait Paintings and Studio Drawings* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 16 October-27 January 2019).

23. https://www.savevenice.org/project/tintoretto-500-campaign.

24. At the opening of the Washington exhibition, the Ambassador of Italy to the United States, Armando Varricchio, and the Mayor of Venice, Luigi Brugnaro, both highlighted the vital connection between a "great artist" and a "great city"; both spoke of the cultural connections between Venice and Washington and their shared defence of "Western values" such as freedom. In their "Directors' Foreword", the museum directors involved in *Tintoretto 500* contextualised the event with respect to the longstanding and ongoing collaboration between the civic museums of Venice and the National Gallery of Art, Washington. See Gabriella Belli, Paola Marini and Earl A. Powell, "Directors' Foreword", in *Tintoretto: Artist of Renaissance Venice*, ed. by Robert Echols and Frederick Ilchman, Exhibition Catalogue (Venice, 7 September 2018-6 January 2019; Washington, DC, 24 March-7 July 2019), New Haven, Yale University Press - Washington, DC, National Gallery of Art, 2018, pp. ix-x: ix.

25. A commemorative 2 Euro San Marino coin was produced. A commemorative gold coin was also released by the Instituto Poligrafico Zecca della Stato (IPZS) as part of their *The Ages of Europe* series, highlighting the various eras of European civilisation. The lighting system was the result of a partnership between Scuola Grande di San Rocco and iGuzzini lighting and architectural company. Salvadori diamond atelier in Venice was the main sponsor of the exhibition *Tintoretto a la Scuola della Trinità in Santa Maria della Salute*. https://www.salvadoridiamondatelier.com/en/2018/09/25/salvadori-celebrates-the-500th-anniversary-of-the-birth-of-tintoretto.

26. Belli, Marini and Powell, "Directors' Foreword", pp. ix-x.

Venice, the curators wrote that since little is known about Tintoretto's drawings, and the last monograph was forty years ago, "the time is ripe for reassessment and for a comprehensive account of his work as a draftsman" that addresses persistent misconceptions and sets the record straight.[27] Of the exhibition *The Young Tintoretto*, Paola Marini, director of the Accademia said, "We want to share with the public what the cultural and visual experiences of the young Tintoretto could have been", going on to state that the artists' own experimental works were displayed separately to the works of his contemporaries, because his style was "so particular that there was too much contrast with the others".[28] This indicates the challenges of presenting Tintoretto's difference – understood here in terms of his difference from other artistic practices of his time – within a commemorative project that bears extra-academic functions and a public orientation.

Robert Echols and Frederik Ilchman, the two senior curators of *Tintoretto 500,* noted that "In conceiving and planning the current exhibition to celebrate Tintoretto in his 500th year, we had multiple goals, starting with proposing the most accurate view of the artist possible", to lead to "a better understanding" of his work. "Maintaining rigorous standards of attribution and quality", Echols continues, "allows the exhibition to present a far stronger and more coherent artist, one consistent with the remarkably high reputation he enjoyed during his lifetime".[29] For the exhibition in Washington, they state, "our aim has been to present Tintoretto's genius as fully as possible outside of Venice, showing a representative selection of his greatest works in the major genres" and enable audiences to "experience many of the Venetian master's signature achievements", adding that they hoped "this exhibit will give Tintoretto the high profile he deserves with the general public". For the publication, "our objective has been to produce a book of enduring value – both a reference for exhibition visitors and a complete, up-to-date presentation of Tintoretto's achievement". Contributors were asked "to discuss key topics of patronage, chronology, iconography, and the like within thematic essays".[30] These essays were gathered around generally familiar themes and problems in Tintoretto scholarship – Tintoretto's Venetian identity; Tintoretto's working processes; Tintoretto's relation to Michelangelo's *disegno* and Titian's *colorito*; the principal genres of Tintoretto's work – sacred narratives, altarpieces, mythologies, portraits, drawings.

