

TAHITI 3

THEORY, HISTORY AND PRACTICES OF MEMORY

Saturday 13.3.2010, 10.15–17.30
Auditorium Armfelt, Arken, Turku



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TAHITI 3
Art History as a Branch of
Scholarship is organised by:



TAIDEHISTORIAN SEURA -
FÖRENINGEN FÖR KONSTHISTORIA RY



Turun yliopisto
University of Turku

PhD Maria Hirvi-Ijäs

University of Helsinki

The Embedded Epistemology of the Work of Art – the First Steps of an Investigation into an Artistic Theory of Knowledge

In my paper I intend to outline some steps into a new research project concerning our understanding of the work of art as a carrier of knowledge. My questions are based in the fact that artistic production during the last 50 years or so has in an increasing way taken a direction and role of a production of what often has been interpreted as critical knowledge.

This has meant a conceptualization of the art field at large and has put new demands not only on the consumption of art but also on the ways the work of art is regarded as an object of research. The researcher has now to approach the work of art as a producer of its own theory.

My presentation will include a brief theoretical background and two cases of artists that in different ways have articulated their own way of expressing their relation to knowledge, theory and critical thought. These artists are Barnett Newman (1905–1970) and Bruce Nauman (1941–). Even if they partly worked parallel in the American art world during the 1960s they represent different generations and different approaches to artistic thinking. They are both individuals that have had an immense influence on the art production worldwide from the 1960s up until today.

I will discuss some basic theoretical assumptions for this clear shift within the history of contemporary art as an epistemological question. Thereafter I will present specific art works which in my view well illustrates the problems central to this paper. These are the series of paintings called “*The Stations of the Cross*” (1958-1966) by Barnett Newman and the seminal neon piece “*The True Artist Helps the World by Revealing Mystic Truths*” (1967) by Bruce Nauman.

By ventilating my first steps into a new research project in this seminar, I hope to be able to take a few steps further.

Maria Hirvi-Ijäs, PhD, is a researcher of contemporary art, based in Helsinki. Her research interest concerns the performative and rhetoric character of contemporary art and its presentation. The most recent research questions involve the significance of artistic methodologies for art research and the possibility of an epistemology of the work of art.

MA Pia Wolff-Helminen

Åbo Akademi University

Architecture That isn't Regarded as Architecture: Renaissance Architectural Festival Design in 20th Century Research

During the renaissance, court festivals were of great importance. Through them, the ruler demonstrated his power to his subjects and to his politically important friends and enemies. The festival designs often included classical architecture due to its allusions to the great Roman empires, and in order to gain architectural accuracy, they were made by established architects.

Studying an architect's professional progress out of its context can result in highly questionable results, as in the case of the English renaissance architect Inigo Jones (1573–1652). He began his career as a masque designer in the English court ten years before he took office as Surveyor to the King's Works. Since there is hardly any proof of his involvement in architectural projects before that, most researchers argue that his knowledge of architecture during this time was thin. If this was the case, one wonders on what grounds he was made Surveyor – chief architect of the royal real estates? Jones's early masque designs demonstrate knowledge of architectural elements that only skilled renaissance architects could have. Therefore it is necessary to take his efforts as masque designer in consideration when studying his career as architect. Only by studying what he and his contemporaries considered as architecture, can we understand his career as an architect.

Contemporary architectural treatises show that the renaissance architect was expected to have skills in theatrical design, and that architecture designed for temporary festivals was regarded as equal to 'real' architecture. 20th century studies on renaissance architects too often fail, however, to consider their involvement in festival design. The main reasons for this neglect are the use of a modern definition of architecture, which excludes architectural elements in theatre design, and that theatre historians largely ignore architectural history. Regardless of the reasons, the question is whether there is credibility in modern researchers' studies on renaissance architects if they omit aspects that were of importance in the architect's exercising of his profession?

Pia Wolff-Helminen, MA, doctoral student in the Finnish Graduate School in Art History, Åbo Akademi University

Specialised in Renaissance art and architecture. Field of research: architecture and the role of the architect in Renaissance stage design. The preliminary title of the doctoral thesis is 'Architecture in Inigo Jones's early masque designs, 1605–1615'.

