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Abstract

Marlene Dumas is regarded as one of the most important international painters of this time. In this article, an analysis is made of what her painting *The Kleptomaniac* (2005) and, in particular, what its title represents. Drawing upon art history, I begin by looking at the original *Portrait of a Kleptomaniac* (ca. 1820) by Géricault of which Dumas has painted her own version. This will be followed by a discussion of the history of the concept of kleptomania in psychiatry and an analysis of how that concept is reproduced by Dumas's painting. It will be argued that, by giving the portrait of a man the title of 'kleptomaniac' in 2005, Dumas represents a type of criminal in a way that neither does justice to the history of the concept of kleptomania, nor to the phenomenon itself. By mobilizing a contested and obsolete psychiatric concept as a title for a painting, the subject itself is mystified and the effect on the viewer of the painting is not only disorienting, but also ethically problematic.

Keywords

Marlene Dumas, Théodore Géricault, kleptomania, visual criminology, ethics of representation

Introduction

While attending an exhibition of contemporary Dutch art,¹ I encountered the painting of a man's face, shown in Figures 1 and 2.

The painting was by Marlene Dumas, who is universally regarded as one of the most important painters of our age. A sign next to the painting read as follows: '*The Kleptomaniac*, 2005, oil on canvas, 100 x 90 cm'. The face of the man looked decidedly familiar and I realized it reminded me of a photo of a painting I had seen several years before in a Dutch newspaper. I had even filed the photo away with the idea that one day I might 'do something with it'. After retrieving the photo from the file, I discovered that it was a reproduction of a painting by Théodore Géricault (1791–1824), painted around 1820. It was entitled *Portrait of a Kleptomaniac* (Figures 1 and 2).

Given that the faces of the men in these portraits look almost identical and that the newspaper photo and the painting had been published and painted, respectively, in the same year (2005), it

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Figure 1. *The Kleptomaniac*, by Marlene Dumas (2005).

Figure 2. *Portrait of a Kleptomaniac*, by Théodore Géricault (ca. 1820).

seemed reasonable to assume that Dumas, who lives and works in Amsterdam, had been inspired to paint *The Kleptomaniac* after having seen the photo of *Portrait of a Kleptomaniac* by Géricault in the same Dutch newspaper. This was even more likely because, as she has repeatedly explained in interviews (Schutte, 1997; Solomon, 2008), she likes to use photos from

newspapers, magazines, books and catalogues as both a source of inspiration and as a method. Her method involves deregulating the tendency of viewers to transform pictures into portraits of a 'real' person (Den Hartog Jager, 2010). Viewers of *Portrait of a Kleptomaniac* by Géricault, for example, will try to imagine who the man in the portrait was, when he lived, what he did and why the artist painted him in such a way. Dumas' approach to painting can be seen 'as a fight against the conditioning of the human gaze' (Den Hartog Jager, 2010). She achieves this by subtly manipulating an image, just enough to create confusion (Reinders, 2013: 44). Through her artistic interventions, she creates such a variety of interpretations that the viewer oscillates between heart and mind. By showing that 'a painting is not a picture,' she makes viewers aware of the presuppositions they bring to a painting (Dumas, 2006b).

Dumas is considered one of the leading contemporary artists and her work has been widely shown in galleries and museums around the world. As an indication of her importance, one might consider that, in 2006, at an auction for modern art at Christie's in London, her painting *The Teacher* was sold for 3.34 million dollars. At that time, it was the highest price ever paid for a work by a contemporary female artist. Some of Dumas's most important exhibitions were at the Documenta in Kassel, the Biennale in Venice, the Museum of Contemporary Art (MoCA) in Los Angeles and the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York. Most recently, the Municipal Museum of Modern Art in Amsterdam has presented Marlene Dumas: the image as burden—an overview of her work 1975–2013. Marlene Dumas received many honours and prizes, including the Johannes Vermeer National Prize for the Arts in 2012 for which the jury praised 'her unique capacity to capture emotions in images'.

In this article, I will be limiting myself to Dumas's painting *The Kleptomaniac*. I will be exploring what the painting represents, how it is represented and the kind of message that the painting sends to the viewer. In this way, I hope to contribute to the growing field of visual criminology and, more specifically, to the work of those scholars in visual criminology who have taken an interest in visual representations of crimes and criminals in the arts. Given that 'the cultural turn in criminology has meant a greater attentiveness to issues of representation' Carrabine (2012: 486), it is surprising, however, how little attention has still been given to representations of crime in the fine arts.

Visual criminology

Visual criminology can be defined as the study of visual representations of crime, i.e. of the ways in which perpetrators, victims and crime scenes are imagined in the visual media and the visual arts (Melossi, 2000: 298). As a field of research, visual criminology draws on a wide range of disciplines and research methods including media studies, art theory and art history, ethnography, history, sociology, aesthetics and ethics in order to study media representations of crime and to analyse how crime is visually represented in the arts.

In *Framing Crime: Cultural Criminology and the Image* (Hayward and Presdee, 2010), the beginning of visual criminology is tied to the discovery of photography in the early 19th-century which, among other items, enabled photographic portraiture (Hamilton and Hargreaves, 2001). Celebrity portraiture provided the public with images of some of the most noteworthy, and, indeed, notorious people of their time, but was soon to be followed by portraiture of ordinary members of the middle classes who wanted their pictures to be taken in a similar fashion. In this way, social and political class differences were visually articulated.

Photographic images were also used to study the facial and bodily features of psychiatric patients and criminal offenders. Portraits of psychiatric patients were classified based on the diagnosis of their disorder or disease. A famous example is the collection of photographic images that was made between 1876 and 1880 of female patients of Dr Jean–Martin Charcot, the director of the Hôpital de la Salpêtrière in Paris.

From a criminological perspective, the work of the French biometrician Alphonse Bertillon (1853–1914) is particularly interesting (Finn, 2009). He developed a method to classify photographic images ('mug shots') in order to more efficiently detect suspects of criminal activity. Because photographic images were seen as objective reproductions of reality, photography enabled classifications for scientific purposes to the extent that Bertillon is supposed to have said that we only see what we look at, and we only look at what we already have in mind.