27. John Marciari, *Drawing in Tintoretto's Venice*, Exhibition Catalogue (New York, 12 October 2018-6 January 2019; Washington, DC, 3 March-26 May 2019), New York, Morgan Library and Museum - London, Holberton, 2018, pp. 6, 9.

28. Paola Marini, quoted in Hannah McGivern, "Tintoretto's 500th Anniversary Takes over Venice", *The Art Newspaper*, 304 (Sept. 2018), p. 17.

29. Nina Siegal, "Exhibitions Celebrate Tintoretto's 500th Birthday", Sotheby's, 30 August 2018, https://www.sothebys.com/en/articles/exhibitions-celebrate-tintorettos-500th-birthday

30. Robert Echols and Frderick Ilchman, "Curators' Preface", in *Tintoretto: Artist of Renaissance Venice*, pp. xiii-xvi: xiv, xvi. Robert Echols, cited in Sadie Dingelder, "For His 500th Birthday, Renaissance Master Jacopo Tintoretto Gets His First U.S. Show", *The Washington Post*, 21st March 2019. https://www.washingtonpost.com/gdpr-consent/?next_url=https%3a%2f%2fwww.washingtonpost.com%2fexpress%2f2019%2f03%2f21%2fsee-massive-cinematic-paintings-by-renaissance-master-jacopo-tintoretto-nga%2f.

I quote these statements at length to explore some of the pervasive attitudes and approaches towards the commemorative occasion of the anniversary. Recognizing that these are just a handful of the scholarly responses to *Tintoretto 500*, and as such are neither exhaustive nor representative, they nevertheless provoke interesting reflection on what anniversaries might mean for scholarship, and what – beyond the specificity of the occasion – they might reveal about disciplinary practice. Whilst some of the approaches that manifest at an anniversary are specific, perhaps even exclusive, to this type of occasion, I believe they have wider implications insofar as they touch on fundamental issues such as the progress of scholarship, the production of knowledge and the relationship between the object and nature of study.

To begin, there is the spirit of conservation, celebration and honouring. Insofar as there is a focus on major works and signature achievements, we see a tendency towards the canonical. Established thematics and topics such as patronage, chronology, iconography, working methods, Tintoretto's Venetian identity, the major genres of his work, are presented. In addition, certain references and nominations emerge – such as the characterisation of Tintoretto as genius and prophet – which in other scholarly contexts would not be so readily received. There is the tendency towards approaches that offer an overview, a survey, a representation – perhaps a comprehensive one and which can present up to date findings. We find invocations to accuracy and connoisseurial attention to details of attribution and quality. None of this is necessarily surprising. The anniversary emerges as a moment to take stock, to act as a point of reference, and lay the ground for/act as a benchmark for future scholarship. Tropes of greatness, the master and the masterpiece – whilst no doubt outdated with respect to the way the discipline has evolved – nevertheless fulfil extra-academic functions, enabling an accessible and representative interface for the public and non-specialist audience (which of course in this case includes a Venetian audience proud of a Venetian artist).[31] It is not the problematic aspects of Tintoretto that are foregrounded, but a coherent and well-founded image.

Such approaches would seem to confirm the view that anniversaries are better moments for progressing public understanding and sustaining the continuity of scholarship than for the introduction of divergent or experimental interpretations that disrupt existing habits of thinking. Surveying, surmising, consolidating, collating – these can be understood as characteristics of a foundational and representational mode of thought that proceeds on the basis of what is already established. It is not that notions such as iconography or patronage are in themselves necessarily outmoded tools of investigation. It is rather that by being treated as methodological presuppositions belonging to a pre-existing image of thought, they delimit a

31. In a review of the Washington show, it was remarked that "this monographic show could be charged with being old-fashioned, exploring just how masterful this old master was". By placing the artist's two self-portraits at the entrance and exit of the show "confirms that it is all about the man here – the genius, or the prophet, as the curators call him in the catalogue". The show demonstrated that "Connoisseurship still matters". Suzy Nalezyty, "Tintoretto: Artist of Renaissance Venice", *Renaissance Quarterly*, 73/3, (Fall 2020), pp. 1000-1003: 1000-1001.