Prof. Altti Kuusamo

University of Turku

On 'Symbolic Omnitemporality'. Temporal Integration and Simultaneity in Pictorial Narratives

“There is no single perception of time or duration as there is of a tone or a colour”. Perhaps this maxim of Ernst Cassirer illustrates the wide variety of time functions pictorial narratives could open when we sense time as *represented* time in a picture. We can't see time, but we can see signs of time. In my paper I'll discuss some of those functions: how the articulation of space, gestures, action and even atmosphere can effect our assumptions of time in a picture. Time can also show up via synaesthetic associations: slow motion and intimacy in a picture make it “silent”. I'll also ponder the ways to represent the present moment or 'now' in a picture – and events represented simultaneously. We can also ask, what simultaneity exactly means inside one pictorial frame. The case in point is Wiligelmo's narrative relief *The Creation of Adam and Eve* (Modena Cathedral): how deictic functions are to be seen and interpreted and how Wiligelmo represents *prolepsis* (narrating ahead of events).

Altti Kuusamo, Professor in Art History, University of Turku

The main areas of scholarly work are the methodology of research of the pictorial arts, theories of art, contemporary art, renaissance art, the relationships between the arts, visual semiotics, popular pictorial culture, the research of the perception and critique of art. Numerous productions include also art critique and other generally comprehensible writings within artistic and cultural fields. Has actively participated, in different media, in the general discussion of art and culture.

Prof. em. Stephen Bann

University of Bristol

History as Dream Work: the French Troubadour Painters Fleury Richard and Pierre Revoil

My subject is the recreation of the past through historical paintings. I suggest that this is a process akin to what Freud describes as the 'dream-work' in his study of *The Interpretation of Dreams*. This leads to a consideration of two of the most important artists who initiated the historical representations of the Romantic period: the French painters Fleury Richard and Pierre Revoil. I argue that the different rhetorical mechanisms through which they developed their historical pictures can be identified with the concepts of Resurrection and Restoration – both of them fundamental to our subsequent understanding of the representation of the past.

Stephen Bann, Prof. em., University of Bristol

Bann is one of the major contributors to the rethinking of art theory and historiography that in the Eighties came to be known as New Art History. Both in his critical accounts of historiography and in his studies of individual artists, Bann's extensive philosophical and literary learning uncovers unexpected links between past and present in images.

MA Anna-Maria Wiljanen

University of Helsinki

The History of Invisible Women in the Artists' Colony

My presentation deals with a specific question concerning reconstruction of the history of the artists' colony: whether the history of the invisible women in the Önningeby artists' colony should be written. Until now history has focused more on male artists, even though the colony also included a considerable number of women artists.

I begin by addressing some terms that are linked to Leopold von Ranke's theory of historicism: the primary sources and the various aspects of criticism of sources in the context of artists' colonies in general. I shall then scrutinise more closely the challenges that von Ranke's theory has faced: the development of society and culture, the more democratic division of power; it's no longer a question of how something has happened, but of why has it happened.

I shall also focus on the question of the history of the invisible women by referring to Griselda Pollock's publication *Differencing the canon*. Half of the caucus of the Önningeby artists' colony were women. Allowing for the fact that the women didn't visit the colony so frequently, the proportion of women was even higher than this. Is it necessary to reconstruct a history specifically for the women of the artists' colony? Is this justified?

In his publication *Historiantutkimus ja historia* (Historical Research and History) professor Jorma Kalela points out that the scholar should seek to do justice to the research subject, which is exactly what I intend to do. But the ethical point of view is not enough. I shall emphasise the aspects that favour the reconstruction of this history. Does the history of the artists' colony appear different if it is approached from the perspective of female artists? Can this change the history of the artists' colony in some way?

Anna-Maria Wiljanen, MA, doctoral student, University of Helsinki, Communications Manager, Finnish National Gallery
Dissertation topic: The Impact of Modernism on the Önningeby Artists' Colony.

MA Mia Åkerfelt

Åbo Akademi University

Biography and its Problematic Role in Art History: The Case of Hilda Hongell

Biographical accounts are common in art historical research, especially in studies on not so well known artists. In traditional art historical works, biographical information is normally used for purposes of description rather than explanation in relation to a theoretical context. While working on my thesis on master builder Hilda Hongell, I have confronted some of the problems and limitations this use gives rise to. Therefore, I have sought for alternative ways of using the biographical information, especially in research relating to the history of architecture.

My aim now is to show, using my own research as a point of departure, that redefining the use of biography can make it a more versatile tool in art historical research. I will start with a brief summary of how biography has commonly been used in the humanities, and which problems occur when a biographical documentation should be made “art historical”. I will present some suggestions as to how the biographical concept could be widened in order to give it a more active role in research in the history of architecture.

Biography and history of architecture are both of a very concrete nature and are also treated in that way in and by art history. The problem is that biography as a method is rarely problematized enough – with the result that it automatically tends to impress its own structure, and its limitations, on both the research work and the finished studies. By shifting its traditional focus from chronological documentation of life and career, to the use of biographical data as exemplifying broader theoretical contexts, biography may, according to my view, contribute to a better analysis of the artist and his role in art history.