Probably no one has used visual imagery more effectively than Cesare Lombroso, the founding father of modern criminology. In fact, the success of his theory of the biological causes of crime is due to a large extent to the fact that he collected a large quantity of photos of both men and women showing what he considered to be the 'atavistic' features of 'born criminals'. He also had pictures taken of men demonstrating before the camera how certain crimes were actually committed (Turzio, Villa and Violi, 2005). The final edition of *L'Uomo Delinquente* sported an extensive catalogue of photographic images of criminals. These representations were intended as proof of the validity of his theory. From a contemporary methodological perspective, however, they were little more than visual illustrations of his theory (Gibson and Rafter, 2006: 21; Rafter, 2014: 130).

Before the discovery of photography in the early 19th-century, images of lunatics and criminals were drawn or painted. Lombroso's student Enrico Ferri had studied these drawings and paintings, as well as sculptures of lunatics and criminals. In the third chapter of his book *I Delinquenti Nell'Arte* (1896), Ferri notes how the famous French psychiatrist Charcot identified the characteristic features and postures of hysterics and epileptics in the portraits that great painters like Raphael had made of the possessed and the deformed. He also refers to the anthropologist Edouard Lefort who identified the characteristic facial features of criminals in more than 100 portraits by painters of the Italian, Flemish, Spanish and French school. Ferri concludes that portraits of criminals drawn and painted in the past centuries were, in fact, 'perfectly matched' to the scientific types of the born criminals that had been developed theoretically and empirically by his teacher Cesare Lombroso.

In her article 'Portraits in painting and photography', the philosopher Cynthia Freeland (2007: 95) has argued that the portrait is 'a genre that is surprisingly under-examined in aesthetics—especially in relation to its importance in art history'. This is surprising given that painted portraiture has been known ever since the 17th-century, when members of various social classes had portraits made of themselves. Initially, artists were restricted in their possibilities for expression because they were paid to reveal the power and wealth of those who commissioned their portraits. In the course of time, however, painters of portraits were allowed to pay more attention to their subject's inner states. (Freeland, 2007: 97) One way they did this was by painting anonymous, socially marginal people like beggars, vagrants and lunatics (Gilman, 1982; Nichols, 2007).

Portraits can show their subjects in different ways and sometimes in more than one of these ways simultaneously. A portrait can offer a striking likeness that renders a person's physiognomy and physical appearance in every detail. Alternatively, a portrait can testify to the subject's presence in a particular context or situation by showing that the individual was *there* in person. In

addition, a portrait can show the subject as a specific kind of person by highlighting his or her attitudes, emotions and personality. Great artists like, for example Géricault, have the capability to portray their subjects in such a striking way that for the viewer it is almost as if he or she were encountering the portrayed individual in person. 'In such cases ... we imagine that we know the person and gain insight into their essential character through viewing their image. This involves more than just conveying the person's particular feeling or state at any given moment, but penetrating more deeply into their very innermost self, their nature, and even their self-conception' (Freeland, 2007: 107).

Contemporary artists, like Marlene Dumas, want to break with this romantic idea of a portrait and the belief that the painted human face should be a window on the person's soul.² In contemporary art, image and reality are constantly blurred and cannot be clearly distinguished. Not only paintings but also photographic images are no more seen as reproductions of reality. In his chapter on photography in *Framing Crime: Cultural Criminology and the Image*, Phil Carney (2010: 27) for example, refers to Andy Warhol's (1928–1987) collage of 'mug shots' of most wanted criminals. Warhol's installation was inspired by Marcel Duchamp's work *Wanted, \$2,000 Reward* in which Duchamp had integrated a photo of himself in a police poster with wanted suspects of crimes. Warhol made enlarged copies of 'mug shots' which had been made public by the New York police on 1 February 1962 under the title 'The thirteen most wanted'. Also famous is the series of portraits entitled *18 Oktober 1977* that Gerhard Richter painted based on photos of 'terrorists' (members of the German Baader–Meinhofgroup). Marlene Dumas also painted a portrait of Ulrike Meinhof, one of the founders of the group, entitled *Stern* (2004) after the magazine which was the first to publish a photo of Meinhof (the same one Richter used), which was taken immediately after her body was cut loose from the towel with which she had either been killed or had hung herself.

Contemporary society is flooded with images of criminals and crimes and, as Nicole Rafter (2014: 129) has noted, the world of crime-related images is so vast and confusing that the task of bringing analytic order to the subject can seem overwhelming. Moreover, in visual criminology, we are only just now learning how to interpret all these images and representations 'whose message is sometimes difficult to look at and often difficult to decode'. Contrary to the common sense notion of spectatorship, 'looking is never "just looking"' (Young, 2010: 91) because 'much of what we "see" is actually mediated by the image' (Hayward, 2010: 2). As a result, the analysis of images is 'no easy task' (Carrabine, 2012: 463). In order 'to avoid the pitfalls of an object-centered approach to the image, in which it is posited as a thing awaiting interpretation', Allison Young (2014: 161) has proposed a paradigm of 'criminological aesthetics', i.e. an analysis of both the images themselves and the relation between the spectator and the image.

Taking a critical perspective at the encounter between viewer and image, Valier and Lippens (2004) have analysed the mass production and consumption of imaginaries of criminals especially with an eye to developing an ethical evaluation of visual material. Building on the ideas of Roland Barthes and Emanuel Levinas, they discuss why some images touch us emotionally and how we respond to them. According to Barthes (1984) images can sensitize us to the world behind them if something in these images touches us personally. In the case of a painted portrait, for example, a facial expression may trigger the need to know what is behind it (Valier and Lippens, 2004: 324). Looking at a portrait is like an encounter with 'the other'. It confronts us with potentially uncomfortable questions about ourselves, i.e. who we are and what we represent.

Obviously, looking at a painted portrait is not an encounter with a fellow human being in flesh and blood. Nevertheless, a painted portrait enables us to meet the other and to experience 'moral affinity' (Levinas, 1998). Valier and Lippens (2004: 321) suggest that a painted portrait like a photographic image can create an imaginary space in which boundaries can be tested between the one who looks at the image and the other who is represented in it. Whether or not we will be touched by it and how we will respond to it, depend on the representation of the other by the artist and the interpretation of this representation by the viewer.