common and recognised territory that subjects what is most obscure, deviant and idiosyncratic of its object to the levelling mechanisms of representation, bringing difference under the framework of identity. Characteristics of the experimental and unorthodox nature of Tintoretto"s work have never been in short supply; yet – as I will explore further below – we often find such characterisations recuperated within pre-existing interpretive frameworks and categories, the coordinates of established images of thought. This has the effect of levelling what was experienced as excessive, making it recognisable, palatable. What would it instead entail to remain with this difference, as an insistent impetus to think?

At this juncture it is interesting to consider Grady's invitation for scholars to reflect on anniversaries as "moments that are very much alive in the present". For him, this involves replacing the commemoration of great historical figures with emphasis on "the marginal or more problematic aspects of the past", to register the difference in history that would complicate and diversify the moment of commemoration. Could the anniversary then be an occasion for critical reflection upon scholarly customs and habits that often go unaddressed?

Is it possible that scholarship's drive towards the continuity of knowledge-production masks a more profound aspect of recurrence, determined by the force of an object that makes itself return? Looked at this way, the anniversary prompts reflection upon the phenomena of survival, renewal, recurrence, continuance and perpetuity, the birth and rebirth of the object of our thought. At stake here is the fundamental question of how and why we study the objects of the past, why certain objects continue to concern us. Do we study something again and again because it is established as part of the discipline"s habit and we desire to advance an existing field of knowledge? Or might this attention be considered as the registration of something unresolved, something that does not cease to probe us and insist that it be thought? Is Tintoretto material for the disciplinary production and reproduction of knowledge such that the anniversary marks the absorption of the phenomena of recurrence into the continuity of discourse? Or is Tintoretto a problem that recurs, a problematic object that keeps returning because it resists solution, forcing the scholar to invent new ways of thinking?[32] What happens when we reflect on scholarship not just in terms of the production of knowledge but as a mode of thinking?

I believe that it is in the expression of difference through recurrence that the anniversary can confront thought with a provocation: the provocation posed by the "*versus*" ("against; turned") of its name. Difference introduces a turn, a change of nature or orientation, within the domain of the same.

32. See the insights of Hubert Damisch, in Yve-Alain Bois, Denis Hollier, Rosalind Krauss and Hubert Damisch, "A Conversation with Hubert Damisch", *October*, 85 (Summer, 1998), pp. 3-17: 9: "The great question regarding history that never stops attracting me – since it has a relation to our contemporary situation – is, why do the works of the Quattrocento still concern us?". For Damisch, this question has nothing to do with historical contextualism; it has rather to do with the way the object functions as a "theoretical object", raising questions and provoking thought in the present. I develop this idea in Kamini Vellodi, *Tintoretto's Difference: Deleuze, Diagrammatics and Art History*, London, Bloomsbury, 2019, pp. 163-166.

Deleuze: thought, event, monument

In the writings of the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, we encounter a philosophy of thought that attends to how the qualities of an object and the experience it occasions impact the production of thinking. Deleuze contrasts two models of thought. On the one hand, what he calls a "dogmatic" image of thought (Deleuze also calls it "representational", "orthodox", "traditional", "classic" and "naturally upright") maintains thinking under the image of what has already been thought. Here, thought grounds itself on what it already knows and recognises of itself and the production of knowledge takes place as a continuous process of addition, removal and augmentation with respect to recognised coordinates, frameworks and characteristics of thinking. On the other hand, there is thinking that begins with the unrecognisable, the excessive element of experience that can only be sensed.[33] Thought is here removed from the logic of representation, recognition and reproduction and rendered a question of production and genesis.