Mia Åkerfelt, MA, doctoral student, Åbo Akademi University

Research on Hilda Hongell’s architecture as a representation of modernity in Mariehamn in the late 19th century.

PhD Tutta Palin

University of Helsinki

Decorated Subjects: Corporate Masculinity in Hugo Backmansson's Paintings

During the period when Finland was an autonomous Grand Duchy of pre-revolutionary Russia the educational possibilities and work opportunities of the nearby metropolitan city of St. Petersburg were embraced by many Finns. Specializing in battle painting, Hugo Backmansson (1860–1953) acquired both military and artistic training in the Russian capital. At the end of the 19th and during the first half of the 20th century he produced a handsome number of group portraits and portrait series that mark his position as a member of various male-based social networks of imperial Russia and the young Republic of Finland, where he returned after the Finnish independence (1917) and Civil War (1918). These include the Finnish Cadet School in Hamina, the upper middle-class Nordic circles in St. Petersburg, and Swedish-speaking and Swedish-minded businessmen and officers in Finland.

It comes as no surprise that as an officer of the later political enemy, Backmansson's position at the face of nationalistic narratives of Finnish art has been insecure. Since the majority of his contemporaries – the generation of Nordic Naturalists – were oriented towards Paris rather than St. Petersburg, he remained outside of the fraternity of influential colleagues as well. For the younger Swedish-speaking Neo-Impressionists, on the other hand, his manner of painting seemed stuffy and old-fashioned. Thus, his networks of bourgeois professionals and militaries, non-dependent of the artfield, turned out to be absolutely vital for his survival as an artist.

From the perspective of the current masculinity studies, Backmansson's portraits are interesting precisely because of their unreflective mainstream nature: comprising a body of gestural reflections and poses, a corporeal vocabulary of a sort, they articulate the category of modern corporate masculinity that so often remains unmarked in its generalized normativity. The concept of intersectionality, another analytical tool derived from current feminist and cultural studies, helps to identify an intertwining of various socio-cultural markers in Backmansson's portrayal of predominantly male collectives. The main point of this paper is a modest reflection of the ways in which "anachronistic" contemporary concepts can work towards a sharpening of historical analysis.

Tutta Palin, PhD, Senior Lecturer (acting) in Gender Studies at the University of Helsinki and Adjunct Professor (Docent) in Art History at the University of Turku
Research interests in the field of Feminist Art History and late 19th and early 20th century Nordic painting and photography, and publications including two monographs on portrait painting.

MA Andreas Risberg
Åbo Akademi University

Source Criticism in Modern Historiography of Art History, Nothing but a Memory? A Critique of the Modern Representation of Josef Strzygowski

The paper deals with how and why scholarly reputations are created, maintained and changed in a rather obscure process of negotiation. An illuminating case is that of Josef Strzygowski (1862–1941), who throughout his academic career was notoriously controversial and his ideas persistently attacked by powerful antagonists such as Alois Riegl (1858–1905) and Max Dvořák (1874–1921). The interpretation of Strzygowski and his research has varied greatly ever since his debut as an art historian. But how is he depicted today, why, and on what grounds?

The paper is based on a case study of how the image of a researcher is conceptualized and re-created long after his demise. This is shown through a source critical analysis of a selection of scientific articles and historiographical surveys, and through a comparison with Strzygowski's own production and other contemporary sources. The sources consist of three main categories: 1) Strzygowski's own texts, from the first part of the 20th century, 2) historiographical surveys, and 3) scholarly articles published between 1994 and 2007 dealing with Strzygowski and his research. Important texts are Strzygowski's famous monograph *Orient oder Rom* (1901) and Suzanne Marchand's article "The rhetoric of artifacts and the decline of classical humanism: The case of Josef Strzygowski" (1994).

The results indicate that the present representation of Josef Strzygowski is heavily influenced by the old feud within the Vienna School. Through persistent and vehement critique, his image has been changed from that of an inconvenient and subversive agitator into that of a racist with strong Nazi sympathies. This is largely due to a strong dependence on the hostile Viennese tradition, inadequate language proficiency, and an embarrassing lack of source criticism in the modern historiography of art history.

Andreas Risberg, MA in Art History and BSc in Economics and Business Administration, Åbo Akademi University

Currently working on an article about issues concerning source criticism in the art historical discipline, specifically in the case of Josef Strzygowski. Also working on a Master's thesis in Economics and Business Administration, in which the subject matter is an interdisciplinary approach to the valuation of Finnish paintings sold through Finnish auctions in 2000–2009.