Recently, an art critic observed that Géricault's *Portrait of a Kleptomaniac* 'can give you the shivers'. This is due to the penetrating presence of the portrayed, a man with a thin face, a tight mouth and a foolish look in his dark blue eyes (Van der Wal, 2014). In the course of time, several descriptions of this portrait have been given. The art critic Louis Viardot (Clément, 1868) was the first one to write about this portrait of 'a man dressed in a green blouse with an intelligent face and an expression of audacity and perversion'.³ On 6 December 1863, Viardot wrote to his friend Charles Blanc that he had found five of the ten 'études d'aliénés' by Géricault that were believed to have been lost, in the home of Dr Lachèze in Baden.⁴ While he was working as an intern at Hôpital de la Salpêtrière in 1928, Lachèze had bought the five paintings at an auction of the estate of Georget who had passed away earlier that year.⁵

Many years later, the art critic Anita Brookner (1997: 16) writes about 'a face of great beauty, with eyes sunk in innocence and doubt', while the cultural historian Rachel Shteir (2011: 37) is struck by the 'cold, pinched gaze' of the kleptomaniac, which she interprets in the following way:

'His indifference to the painter—to anyone who would judge him—implies that he is in the grip of irrational forces of some kind, that the Industrial Revolution as well as an inner revolution have taken their toll. Shame is not a factor; no social reproach can stop him. Nothing in his face reveals remorse.'

As these quotations show, each interpretation of this portrait on the basis of physical and social characteristics of the portrayed results in a representation of a specific type of criminal with its own moral connotations. Moreover, *The Kleptomaniac*, which Marlene Dumas painted after *Portrait of a Kleptomaniac* by Géricault, is no exception.

Nicole Rafter (2014) has noted that in studies of visual representations, the focus has tended to be on words and narratives rather than on the visual image itself. I am afraid that this article will not be an exception to this rule, as I will be focusing more on the title of Dumas's painting than on the visual image itself. I am less concerned with what the artist herself intended in painting this particular portrait. Discovering her intentions—if this would even be possible—requires the study of form, content and medium of the work (Lelik, 2010: 66) and, more specifically, an analysis of how—through the medium—form and content interact in the context within which the work is presented (Valverde, 2006: 28–30). Leaving aside this point, as a criminologist, I do not have the knowledge and expertise in the field of the art needed to do this; such an endeavour would also go far beyond the scope of this article. Instead I will focus on how the painting *The Kleptomaniac*—and especially its title—represents a particular type of criminal and the kind of message this representation sends to the viewer. After reviewing the art historical research related to Géricault's *Portrait of a Kleptomaniac*, I will discuss the history of the concept of 'kleptomania' in psychiatry and analyse how this concept is represented by Dumas's painting and its title. Finally, I will reflect on some of the ethical implications of this particular work of art.

Géricault and the history of psychiatry

'Géricault's picture is a deeply revealing portrayal of its subject. Everything about the sitter's appearance suggests that something is subtly wrong within. His sallow skin has an unhealthy, slightly greasy sheen. His scraggly beard is unkempt. His hair is disheveled, sticking out in tufts. His left cheekbone is puffy, suggesting a recent fall or altercation. The impression is of a person who has become somehow disconnected from the shared assumptions and expectations of everyday social existence. This is reinforced by his disconcerting, oblique gaze. The man's eyes are full of expression but just what they express—beyond an abstractedness that seems almost to verge on autism—remains open to question. The windows of the soul are opaque. The painter does not presume to understand what he sees, but he nevertheless pays close attention to every detail. The sympathy and fascination that he feels for the enigma before him is almost palpable(-). The unprecedented restraint and dignity of the portrait reproduced here imply a more sensitive, reasoned attitude to those suffering from disorders of the mind. The artist has taken care to leave out anything which might too loudly trumpet the presumed 'madness' of his sitter. Instead of a strait-jacket, or any of the other restraints in common use in asylums at the time, the man wears his own clothes, which have been abbreviated to little more than a white collar and cravat and a dark, sketchily indicated coat. Likewise, the institution of his confinement has been reduced to nothing more than a patch of dim wall in the background.' (Graham-Dixon, 2001).

Several art historical studies have been dedicated to Géricault's *Portrait of a Kleptomaniac* (Boime, 1991; Eitner, 1983; Eldridge, 2002; Fehlmann, 2006; Jubinville, 2011; Miller, 1941; Prendeville, 1995).⁶ These studies speculate about the identity of the subject of the portrait, the circumstances of his portrayal and the artist's intentions. Given that these speculations are widely divergent, this painting remains one of the most challenging 'enigmas' of early modern European painting (Jubinville, 2011).

According to Géricault's most authoritative biographer (Eitner, 1983: 242), it is most likely that *Portrait of a Kleptomaniac* was part of a series of 10 portraits of psychiatric patients that Géricault painted in 1822–1823 and which had been commissioned by his friend, the psychiatrist Étienne-Jean Georget (1795–1828). However, no proof has been found that Georget indeed paid Géricault for painting the portraits (Prendeville, 1995: 97). Art historian Anita Brookner (1997) assumes that Géricault painted the portraits of psychiatric patients, including *Portrait of a Kleptomaniac*, for his own sake and, only later, gave them to his friend Georget, possibly as a gift in return for the medical treatment that he himself received at the Hôpital de la Salpêtrière (Aimé-Azam, 1970; Prendeville, 1995: 113). During his stay in this lunatic asylum, he allegedly painted portraits of some of his fellow patients because he was fascinated by their torments in view of their own depression and delusions. The subject must have touched him deeply because of his own suffering and because insanity was not uncommon in his family. Indeed, Géricault suffered from the deepest depression of his life and career after the exhibition of his magnum opus *Medusa* had not been the success he had hoped for. He almost stopped working altogether and was subject to a host of physical and mental complaints (Eitner, 1983: 245). Thus, whether Géricault painted the portraits for his own sake or was paid to make them by his friend Georget is still very much 'open to debate' (Eldridge, 2002: 22).

