

The Lives of Form: Abstract Art & Nature (Bremen, 13–15 Aug 09)

Isabel Wünsche

The Lives of Form: Abstract Art and Nature
International Symposium

School of Humanities and Social Sciences
Jacobs University, Bremen August 13-15, 2009

http://www.jacobs-university.de/schools/shss/art_nature/

In 1942, Lee Krasner and Jackson Pollock met Hans Hofmann. Hofmann asked Pollock “do you work from nature?” Pollock’s famous reply was “I am nature.” Hofmann’s response to this is less well known, but just as interesting. He said “Ah, but if you work by heart, you will repeat yourself.” This exchange sets out, implicitly, the two extremes between which abstract art has developed, on the one hand, the desire to tap into the formative power of nature itself, and on the other hand, allowing this drive to be regulated by reference to natural form.

Our symposium will explore these extremes and the complex space of creative possibilities which exists between them. We will address different ways in which art has been created by consciously abstracting from nature, and the varying ways in which nature’s formative non-objective core—and cognate notions such as the Unconscious—have been addressed through abstract idioms. The time span covered will be from Kandinsky’s, Malevich’s, and Mondrian’s innovations after 1910, down to late Modernism. As well as considering specific bodies of artistic practice, our symposium will also look at those accompanying theoretical and critical narratives, which seek to justify abstract art on the basis of a special relation to nature, or in the deliberate attempt to transcend it entirely. We will also be interested in the possibility—or otherwise—of their relevance for a general theory of meaning for abstract art.

Program

Thursday, August 13, 2009

14:00 Registration starts

15:00 Opening Remarks

Hendrik Birus, Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences

15:00 – 18:00 Session 1: Abstracting from Nature

Chair: Isabel Wünsche

Paul Crowther (Bremen/Galway)

Meaning in Abstract Art

Andrew Inkpin (London)

The Complexities of “Abstracting” from Nature

Coffee Break

Freya Strecker (Stuttgart)

The Symbolism of Natural Materials in 20th-Century Abstract Sculpture

Regine Prange (Frankfurt Main)

On the Problem of the “Aesthetic Border” in Early Modernism

Discussion

18:00 – 20:00 Dinner

21:00 Opening Reception

Friday, August 14, 2009

9:30 – 12:30 Session 2a: The Other Side of Abstraction: Nature and
Formative Processes

Chair: Birgit Mersmann

Manfred Milz (Izmir)

Henri Bergson and the Formation of Abstraction

Alison Syme (Toronto)

Frantisek Kupka’s “Floral Romances”

Coffee Break

Herb Hartel (New York)

Natural Forces and Phenomena as Inspiration and Meaning in Early
American Abstraction

Isabel Wünsche (Bremen)

Organic Ideas in Russian Avant-Garde Art

Discussion

12:30 – 14:30 Lunch Break

15:00 – 18:00 Session 2b: The Other Side of Abstraction: Nature and Formative Processes

Chair: Paul Crowther

Elitza Dulgerova (Montreal)

Kazimir Malevich: Form between Nature and Photography

Christina Lodder (Edinburgh)

Man, Space and the Zero of Form: Kazimir Malevich's Suprematism

Coffee Break

Christoph Wagner (Regensburg)

Seven Possibilities of Creating a Tree: The Intellectual Dispute between the Bauhaus and De Stijl

Marek Wieczorek (Seattle)

The Matter of Spirit: Piet Mondrian between Physics and Metaphysics

Discussion

18:00 – 20:00 Dinner

Saturday, August 15, 2009

9:30 – 12:30 Session 3: Abstraction and the Unconscious

Chair: Isabel Wünsche

Irena Kossowska (Warsaw)

The "Spiritual Aroma" of Form: Karol Hiller's Heliographic Compositions

Birgit Mersmann (Bremen)

Nature's Hand: Pictorial Writing as a Pathway to Abstraction

Coffee Break

Elizabeth Langhorne (New Britain, CT)

Jackson Pollock: The "Sin" of Images

Stephen Polcari (Santa Ana, CA)

Jackson Pollock, Clyfford Still, the Unconscious and Shamanism

Discussion

12:30 – 14:30 Lunch Break

15:00 – 18:00 Session 4: Beyond Nature? Abstraction in Late Modernism

Chair: Birgit Mersmann

Eva Ehninger (Frankfurt Main)

"Man is Present": Barnett Newman's Search for the Experience of the Self

Laura Petican (Toronto)

The Arte Povera Experience: Nature Re-Presented

Coffee Break

John G. Hatch (London, OT)

Nature, Entropy, and Robert Smithson's Utopian Vision of a Culture of Decay

Suzaan Boettger (New York)

Dirt into Earth: Transformations in the Material and Cultural Construction of Nature in Environmental Art since the Sixties

Discussion

18:00 – 18:30 Wrap-Up Session

18:30 – 20:30 Dinner

For further information and event registration check: http://www.jacobs-university.de/schools/shss/art_nature/

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Prof. Dr. Isabel Wünsche

<i.wunsche@jacobs-university.de>

Research Fellow

Institute for Advanced Study, Collegium Budapest
Szentháromság utca 2, H-1014 Budapest, Hungary
Tel: +36-1-224-83-00, FAX: +36-1-224-83-10

Associate Professor of Art and Art History

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Jacobs University Bremen, Germany

Tel. +49-421-200-3311

Fax: +49-421-200-49-3311

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