The dogmatic image of thought reproduces the coordinates and frameworks through which it has already exercised itself. Here, "an implicit, tacit or presupposed image of thought determines our goals when we try to think".[34] It proceeds on the basis of established features and values and as such it upholds the principle of recognition. The logic of recognition, which Deleuze defines as "the harmonious exercise of all the faculties upon a supposed same object"[35] is identity – the identity of the object, and thought's identity through its grounding and establishment in a certain image. Recognition measures and limits the quality of a thing by relating it *to* something, thereby interrupting processes of change, transformation and becoming, processes of differing. A mode of thinking based on presupposition, recognition is an essentially communal thinking that posits a common ground and proceeds on the basis of traits held as implicit.[36]

In the commemoration of Tintoretto's 500th anniversary, it might at first appear that the community of scholars knows implicitly what is at stake in thinking about Tintoretto and recognises the kinds of issues and questions that can be raised, and perhaps even the shape of some of the responses. Issues of Tintoretto's working methods, his Venetian identity, his relationship to contemporary currents of painting, his faith, the details of his commissions, the genres of his work, questions of dating and attribution – these are familiar orientations of thought, recognised in advance of study and part of a common sense. The form of the questions and the general forms of some responses will be familiar, even if the particularities of answers offer new content and lead to new knowledge.

The real task for thinking, Deleuze contends, is not simply a question of producing new knowledge, since new knowledge can remain very much indebted

33. Gilles Deleuze*, Difference and Repetition*, transl. by Paul Patton, New York-London, Continuum, 1994, pp. xvi-xvii.

34. *Ibid*., p. 132.

35. *Ibid*., p. 133.

36. *Ibid*, pp. 134-135: "The form of recognition has never sanctioned anything but the recognisable and the recognised; form will never inspire anything but conformities".

to old ways of thinking. Rather, it is to affirm the strange as strange; to retain the unrecognizability of the strange as an insistent impetus. Thinking begins with this element that resists being thought and which, in this resistance, at once ruptures the existing image of thinking and provokes new thought. Thought is forced by that excessive element of experience which defies representation and its structures – linguistic, semiotic, cognitive. The thinking that results is both creative and critical since it involves both the destruction of a pre-existing image of thought and the genesis of thinking in the act itself.[37] In Deleuze's words, such an encounter "calls forth forces in thought which are not the forces of recognition, today or tomorrow, but the powers of a completely other model, from an unrecognised and unrecognisable terra incognita". This "strips thought of its 'innateness,' and treats it every time as something which has not always existed, but begins, forced and under constraint".[38] Thinking does not begin with reference to itself/the thought of others – but with the object, and the object in its *difference.*

By "difference", Deleuze refers to a quality that is not graspable through the parameters of identity. When we refer to difference from or to something else, we retain the sense of difference as marking the distinction of one identifiable thing from another. This way of registering difference externalises it and retains it in the sphere of the negative. Deleuze understands difference as difference "in-itself", difference as the intensive quality of a thing, its differing from itself.

Interestingly, Deleuze relates this conception of difference to an ontology of art that reconfigures ideas of memorialisation and commemoration in compelling ways. We are invited here to think about works of art not as representations or memorialisations of actual happenings but instead as "blocks of sensation", that extract sensations from the habits of perception, memory, recognition and knowledge and materialising them to make us think and feel in unforeseen ways. This embodied sensation is what Deleuze calls a "monument" – that is work of art and a monument are almost synonymous for him.

"A monument does not commemorate or celebrate something that happened but confides to the ear of the future the persistent sensations that embody the event".[39]

"It is true that every work of art is a monument, but here the monument is not something commemorating a past, it is a bloc of present sensations that owe their preservation only to themselves and that provide the event with the compound that celebrates it".[40]

The idea of commemoration, as the remembrance and celebration of objects or things that have actually happened, is replaced by the idea of the monument's capture of sensations that force us to think anew. This moves away from the quotidian ideas of monuments as actual entities to an idea of a monument as a composite sensation through which events persist through time. In turn, the concept of the event is developed within a framework that removes it from the