The original titles of the portraits are also contested. This may be one of the reasons why the Museum of Fine Arts in Ghent, which has the *Portrait of a Kleptomaniac* in its collection, offers the alternative titles of *L'aliéné* and *Le monomane du vol* for the painting. During Géricault's life, the term 'aliéné' (alienated) was commonly used to refer to mentally illness. Giving the painting

such the non-specific title *L'aliéné* could mean that it was originally part of a series of 'études d'aliénés' and did not have a specific title.

In the first study ever of Géricault's work, Clément (1868) used the alleged title *Le monomane du vol* on the basis of the letter by the art critic Louis Viardot who, on the basis of what Lachèze had told him, gave brief descriptions of both the physical appearance of the subjects of the portraits as well as their 'casuistry' (Prendeville, 1995: 101). In the 'catalogue raisonné' which Clément added to his biography of Géricault, the five retrieved paintings were identified as portraits of patients with monomania and the portrait of 'a man dressed in a green blouse; intelligent face with an expression of audacity and perversion' as *Le monomane du vol*. The authenticity of the titles has, however, since been contested (Jubinvillle, 2011: 41, 43; Prendeville, 1995: 101). There are indications that the titles were not originally given to the painting by Géricault himself but rather attributed to them at a later date by others (Fehlmann, 2006).

A clear indication that the title *Portrait of a Kleptomaniac* appeared much later is that the concept of 'kleptomanie'—derived from κλέπτειν (to steal) and μανία (mania) and coined by the medical doctor Charles Marc (1840)—was only used for the first time in 1838 by Esquirol in his three tome opus magnum *Des maladies mentales considérées sous les rapports médical, hygiénique et médico-légal*. This means that neither Géricault, who died in 1824 of tuberculosis, nor Georget who outlived him by only four years, could have possibly known the term 'kleptomanie', let alone used it as a title for the portrait.

The phenomena of people having an irresistible urge to steal without need or necessity was considered at that time to be a form of 'monomania'. (Juquelier and Vinchon, 1914; Seguiet, 1966) The concept of 'monomania' was first used in 1810, by Georget's teacher and mentor Jean-Étienne Dominique Esquirol (1772–1840). As a psychiatrist, Esquirol developed the concept to describe a type of mental disorder that manifests itself only occasionally in people who, for the most part, function normally (Goldstein, 1987: 153). As a result of monomania, a patient might suddenly and unexpectedly reveal, an irresistible urge toward one, and only one, specific type of deviant behaviour.

However, Esquirol's assumptions were controversial as monomania often coincided with (other) disorders. Moreover, patients who occasionally showed an irresistible urge toward deviant behaviour, tended to suffer from other mental problems, like alternating manic and depressive episodes. Ultimately, the assumption that monomaniac disorders were limited to one specific aspect of the patient's personality turned out to be untenable.

Esquirol, however, did not give up his diagnosis of 'monomania' easily. The growing popularity of the notion of 'monomania' among the general public convinced him to ignore the contradictions and objections against his diagnosis and include the concept in his three tome opus magnum *Des maladies mentales considérées sous les rapports médical, hygiénique et médico-légal* (1838).

The concept of 'monomania' also lent the new discipline of psychiatry an aura of professionalism because it referred to a disorder that ordinary people would not be able to identify and which would require medical specialists to diagnose. While Esquirol was acting medical superintendent at the Hôpital de la Salpêtrière, Georget was his assistant and even lived in his supervisor's home (Miller, 1941: 157). Dedicated and ambitious, Georget spent nearly all his time with his patients, attempting to discover the underlying causes of their mental illness and even finding time to write books and articles about mental and nervous diseases for the *Le Nouveau Dictionnaire de la*

Médecine (Miller, 1941: 156). In his later publications, he argued that persons committing crimes due to mental disorder ought not to be convicted as criminals, but rather should be diagnosed and treated as patients in a psychiatric hospital. Georget considered it an injustice to hold these patients criminally responsible. A fair criminal trial would, therefore, require the expertise of an independent psychiatrist to diagnose a suspect. Monomania was considered a typical example of a disorder that required a psychiatric diagnosis. A layperson or, for that matter, a judge would not be able to identify it, nor would they be able to see anything special in the face of such a patient. By showing them painted portraits of a variety of monomaniacs, Georget allegedly intended to convince the judiciary in a criminal trial that psychiatry would be indispensable in assessing the criminal responsibility and guilt of suspects who committed a crime due to a monomania.

Georget allegedly took the idea to have the series of portraits painted from his teacher Esquirol who was convinced that mental disorders could be diagnosed by carefully observing the facial expression and body language of the patient. In order to demonstrate this method of physiognomic diagnosis, he had already commissioned various artists to draw portraits of his patients (Miller, 1941: 158; Prendeville, 1995: 113). He even seems to have had plans for an iconographical archive (Goldstein, 1987).

Since the medical–juridical texts of Georget were published only after Géricault’s death, it is unlikely that Georget had asked for his friend’s help in order to be able to show his expertise as a professional psychiatrist and secure a position for himself as an expert witness in criminal trials. It is more likely that Georget, following in the footsteps of his teacher Esquirol, wanted to convince colleagues who were sceptical of the validity of the diagnosis of ‘monomania’. He must have imagined that illustrations could be helpful in achieving this goal. However, unlike his teacher Esquirol who had commissioned drawings of his patients, Georget must have imagined that painted portraits would be even more effective for showing the essence of monomania and certainly if they were painted by an artist like Géricault. By portraying psychiatric patients as ordinary people, Géricault would be able to prove that only a medical specialist could possibly discern what was wrong with them just by looking at their faces.