MA Lauri Ockenström

University of Jyväskylä

Muisti, mieli ja muoto. *Fantasia* ja *imaginatio* ymmärryksen välineinä Marsilio Ficinon ajattelussa

Firenzeläinen 1400-luvun uusplatonismi ja nimi Marsilio Ficino on tavattu liittää rakkaus-teoriaan sekä okkultistisina pidettyihin aloihin, kuten astrologiaan, magiaan ja alkemiaan. Ficinon astraalimagian lähtökohtana on usein pidetty uusplatonilaista, vastaavuuksien ja keskinäisten vaikutussuhteiden muodostamaa universumia, jonka rakenteeseen perustuivat myös käsitykset abstraktien ideoiden käsittämisestä niiden aineellisten heijastumien ja kuvien avulla. Ernst Gombrichin tunnetuksi tekemän tulkinnan mukaan visuaaliset havainnot aistimaailmassa esiintyvistä yksittäisistä kappaleista, merkeistä ja kuvista johtivat ihannetapauksessa yleisen universaalikäsitteen tai idean ”mieleen palaamiseen” ja todelliseen ymmärtämiseen. Tässä yhteydessä tarkoitukseni on käsitellä Ficinolla esiintyviä tiedostamisen ja muistin käytäntöjen teoreettisia perusteita tulkitsemalla hänen filosofista tuotantoaan, joka on usein jäänyt taide-teoreettisessa keskustelussa vähälle huomiolle. Ficinon näkemystä ymmärtämisen prosessista voisi luonnehtia innovatiiviseksi synteetiksi, jossa hän lähes harhaoppisen ennakkoluulottomasti yhdisteli platonilaisen tradition oppeja Aristoteleen ja skolastikkojen formaaliin terminologiaan. Tiedostamisprosessin keskeisiä käsitteitä *fantasia* ja *imaginatio* hän kehitti muotoihin, joissa voi nähdä merkkejä modernista mielikuvituskäsitteestä: esimerkiksi *fantasian* hän mielsi tiedostamista ja ideoiden ymmärtämistä edistävänä monitasoisena prosessina, jollaisena myös Pico sen omaksui. Ficinon näkemykset vaikuttivat 1500-1600-luvuilla emblemaattiseksi kutsutun ajattelun voimistumiseen ja esimerkiksi luonnonhistoriallisten oppaiden kuvaustapoihin. Myös 1600-luvun empiristien mielikuvitusta koskevien käsitysten taustalta voidaan havaita heijastuksia Ficinon *fantasia*- ja *imaginatio* -käsitteiden erityispiirteistä.

Lauri Ockenström, MA, doctoral student in the Finnish Graduate School in Art History, University of Jyväskylä

Working title of PhD project: Neoplatonic symbolism and functions of visual signs in Marsilio Ficino's philosophy and theory of astrological magic. Has completed the European Diploma for Medieval Studies in Rome 2007–08 (organized by the Fédération Internationale des Instituts d'Études Médiévales).

MA Hanna Partanen

University of Turku

Muistaminen ja unohtaminen. Keskiaikaiset kirkkomaalaukset kansallisena utopiana

Suomen keskiaikaiset kirkkomaalaukset valmistuivat perinteisen käsityksen mukaan eräänlaiseksi lukutaidottomien raamatuksi, jota ”lukemalla” kirkossakävijät saattoivat oppia raamatun tarinoita ja muistaa ne paremmin. Maalaukset olisivat toimineet paitsi muistamisen, myös muistuttamisen välineinä. Tämä tuskin oli maalausten ainoa tarkoitus, mutta varmasti eräs niistä tärkeimmistä. 1800-luvun lopulla ja 1900-luvun alussa keskiaikaiset kivikirkot ja niiden maalaukset nostettiin uudelleen muistin välineiksi, sillä kansakunta ryhtyi rakentamaan itseään harmaakivelle ja kalkkimaalille. Kansallisromantiikan idealismi vaikutti maalauksista tehtyihin tulkintoihin vielä pitkään, ja käänsi monen tutkijan pään kohti kotimaista alkuperää, suomalaisuutta ja kansallista historismia. Syntyi tutkimustraditio, jossa haluttiin muistaa vain ne menneisyyden osat, jotka vahvistivat jo olemassa olleita käsityksiä.