37. *Ibid*., p. 139.
38. *Ibid*., p. 135.
39. Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, pp. 176-177.
40. *Ibid*, pp. 167-168.

customary association of events with actual happenings – an association which sustains a notion of history as the study of things that have happened.[41]

Sensations are preserved: they insist, they persist. Of course, there is nothing new about the idea that monuments are built to endure. Is this not the very reason for an edifice, a structure that outlives time and survives its passing – to make sure we don't forget? Deleuze invites a different approach. What matters about the monument is less a question of ensuring we don't forget and more a question of the ceaseless provocation of thinking, again and again, such that the past is embedded as a vital aspect of the present. The point is not that what happened is over such that its survival depends upon the continuous production and reproduction of knowledge about it, but that the impact of that happening continues to affect us – it is "constantly renewed".[42] We can see this as another way of considering the call made by Tim Grady for scholars to use commemorative moments, including anniversaries, to take account of the present experience of the past's survival.

Thought begins with the experience of what is unrecognised and unresolved of the object and it is the unrecognisable and excessive element of experience that recurs again and again to disrupt thought's continuity with what was thought before. Conditioned by the force of its object, thought forges a schism in the continuum of its inheritance. [43] Thought emerges as a "between-time" which

41. Deleuze's most sustained analysis of the event is in his 1969 book *Logic of Sense*. His conception of the event as an "incorporeal" (that is, an immaterial) transformation, that subsists over and above the spatio-temporal world of actual things was shaped by Alfred North Whitehead's definition of the event as "a vibration with an infinity of harmonics or submultiples", made up of "degrees of matter" and distinguished from "actual occasions". *Process and Reality*, eds. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne, New York, The Free Press, 1985, pp. 73, 77.

42. Deleuze's thought is here shaped by Nietzsche's critique, in his "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life", of the cult of monuments in the nineteenth century, and his argument that monumental history should be replaced by real life, in *Untimely Meditations*, ed. by Daniel Breazeale, trans. by R.J. Hollingdale, Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 57-125. There is also an interesting link to Freud here – who drew parallels between the veneration of monuments and hysteric and neurotic relations to the past. "What should we think of a Londoner who shed tears before the Monument that commemorates the reduction of his beloved metropolis to ashes although it has long since risen again in far greater brilliance? Yet every single hysteric and neurotic behaves like [this]. Not only do they remember painful experiences of the remote past, but they still cling to them emotionally; they cannot get free of the past and for its sake they neglect what is real and immediate". Sigmund Freud, *Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, ed. and transl. by J. Strachey, New York, Norton, 1989, p. 13

43. To conceptualise the temporality of the event, Deleuze draws on the Stoic distinction between the concepts of *Aion* and *Chronos*. *Chronos* is the form of time filled with the movements of the objects that it measures. It designates a form of time in which the order of before and after is subjected to the present. It "makes of the past and future its two oriented dimensions, so that one goes always from the past to the future". It is a time of measure, a "pulsed" time. "Chronos, broadly it's chronological time, as the Greeks said, Chronos is the number of movement". In contast, *Aion* refers to the indefinite and virtual time of the pure event. It is a "pure" form of time because it does not contain or measure anything – it is purified of empirical objects (objects in time). It is an "empty" form of time in so far as nothing happens in it; it is "the permanence of empty time spanning everything that happens". It is the time of pure change that "subdivides *ad infinitum*".

eludes the present, which does not pass, and is never over: "beginning again when time is past".[44] By affirming the recurrence of Tintoretto as a problematic object, we underscore the provocation posed by the *versus* of the anniversary – return as the turning against (chronological time). Whenever we encounter recalcitrant phenomena – aspects of Tintoretto's practice that, in their deviation, upset given interpretative frameworks (for instance, the way the difference of the young Tintoretto from his contemporaries poses a challenge in terms of presentation) we are forced to register the object as problematic.[45]