Because Géricault—in contrast to most of his contemporaries—painted the patients as seemingly ordinary individuals, the five retrieved portraits embody the new approach in psychiatry that was being promoted by Esquirol and Georget (Eitner, 1983: 246). According to art historian Albert Boime (1991: 89), Géricault’s portraits were ‘designed to exemplify the concealable traits of the monomaniacal type, and, at the same time, pinpoint those elusive physiognomic signs that betrayed their mental state to the trained specialist’. Eitner (1983: 242), the biographer of Géricault, however, considers the portraits as ‘a design that is primarily medical, and, as such, more likely to have sprung from Dr. Georget’s than from Géricault’s mind’. He concludes, therefore, that Georget commissioned Géricault to paint the portraits for practical purposes; however, what exactly the psychiatrist had in mind remains a mystery (Eitner, 1983: 245). It seems possible that he wanted to use the portraits in his lectures to demonstrate his clinical research into the causes of monomania. There is no proof, however, that this is how Georget really used the portraits; nor, according to Brookner (1997: 16) would it even be possible to use them for such didactical purposes.

A more plausible explanation is that neither Géricault nor Georget, but rather Dr Lachèze who obtained the five ‘études d’alienés’ from Georget’s estate, gave one of them the title *Le monomane du vol* and that subsequently, this title gained currency through the letters of art historian

Viardot which were mentioned in the first biography of Géricault by Clément. Although Clément seems to have indicated that the subject of the painting was a kleptomaniac (Eitner, 1983: 243; Miller, 1941: 152), he did not identify the painting as a portrait of a kleptomaniac in his catalogue of Géricault's work, but rather as a case of 'monomanie du vol'. Thus, even though Clément may have been familiar with the term 'kleptomaniac', he never actually used it.

Thus, the origins of the current title *Portrait of a Kleptomaniac* remain unclear to this day. It seems possible that the title was given to the painting at the time—between 1840 and 1880—when the notion of monomania disappeared, while the notion of kleptomania gained currency, but the author of the title is still unknown. Ironically, when the painting was bought by The Friends of the Museum of Fine Art Museum in Ghent at an auction in 1908, it was catalogued as the 'portrait of an insane murderer' and, perhaps for this reason, reasonably priced (Museum of Fine Arts, 2013). Until the 1980s, the painting was known and exhibited under this title.⁷

What is clear is that *Portrait of a Kleptomaniac* is not what Levinson (1985) would call a 'true title', i.e. a title given by the artist at or shortly after the work of art was created. Moreover, titles that are not true titles—like *Portrait of a Kleptomaniac*—cannot encompass the complicated meanings of a work of art. Although *Portrait of a Kleptomaniac* is not the original ('true') title, it remains inextricably linked to a painting which has been seen as 'the first portrait of modern man' (Museum of Fine Arts, 2013). In order to do justice to the complexity of the meaning of this particular painting, one needs, therefore, to question the superimposed title *Portrait of a Kleptomaniac* which 'pins its subject like a butterfly' (Minor Virtues, 2012). In this vein, I will, therefore, argue in what follows that by titling her painting *The Kleptomaniac*, the contemporary artist Marlene Dumas has reproduced that very same effect and that it is an effect that needs to be questioned.

Dumas's portraits of 'most wanted men'

Many art critics and curators have written about the work of Marlene Dumas. She has also frequently written and talked about her own work, albeit not specifically about *The Kleptomaniac*. Only once she remarked that she considered Géricault's *Portrait of a Kleptomaniac* 'one of his most beautiful paintings'.⁸ Before discussing her painting *The Kleptomaniac*, I will give the reader some general information about Dumas and her work. This will be based on what others have written about her and what she has said herself in interviews and presentations.

Marlene Dumas was born in 1953, in Cape Town, South Africa where she studied at the Michaelis School of Fine Arts at the University of Cape Town. In 1976, she received a scholarship to study in The Netherlands at the Ateliers '63 Art Institute in Haarlem. She moved to Amsterdam, where she continues to live and work today.

From the moment she arrived in The Netherlands, Marlene Dumas captured the public eye with her personal style of working that deviated from what was, at the time, *en vogue* in the Ateliers '63 in Haarlem where she studied. The dominant view was that an artwork should be reduced to its essence. However, for Dumas there was not simply one essence or one truth. She wanted to make paintings that addressed more than just an image. In the mid-1980s, after a period of doing abstract work, she started to paint 'portraits'. These were, however, not portraits that faithfully reproduced the human face of a model, as is the case in traditional portrait painting. For her portraits, Dumas found inspiration in snapshots of her own family and friends, as well as images from

newspapers, magazines, books and films, which she collected like a magpie and filed in her archive until she could find a use for them.⁹

In using these images, she addressed not only personal, autobiographical and existential subjects but also actual political issues—for example, public opinions concerning sexual, social and ethnic identities and the ways they structure how we look at our fellow human beings. She believed that the constant stream of images, which floods the media we watch, changed the ways in which we looked at one another and at the world around us. In her work she tried to reveal the psychosocial and political effects of these images by showing that, in one way or another, we are all victims of this modern visual culture. Given that we are all interested in endowing images with an unambiguous meaning, she believed that we could only be made aware of this by taking the images out of their context and showing them differently (Den Hartog Jager, 2006). With her paintings, Dumas responded to emotional situations that upset her to the extent that she felt she had to do something (Wesseling, 1986). In this way, she gave a new meaning to portrait painting in an age of visual media culture.

As her artistic career progressed, Dumas began to feel that her use of media images was becoming too obvious and she started to look in other directions for inspiration, including the history of art. As we have seen, *The Kleptomaniac* has been painted after a historical portrait of a psychiatric patient who had been immortalized by Théodore Géricault.

The exhibition *Man kind*¹⁰—where *The Kleptomaniac* was presented in 2006 for the first time—Dumas showed paintings and drawings, mostly of men with a Mediterranean appearance, with dark hair and a beard. Seen from a distance, they could be perceived as a group. Upon closer inspection, however, it became clear that the portraits included such ‘notorious’ figures as Osama Bin-Laden (*The Pilgrim*) and Mohammed Bouyeri, the man who murdered the Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh in 2004, (entitled *The Neighbour*). Paintings of images that have been shown repeatedly in the media were presented next to portraits of anonymous young men with a ‘suspect appearance’ (with titles like *The Believer*, *The Look-alike*, *Man Kind*, *The Mediator*, *The Semite*, etc.). In a post-911-context, these portraits raise questions such as the following: what does appearance tell us about a person and to what extent is our gaze prejudiced? The titles of the works suggest that the artist wants to neutralize and even compensate for the images that have been created in the media about these kinds of men by (re)painting them using facial expressions that force the viewer to see them as unique persons with their own individual characteristics rather than as images of (potential) terrorists. By emphasizing the beauty of these characters, the painting series speaks about ‘us’ rather than about ‘them’ (Lelik, 2010: 28).