Kirkkomaalaukset ovat muistamisen välineitä myös nykyajassa, sillä ne konstruoivat paikallisentiteettejä, ja ovat osa yhteisöjen kollektiivista muistia. Näissä rakentumisissa on maalausten vanhuus ja ainutlaatuisuus keskeistä, sillä niiden kautta yhteisö voi perustella olemassaolonsa suhteessa toiseen yhteisöön. Muistaminen ja muistin tekniikat ovat siten hyvin valikoivia, elektiivisiä järjestelmiä. Kirkkomaalaukset ovat osa monitasoista, sekundäärisen muistamisen

järjestelmää, jossa yhdestä asiasta muistuttavat kuvat muistuttavat nykykatsojaa jostain toisesta. Nykykatsoja näkee maalaukset yhtä aikaa toiseuden ja samuuden kautta, sillä ne ovat syntyneet tavoittamattomassa ajassa ja tavoittamattoman maalarin toimesta, mutta samalla ne muistuttavat häntä hänen itsensä keskiaikaisesta olemassaolosta, juurista ja historiasta. Luterilainen kirkko ja sen liturgiset käytännöt ovat osaltaan vahvistaneet muistamisen käytäntöjä, sillä se ei ole kannustanut maalausten sisällön ja opetusten muistamiseen, vaan on korostanut maalauksia nimenomaisesti ”muistona menneisyydestä”.

Hanna Partanen, MA, doctoral student, University of Turku

Studies medieval wall paintings in Finnish provincial churches. Focus of research is in the early 16th century paintings and their social origins.

MA Mia Hannula

University of Turku

Intercultural Aesthetics. Shaping the Memory of Historical Trauma in Eija-Liisa Ahtila's Video Installation *Where is where?*

Eija-Liisa Ahtila's multichannel video installation *Where is where?* (2008), opens up, by both artistic and documentary means, a specific social and historical view on colonial violence and its aftermaths in the contemporary world. The art work deals with how violence continues to shape the inner, interpersonal and socio-cultural worlds of their subjects. The starting point of the story is based on real events in Algeria under the French rule: the summarily executed inhabitants of the village of Rivet by the French and the revenge of Algerian boys – a case study discussed by Frantz Fanon in his book *The Wretched of the Earth (Les Damnés de la Terre, 1961)*. In the video installation, the past is refracted by the present-day voice of a poet living in contemporary Finland ('preposterous history' by Mieke Bal).

The stories about traumatic events, the ones that can never actually repeat or represent what happened, challenge the clear distinctions between the fictive/imaginative and historical discourses. In my presentation, I consider how the reading of trauma allows an integrative approach that foregrounds both the functions of history and of art. I focus on the different modalities of aesthetics – the narration ('narration without narrativity' by E. Ann Kaplan) and affectivity ('total affect and drained of affect altogether' by Jill Bennett) – in which 'the historical trauma' (Kaja Silverman) is addressed in Ahtila's video work. In my reading, art and imagination have their share in the "re-memory" of the traumatic events, and is working through as well as giving shape to the complexity of historical reality.

Mia Hannula, MA, doctoral student in the Finnish Graduate School in Art History, University of Turku

Her dissertation is entitled 'Towards an Intercultural Aesthetics. Cultural conflicts and encounters in contemporary relational art and experimental documentaries'.

MA Riikka Niemelä

University of Turku

Making Sense of Gestural: Video Performance and the Embodied Memory

In many contemporary video art works, there is a peculiar return to the body and to the performance. The use of new media technologies moreover emphasizes the gestural dimension: a close-up of video, for example, meticulously registers the tiniest movement or facial expression of the performer – even the ones performed without volition – and thus heightens our awareness of the ways in which meanings in artwork are produced with the embodied language. In bodily expression, we however face the ambiguity of interpretation. Gestures are often understood as collective, cultural signs. Usually, the embodiment is also seen enculturated, that is, social structures sediment in the body and in the discursive practices, cultural patterns or expectations are thus molding and determining our bodily experience. Gestures are however also the carriers of lived experiences, performing individual, embodied memory and are hence not defined solely by the cultural. Bodily language could be seen as conveying prereflective regimes of experience as well.

Laura U. Marks worries that the information age has made us so good at symbolization that we lose the contact with that which we don't know, and for which we have no categories. The aim of my paper is to ask how to approach the ambiguous bodily language in video performance. With Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological conceptions of the embodied cognition and the motor intentionality as a starting point, I approach the non-verbal, embodied expression in the video works by Eeva-Mari Haikala and Minna Suoniemi, asking if the gestural can be considered a site where the dualism between reflective and pre-reflective is transcended.

Riikka Niemelä, MA, doctoral student in Art history, School of History, Cultural Research and Art Studies, University of Turku

Working on a doctoral thesis on Finnish video performances. Fields of interest: video art, performance, art and technology, phenomenology.