Such encounters are no doubt part of the daily practice of writing about art and images. In the catalogue to the Venice exhibition, Miguel Falomir points to the register of one such problem. He comments that the interest of Tintoretto's secular works lies in their expression of how "the limitations of an artist can reveal as much or more about him as his successes" and that "his best mythologies […] are approached with a singular vision – one that is frequently very different from the prevailing practices of his time".[46] What is being gestured towards here is Tintoretto's resistance to established interpretative frameworks – the comparative treatment of contextualism on the one hand and the foregrounding of the artist's acknowledged areas of strength on the other. The challenge is how to affirm such intimations of resistance in their disruption of normative approaches and as more than provisional, more than something that can be made solvable and reabsorbed into the realm of the known.

In my book *Tintoretto' Difference. Deleuze Diagrammatics and Art History*, I attempt to address this challenge by contrasting on the one hand the way scholarship has retained a particular framework of interpretation – the statement, most commonly attributed to Carlo Ridolfi, of Tintoretto's relation to Titian and Michelangelo (which I call "Ridolfi's motto") – and on the other hand, Tintoretto's

Chronos, measured from the present, sustains "vast and thick presents which comprehend both future and past in relation to one another". The present has duration and extension. In the time of *Aion*, the present is an instant without duration or extension: "only the past and the future inhere or subsist" and they "divide the present at every instant", "in both directions at once", into the already past and the yet to come. Gilles Deleuze, *Logic of Sense,* ed. by Constantin V. Boundas, transl. by Mark Lester, London-New York, Continuum, 2004, pp. 1, 89, 164, 207; Gilles Deleuze, "Anti-Œdipe et Mille Plateaux Cours Vincennes: On Music", Cours du 03/05/1977. Webdeleuze. https://www.webdeleuze.com/textes/5#:~:text=Chronos%2C%20broadly%20it's%20chronological%20time,less%20simple%20time%20to%20understand.&text=The%20Stoics%20took%20the%20Aion,a%20time%20of%20the%20incorporeal.

44. Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, p. 158. Deleuze and Guattari contrast events with the regime of history: "What History grasps of the event is its effectuation in states of affairs or in lived experience, but the event in its becoming, in its specific consistency, in its self-positing as concept, escapes History" (*ibid*. p. 110). Joseph Leo Koerner, "On Monuments", *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 67/1 (2017), pp. 5-20: 6, expresses a similar idea, ruminating on the German for monument – *Denkmal* – which "remembers and warns by means of an elemental mark or Mal". Mal "pertains to time, denoting time narrowed to a distinct point or event: dies mal, einmal".

45. Vellodi, *Tintoretto's Difference*, pp. 11-13, 60, 89-92.

46. Miguel Falomir, "Mythologies", in *Tintoretto: Artist of Renaissance Venice*, pp. 191-199: 191.

invention of a method of composition through the construction of miniature staged assemblages (which I call the "stage-method"). In his 1624 biography of Tintoretto, Ridolfi wrote of how Tintoretto "wrote the rules of work on the walls of a room of his, thus: 'The Drawing of Michel Angelo and the colouring of Titian'".[47] Indeed, despite the acknowledged dubious accuracy of Ridolfi's biography of the artist, as well as the fact that he was himself inheriting an idea of an ideal synthesis that could fuse two hitherto distinct artistic traditions[48], the reference to the motto persists in the scholarship.[49] This inheritance of an interpretative framework (even

47. Carlo Ridolfi, *Tintoretto: from Le maraviglie dell'arte, vol. II*, ed. by Detlev von Hadeln, transl. by Rhoda M. Welsford, London, Courtauld Institute of Art, 1949, p. 2.