This leaves us wondering, however, why *The Kleptomaniac*—a painting based on a photographic reproduction of a portrait dated in the 1820s, was included in a series of contemporary portraits of men with a ‘suspect appearance’. The titles of the portraits are reminiscent of the incomprehensible list of animals in Borges’s famous Chinese encyclopaedia (Borges, 1981: 141). It is as if Dumas wanted to create what Foucault (1994: xviii)—referring to Borges’s fiction—has called a ‘heterotopia’—a juxtaposition of words that undermine our language and shake the ground upon which our common knowledge is built. Was *Man kind* maybe meant to create a visual ‘heterotopia of deviance’ (Topinka 2010:57)?

In an accompanying text to the exhibition *Man kind* (Dumas, 2006a), she stated that she focused on faces of male suspects in order to make us aware that each historical period produces its own ‘most wanted’ faces. However, in the case of *The Kleptomaniac* there is nothing in the

painting, nor in the title, that might suggest that this painting was inspired by the portrait of a man who was wanted in another era. There is no contextualization in terms of the history of the original painting. Perhaps the answer to the question why *The Kleptomaniac* was included in the series of 'most wanted faces' has been given recently by the artist herself. In a brief contribution to the catalogue of the current retrospective of her work (Dumas, 2014), she writes that she does not think in a linear way and likes to mix her works in order to make them match with her ideas about art and life.

With the exhibition Marlene Dumas and the old masters: Tronies¹¹ in 2010—where *The Kleptomaniac* was also shown—a number of her painted portraits were presented in combination with 17th-century portraits of anonymous models in which the artists experimented with different body postures, facial expressions, glances or effects with light and shadow. The confrontation between Dumas work and the 17th-century portraits of usually anonymous or imaginary people was meant to show that Dumas wants to break with the romantic idea of a portrait as well as with the belief that the painted human face should be a window on the person's soul. She wants to detach emotions, thoughts and feelings from the individual person in order to juxtapose general, even universal, emotions that are not only in the portrait but also in the viewer (Den Hartog Jager, 2010).

More recently, Dumas herself has remarked that what so fascinates her in the human face and makes her want to paint and work with it is the fact that, if one is interested in the emotional world of humans, the face has everything in it.¹² In her portraits, she plays with the tension between looking and being looked at, a tension which lies 'at the core' of the modern conception of the portrait (Podro, 1998: 106). This, however, can easily lead to problems of (mis)interpretation of what the artist has intended. In fact, Dumas complains that she is often misunderstood because, in contrary to what tends to be assumed, she does not start with an intention that she translates into an image. Because of her way of working, there is not just one right interpretation. This is not how she works. Much depends on chance (Stigter, 1992).

One wonders whether this intentional contingency also applies to the titles she gives to her works. What is clear, at least, is that titles are important to her, because as she (Dumas, 1992) puts it: 'Titles re-direct the work; however, they do not eradicate the inherent ambiguity.' Titles can add an unexpected meaning, can put the viewer on the wrong foot or can destroy the viewer's illusion of knowing what the work is about. To achieve these effects, Dumas often uses provocative titles (Schrader, 2014: 180).

Titles and titling

Not all paintings have a title; nor do they always need one. Usually, however, a painting cannot do without words because so little can be read from the image itself. For Dumas (1987), however, a title is important because she wishes to spare herself or even oppose 'the mystification of a work without a title.' This raises the question to what extent she actually achieves the intended effect. Strictly speaking, *The Kleptomaniac* is, as we have seen, not a 'true title'. However, for the meaning of the painting, it is essential that it is read as a true title. Without it, the painting would merely show the face of a man. Obviously, even without a title, a portrait may trigger our imagination and raise question about the world behind the painted face. However, these questions will be less relevant than when the gaze of the viewer is directed by a title in a particular direction—that is,

when a title which tells us something about the intentions of the artist or about the person who is portrayed.

Despite their importance, surprisingly little has been written about titles and titling in the field of art history. Even the curators, whom I asked about it, had surprisingly little to say. It is as if it is the unquestioned prerogative of the artist to give a work any title he or she desires and we, the viewers, will simply have to accept the result. Fortunately, a few scholars in the philosophy of art and aesthetics have addressed the issue of titles and titling and this turned out to be helpful for analysing and understanding the effect that titles have on viewers of works of art.

Titles have been given for purely practical purposes like, for example, to catalogue works of art numerically or chronologically. Such 'referential titles' merely serve to label these works without any implications for their meaning (Levinson, 1985: 37). A title like *The Kleptomaniac*, however, is more than a referential title; it is an 'interpretive title'. An interpretive title suggests a particular reading of the work of art and invites the viewer to think or talk about it with others. Interpretive titles are 'absolutely essential' to be able to understand and value a work of art and raise the broader question of interpretation as key to the conceptual analysis of art (Fisher, 1984: 295, 298).

According to Levinson (1985: 30) the title of a work of art must be considered as part of its artistic structure. A title is part of the ensemble of structural elements, which the artist assembles in making and projecting the aesthetic content of a work of art. With regard to the effect of a title on the content of a work of art, Levinson distinguishes a whole series of titles: neutral, underlining (or reinforcing), focusing, undermining (or opposing), mystifying (or disorienting), disambiguating (or specifying) and allusive titles.

In terms of this taxonomy, *The Kleptomaniac* could be seen as an allusive title that refers—indirectly—to another work and another artist (Levinson, 1985: 37). However, this title does not refer to the original ('true') title which the artist gave to that work, but rather to a title that was fabricated at a later date by someone else (Fehlmann, 2006). This implies that the title *The Kleptomaniac* which Dumas gave to her painting is not only an allusive, but also a mystifying (or disorienting) title, a title 'which, instead of corroborating or confounding something in the body of the original work, seems tangential or orthogonal to it' (Levinson, 1985: 36). By borrowing the supposed original title of the work by Géricault, she underwrites the presupposition that Géricault painted this portrait as an illustration of a form a monomania that, much later, would become known as 'kleptomania'. This interpretation, however, is not entirely correct. In order to understand what Géricault really intended, the portrait would have to be viewed against the background of his oeuvre.

