

Reflections on European Romanticism(s) in Visual Art (Jena, 14–16 Sep 22)

Friedrich Schiller University Jena, Sep 14–16, 2022

Deadline: Apr 30, 2022

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Reflections on European Romanticism(s) in Visual Art: State of Research and Future Perspectives
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Almost 100 years ago, in 1924, Arthur O. Lovejoy raised the fundamental question of whether Romanticism could be characterised as a comprehensive movement that transcended national and linguistic borders. Lovejoy's critical reflections on the diversity of Romanticisms have met with divided responses. While some researchers, notably René Wellek (1949), believed that they could identify enough common characteristics in the Romanticisms to speak of one movement, others shared and supplemented the reservations Lovejoy had formulated. More recent comprehensive German monographs on Romanticism demonstrate that the issue is still controversial today: Rüdiger Safranski has subtitled his survey "A German Affair" (2007, engl. 2014) and understood Romanticism as a German phenomenon at its core. However, the literary scholars Stefan Matuschek (2021) and Rüdiger Görner (2021) have resolutely highlighted the European dimension of Romanticism and, thus, the commonalities between different national forms.

In relation to Romantic art, the situation is by no means simpler or clearer. Here, the question of whether to talk about several independently considered Romanticisms or one European Romanticism has seldom been asked. An overall view of the "Romantic Movement", as attempted in the Council of Europe exhibition at the Tate Gallery in 1959, has rarely been attempted in recent decades. Monographs, such as those by William Vaughan (1978), Hugh Honour (1979) or Maria Teresa Caracciolo (2013), have not stimulated a broad, sustained research discussion on the question of the similarities and differences between the Romanticisms in visual art. Art historical research on Romanticism is open to interdisciplinary dialogue to a large degree but only selectively crosses the boundaries of respective language areas. A research history characterised by national discourses could be responsible for the impression that pictorial Romanticisms seem to show irreconcilable differences. Possible overarching similarities hardly come into the focus of research, not least because too little is known about more recent work and discussions on Romanticisms in other languages.

The proposed conference aims to encourage researchers to engage with and work on the problem outlined above. It does not seem promising to immediately propose hypotheses for discussion that aim to answer how a unity or at least affinities of Romantic painting in Europe could be established. Instead, the various research discourses on Romanticism in visual art should first be assembled for in-depth discussion. To avoid too great a heterogeneity of the contributions, we

suggest focussing on painting, drawing and printmaking, and thus on those art forms in which Romantic impulses are probably most evident.

The presentations should address one of two topics: A few contributions in the programme could put forward general theses on the status of a significant part of research on Romanticism. The focus should be less on specific individual results and more on central issues, theoretical and methodological developments or blind spots in recent research. The majority of the conference contributions could focus on ongoing or recently completed research projects. Of particular interest are lectures that offer insights into projects that can be considered as innovative contributions to general research on Romanticism. Based on the respective specific examples, these lectures should present the more general questions, perspectives and theses for discussion that are pursued in the project or result from it. In this way, we hope to arrive at a meaningful, even though, inevitably, incomplete overview of tendencies in research on Romanticism. For all contributions, the speakers should show the courage for abstraction and tentative generalisation. By choosing such a perspective, possible similarities between the various forms of Romanticism in painting and graphic art can emerge.

The conference will be held in English. Conference presentations should be 30 minutes long.

We will provide accommodation and reimburse travel costs.

We warmly welcome papers from postdoctoral and senior scholars. Please submit your abstract (250 words) along with a short biography, in English, to europaeischerromantik@uni-jena.de by April 30, 2022. Speakers will be notified by mid-May 2022.

Reference:

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