48. It had been pronounced as early as 1548 by Paolo Pino: "if Titian and Michelangelo were a single person, if the drawing of Michelangelo were added to the colour of Titian, then we would have the supreme god of painting"; quoted in Anna Laura Lepschy, *Tintoretto Observed*: *A Documentary Survey of Critical Reactions from the 16th to the 20th Century* , Ravenna, Longo, 1983, p. 19. The Florentine writer Raffaello Borghini was, in 1584, the first to attribute this idea to Tintoretto: Tintoretto "himself confesses that he recognises as master, in matters of design, none other than [Michelangelo]; but as far as the use of colour is concerned he declares that he has imitated nature, and also particularly Titian" (*ibid*., p. 27).

49. Lepschy, *Tintoretto Observed*, p. 19, remarks that it has "fixed the main outlines of Tintoretto's image for posterity". Philip Cottrell, "Painters in Practice: Tintoretto, Bassano, and the Studio of Bonafacio de' Pitati", in *Jacopo Tintoretto. Actas del Congreso Internacional 'Jacopo Tintoretto' - Proceedings of the International Symposium 'Jacopo Tintoretto'*, ed. by Miguel Falomir, Milan, Skira - Turnhout, Brepols, 2009, pp. 50-57: 50, writes that "in wishing to define a historically tenable account of Tintoretto's professional origins, many scholars are still forced to reply on the rather vague comments made by Carlo Ridolfi in his life of Tintoretto of 1642". A useful account is in Alison Carroll, "On the Credibility of Carlo Ridolfi's Lives of the Venetian Painters", *Australian Journal of Art*, 2 (1980), pp. 51-62 (I thank Marie-Louise Lillywhite for this reference). For references to the motto, see David Rosand, *Painting in Cinquecento Venice*: *Titian, Veronese, Tintoretto*, New Haven-London, Yale University Press, 1982, pp. 217-218; Sydney J. Freedberg, *Painting in Italy 1500-1600*, New Haven-London, Yale University Press, 1993, 3rd edition, p. 523; Tom Nichols, *Tintoretto: Tradition and Identity*, London, Reaktion, 1999, p. 14; Robert Echols and Frederick Ilchman, in Frederick Ilchman, with contributions by Linda Borean et al., *Titian, Tintoretto, Veronese: Rivals in Renaissance Venice*, Exhibition Catalogue (Boston, 15 March-16 August 2009; Paris, 14 September 2009-4 January 2010), Farnham, Lund Humphries, 2009, pp. 112, 225; David Rosand, "Tintoretto and Veronese: Style, Personality, Class", in *Jacopo Tintoretto*. *Actas*, pp. 72-76: 73. For critical evaluations see Hans Tietze, *Tintoretto: The Paintings and Drawings*, London, Phaidon, 1948, p. 14: "it is not very difficult to prove that [Ridolfi] and his contemporaries compressed into anecdotal form vague traditions and misunderstood utterances of Tintoretto"; it is "completely wrong to imagine Tintoretto as guided by this double star from the very beginning and to think that even in his youthful period he was striving to achieve a synthesis out of antagonistic elements". Francesco Valconover and Terisio Pignatti, *Tintoretto*, transl. by Robert Erich Wolf, New York, Abrams, 1985, p. 15, state that whilst the motto might have served more than one of the younger generation in Venice in the 1540s and 1550s, "whatever [Tintoretto] produced was entirely original, an idiom that burgeoned under his hands with increasing sureness". See also John Steer, *A Concise History of Venetian Painting,* London, Thames and Hudson, 1970, p. 154: "[i]n this treatment of form and space Tintoretto seems to be trying to combine Roman and Venetian ideals in a new and daring synthesis, but in fact the final result has style all its own". In *Tintoretto: An Artist of Renaissance Venice*, Echols and Ilchman dedicate a chapter to the motto, concluding that Tintoretto was less indebted to Titian