Géricault painted a notable number of portraits of anonymous persons. He painted the poor and maimed, the dead and dying, strangers and mentally diseased. These unknown persons represented social categories that at the time—at the beginning of the 19th-century—were seen as belonging to the dangerous classes, feared for their involvement in social upheaval and, therefore, a cause for political concern. Géricault's project was a humanistic one—to represent these 'faces of otherness' in such a way that the viewer of his painting would be able to see the humanity of these marginal people (Eldridge, 2002: 23).

The portraits of psychiatric patients displayed human faces without trying to probe their state of mind or exposing their innate disorders to the public (Brookner, 1997: 16). Painted with accurate vigour and possibly even without any preparatory studies or sketches, they were executed 'with the passionate fluency of which Géricault was capable when stirred by a strong, immediate experience of reality' (Eitner, 1983: 241).

Because these paintings seemed at first sight to resemble formal portraits of middle-class people (Eitner, 1983: 245), it was not immediately clear that they were, in fact, portraits of mentally diseased people. According to Fehlmann (2006), 'The line between the reasonable and the unreasonable, between the sane and the insane, is very thin and none managed to transform it as convincingly into painting as Théodore Géricault.' He achieved this, paradoxically, 'not through... having invested them with expressive force so much as through his having refrained from doing so, in an intense effort of description' (Prendeville, 1995: 96). This and the fact that obviously these paintings were not meant to be sold or exhibited is what makes them, as portraits of psychiatric patients, unique.

In 1991, Marlene Dumas made a series of paintings of psychiatric patients.¹³ She portrayed them together with staff members and the director of the psychiatric institution where the patients were interned. Within this tableau, she inserted a portrait of Jim Morrison, a few images of animals, including a pig, and a painting of the moon. Given that the 36 paintings of 60 x 40 cm² seem to be arranged randomly, it is up to the viewer to interpret each of the individual paintings as well as the composition as a whole. Recently, Dumas explained that, in this way, she wanted to make us aware how we look at human faces, what we believe can be seen in them and how this directs our behaviour.¹⁴ Her painting *The Kleptomaniac*, however, is not part of this project. It does not show a psychiatric patient in a mental institution suffering from 'kleptomania'. Instead, the title of this painting confronts the viewer with a preconceived *idea* of 'kleptomania', as if it did not require any deconstruction at all.

Misinterpreted or misrepresented?

I would argue that Dumas is trying to achieve in a postmodern context what Géricault did, almost two centuries before her, in a modern context. In the 19th-century, portraiture was a highly privileged medium. By its very nature, it conferred status and importance on the personality of the portrayed. In this context, Géricault's portraits of asylum inmates can be seen as exceptional. Through his portraits, he forced his contemporaries to see the mentally diseased ('lunatics') as fellow human beings. He created doubt about the then current idea that people could be classified as normal or abnormal based on their physiognomy, i.e. their facial features. As a painter, Géricault was a realist who wanted to show reality 'objectively'. At a time when photography had not yet been invented and 'mug shots' made by the police did not exist, he tried with his portraits to approach reality as closely as possible (Boime, 1991: 88).

In contrast, Dumas's paintings are not meant to show the 'true' reality. On the contrary, they are 'a passionate plea for ambiguity' (Reinders, 2013: 51). With her way of painting portraits, she tries to disrupt our gaze in order to raise questions about what we (believe we) are seeing. In her view, the 'real' reality can only emerge after we have deconstructed a portrait by realizing that images do not and, in fact, cannot have unambiguous meanings. In order to achieve this, Dumas tends to strip her subjects of their cultural and historical context in order to get rid of what she considers 'irrelevant' background information. For her the 'close up' is a way of getting rid of 'irrelevant background information', of doing away with the present location and the social context of the portrayed. *The Kleptomaniac* is no exception. By zooming in on the face of the subject, she eliminates the background details and clothing which in Géricault's painting served 'to imply a more sensitive, reasoned attitude to those suffering from disorders of the mind'. (Graham-Dixon, 2001).

On the one hand, Dumas can be seen as a postmodern painter who embraces ambiguity and deconstruction. On the other hand, however, in her choice of objects, focus on the human body and face as well as in the handling of her material, Dumas, like other contemporary painters such as Borremans and Tuynmans, seems to be a classic painter who celebrates the European tradition of portraiture.

Marlene Dumas's paintings are complex and based on ongoing contemplation and reflection of the subject matter of her work. However, what about the title of a painting? Should not this also be deconstructed? The title is, as we have seen, part of the 'artistic structure' of a painting and of the ensemble of structural elements that the artist assembles in making and projecting the aesthetic content of a work of art. However, the *ethical* aspects of a representation, including the normative effect a title can have on the content of a work, is apparently not part of the 'twist' Dumas claims she intends to give her portrait with the title *The Kleptomaniac* 'without erasing its ambiguity' (Dumas, 1992). On the contrary, by means of this title, her own version of the portrait originally painted by Géricault does not only erase its ambiguity (exactly what Dumas claims *not* to want to do), but it reifies the 'idée fixe' of a monomaniac disorder which was so immensely popular in the 19th-century, in part due to Géricault's work. At the same time, her title does not take any account of the fact the diagnosis itself has, in fact, always been contested and, today, is hardly seen as a 'bonafide' mental disorder (Groot and Colon, 1998: 168). Almost a century ago, the French psychiatrist André Antheaume (1925) claimed that kleptomania did not exist, calling it nothing more than a form of class justice, whereby lower class people were severely punished for shoplifting while bourgeois ladies were acquitted with the 'trendy' diagnosis of 'kleptomania' (Abelson, 1989; O'Brien, 1983). For these reasons, Antheaume already regarded kleptomania as an imagined disorder and demanded that this 'mythical creation of medical science' should be removed from the classification of mental disorders once and for all. Kleptomania has been removed from the authoritative *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (DSM-II) of the American Psychological Association (1968), but was, again, included in DSM-III (1980) as 'impulse-control disorder not elsewhere specified'. More recently, it has been proposed that 'kleptomania' be removed again, given that there is insufficient proof to sustain the existence of this disorder and that in clinical practice the diagnosis has become increasingly rare.¹⁵

When viewed through the lens of an ethics of representation, it is less problematic that *The Kleptomaniac* was painted after a portrait created in a different art historical and socio-political context and then given a title that the original painting could not possibly have had. More problematic, is the lack of explicit contextualization in terms of the history of the original painting,¹⁶ allowing the notion of 'kleptomania' to be presented as a valid and relevant concept for the present. By giving a painting of a (male) face, in 2005, the title *The Kleptomaniac*, a specific type of criminal is represented in a way that does not do justice to the medical, psychiatric and psychological, social and cultural history of the concept and phenomena of 'kleptomania'. Thus, the mobilization of an outdated and problematic psychiatric concept for an artistic project does not produce the intended ambiguity of a painted portrait, but rather destroys it. The effect of the seemingly allusive title *The Kleptomaniac* is that the subject of the painting is mystified and the viewer of the work disoriented. Since Dumas's project is to create 'paintings of pictures that show that a painting isn't a picture' (Dumas, 2006b), she is presumably unaware of the 'collateral damage' of such a misrepresentation.

One could, of course, argue that using an outdated and problematic psychiatric concept like kleptomania as a title for a painting is meant to engage the viewer in a bit of 'ironic play'. It is not

uncommon in the art world to use a title to make a work appear more salient (Fisher, 1984: 294) and there are myriad examples of well-intended but misplaced titles and of artists who are hardly aware of the background of their creations, nor of the effects that the titles of their works may have (Levinson, 1985: 35).

Given what we know about Marlene Dumas's approach to the painting of 'found' images, it seems reasonable to likely that she simply took the title which accompanied the photographic reproduction of the original painting and translated this into English without giving it much thought. Alternatively, it might be argued that using a title like *The Kleptomaniac* could be part of an artistic project to explore or even deliberately transgress ethical boundaries of representation. On second thought, however, such artistic projects should be taken to task, not only for their intentions, but also for their unintended consequences.

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Notes

1. 'Cobra tot Dumas. Collectie De Heus-Zomer. Nederlandse Kunst 1948–2012'. Singer Museum, Laren, The Netherlands, 24 January–20 May 2013. A photo reproduction of the painting is included in the catalogue of the exhibition (Den Hartog Jager and de Lorm, 2013: 106).
2. 'Cobra tot Dumas. Collectie De Heus-Zomer. Nederlandse Kunst 1948–2012'. Singer Museum, Laren, The Netherlands, 24 January–20 May 2013. A photo reproduction of the painting is included in the catalogue of the exhibition (Den Hartog Jager and de Lorm, 2013: 106).
3. 'Homme vêtu d'un habit vert: tête intelligent avec une expression d'audace et de perversité'.
4. Today Baden–Baden is in the German state Baden–Württemberg.
5. The other five painting, which were purchased by another intern, have disappeared and not been found again. Dr Lachèze had five portraits that, after first attempting without success to sell them to the Louvre, he sold to the painter Charles–Emile Jacques, who, in turn, put them on the market. Ultimately, the paintings landed in different museums. The *Portrait of a Kleptomaniac* was bought in 1908 by The Friends of the Museum of Fine Art Museum in Ghent at an auction for 1050 Belgian franc. (Museum of Fine Arts, 2013).
6. It is notable that, for example, the canvas showed damage along the edges that could indicate that the original format of the composition had been altered (Eitner, 1983: 245).
7. This may explain why Sander Gilman in his book *Seeing the Insane* (1982) referred to this painting as Théodore Géricault's *Monomania. The Assassin* (1821–1824). (Gilman, 1982). However, that Gilman claims to have taken this title from Clément's biography of Géricault is a mistake. As we have seen, Clément himself referred to the painting as *Le monomane du vol*. Despite the fact that Gilman has contributed greatly to representations of illness in art in general, in this particular case, he is inaccurate.
8. In: Marlene Dumas and the monomaniacs of Géricault, a video at the occasion of the exhibitions Géricault: Bilder auf Leben und Tod (18 October 2013–26 January 2014) in the Schirn Kunsthalle in Frankfurt am Main) and Géricault: fragmenten van mededogen (22 February 2014–25 May 2014) in the Museum of Fine Arts in Ghent.

9. She has thanked 'the popular culture of image suppliers, the embedded journalists, the media managers, the hotel warriors and the airport artists' for providing them to her. Marlene Dumas on her own website (5 September 2006).
10. 17 October–25 November 2011 in Galerie Paul Andriessse, Amsterdam.
11. 29 October 2010–6 February 2011 in Haus der Kunst, München.
12. In: Marlene Dumas and the monomaniacs of Géricault, a video at the occasion of the exhibitions Géricault: Bilder auf Leben und Tod (18 October 2013–26 January 2014) in the Schirn Kunsthalle in Frankfurt am Main) and Géricault: fragmenten van mededogen (22 February 2014–25 May 2014) in the Museum of Fine Arts in Ghent.
13. *Het Hooghuys*, 1989–1991, 36 paintings of 60 x 40 cm² oil on canvas.
14. In: Marlene Dumas and the monomaniacs of Géricault, a video at the occasion of the exhibitions Géricault: Bilder auf Leben und Tod (18 October 2013–26 January 2014) in the Schirn Kunsthalle in Frankfurt am Main) and Géricault: fragmenten van mededogen (22 February 2014–25 May 2014) in the Museum of Fine Arts in Ghent.
15. At <http://www.dsm5.org/Pages/RecentUpdates.aspx>. However, from the 4th edition text revision DSM-V (2013) kleptomania has not yet been removed.
16. In contrast to, for example, Hervé–Paul Delhayé who painted portraits explicitly after Géricault and entitled them as *Monomane du vol d'après T. Géricault*.

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