if to contest it), demonstrates the pervasiveness of an established image of thought, whereby coordinates of reference and discourse are given in advance of, and supply a ground for, the practice of thought. In contrast, the "stage-method" functions as that through which Tintoretto's works present as problematic – a source of their unorthodox effects and their resistance to situation in their time.[50] Whilst Tintoretto's stage method is well known within the scholarship, its radical nature is often made intelligible through an appeal to the historical state of affairs, for instance, to the established practice of using maquettes and to the contemporary relations between painting and theatre. By reabsorbing it within established frameworks, difference is made solvable and intelligible, reabsorbed into the realm of the known, and brought back under the parameters of identity. The challenge is how to affirm difference as a disruptive force for normative approaches, to sustain the registration of difference as something more than provisional and which makes us think again and again.[51] This might involve a practice of writing that undercuts the signifiers, statements and propositions that uphold established images of thought.[52] Writing could instead invest language in a way that disrupts its communicative regime, enabling the problematic element of experience to insist.

Conclusion

These reflections on the nature of anniversaries are made at a time when academia's participation in histories of commemoration and collective memory

than to Pordenone; Robert Echols and Frederick Ilchman, "The Motto on the Wall", in *Tintoretto: Artist of Renaissance Venice*, pp. 85-92.

50. Ridolfi, *Tintoretto*, p. 3: "He also practised by making little models of wax and clay, dressing them up with bits of stuff and studying carefully the contours of the limbs with the folds of the draperies. Some (figures) he also set up in little houses and in perspective scenes made of wood and cardboard, and by contriving little lamps in the windows he introduced therein light s and shadows. He also hung some models by threads to the roof beams to study the effect they made when seen from below, to get the foreshortening of figures for ceilings. By such methods he composed strange inventions". I analyse this at length in Vellodi, *Tintoretto's Difference*, pp. 31-59.

51. This is what Eric Newton, *Tintoretto*, Longmans, Green, 1952, p. 35, seems to intimate when he wrote the following: "[Tintoretto] is neither a good Michelangelist nor a great colorist […]. The key to his art is not to be found in his motto, which looks back into the past, but in the kind of problems he tried to solve and the spirit in which he solved them. They were problems that, in the mid-sixteenth century, belonged to the future, problems that neither Michelangelo nor Titian could have understood". Indeed, Newton goes on to discuss Tintoretto's stage-method as the artist's own distinctive method for attending to his problems, problems which in fact remain unsolved in his work.

52. James Elkins, *Our Beautiful, Dry and Distant Texts*, London, Routledge, 2000, p. xiii, links the desire to posit the artworks as the site of meaning and viewers as the readers of that meaning with the desire to continue writing "in a conceptually and rhetorically uniform manner that I call sameness". He continues "That uniformity is important enough that the ostensive subject of historical research – the grainy, recalcitrant detail of actual artworks – is sometimes excluded from art history in its name".

is under scrutiny. In the wake of global protests around issues of race equality, decolonisation, and the charged symbolism of monuments and memorials as perceived bearers of contentious histories, academia is obliged to examine its values, what these values exclude and what they have and continue to sanction, and to interrogate its own commemorative practices.[53] There is a need to examine how the retention of disciplinary habits sustains the structures of past knowledge. What is at stake is the mode of thinking – does thought proceed as grounded on its presuppositions or does it begin as registration of the strange, troubling, differential elements of the object that conditions it?

In foregrounding the question of recurrence – why we study certain objects of the past, why certain objects recur as problems for thinking – the anniversary prompts reflection on the nature of scholarly thought and the nexus of habits, customs and presuppositions within which it operates. In this paper I have explored how the commemorative occasion of a 500th anniversary can sustain an established image of thought through the logic of recognition. Drawing on the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze I have considered an alternative approach to the investment of the anniversary moment, one that foregrounds the object in its difference and the challenge difference poses to thought. It is by affirming the object in this challenge that scholarship can engage an ethics of thinking that foregrounds the primacy of experience over the inheritance of knowledge structures within disciplinary practice. I suggest that this might be one way to respond to the current demands being made upon academia – that is, to strip commemoration of its retrospection and render it a question of agency.

53. Seth C. Bruggeman, "Memorials and monuments", *Parks Stewardship Forum*, 36/3, 2020, pp. 465-470.