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re:visions, no. 4, Pseudomorphism

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revisionsjournal.de/Call-for-Contributions-Pseudomorphism

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Call for Contributions (re:visions, no. 4): Pseudomorphism.

Pseudomorphism, a term introduced to art history by Erwin Panofsky in 1964, refers to the ostensible similarity between two works of art that actually emerge from distinct historical and artistic lineages. More recently, Yve-Alain Bois tried to revive the notion for the study of modern and contemporary art, while Pamela Lee's work shows how the phenomena is becoming increasingly widespread, putting forth 'a transhistorical, and perhaps transdisciplinary, agenda in the process'. This issue of re:visions invites graduate students and other scholars, researchers, writers, and artists to think through issues related to likeness/similarity and test bold comparisons, reflecting on the ambivalent nature of pseudomorphism.

Whereas for some, likeness marks an opportunity to bring different contexts together, others use the term pseudomorphism to call out the flawed implementation of comparative methods. At times, the term even evokes art historical paranoia that the perception of likeness between two things is somehow deceptive or due to an untrained eye. In this way, pseudomorphism is mobilized as a critique in defense of both academic integrity and the faultlines of geographic regions, historical periods, and scientific disciplines.

If we consider pseudomorphism as an opportunity, the concept can help us address an increasingly globalized world, where unrelated objects and images constantly cross paths. The concept may help reevaluate the gains and losses of the global art world, which demands that researchers make transnational and transcontinental voyages to exhibitions, archives, and museums, potentially blurring the various contexts together.

Deconstructing pseudomorphism can help researchers push past appearances to see other aspects of artworks, such as artistic strategies, techniques, or materials. Seemingly a distinctly formalist issue, pseudomorphism raises historical and political questions not typically associated with formalism, thereby approaching worlds beyond the work of art through the work of art. Finally, it probes the grounds of perception by asking: under which conditions do things appear alike to us?

The following questions are intended as thought impulses, but this issue welcomes other inquiries as well:

- How might one characterize the role of pseudomorphism in the discipline of art history? Does the diagnosis of likeness between possibly unrelated things pose a threat to scholarly integrity or

might it generate novel inquiries?

- Pseudomorphism, simply put, describes similarity between unrelated things, but this raises the question of how similarity is perceived in the first place. Can we consider pseudomorphism only through morphology or also through semiotics? Are there alternative levels of analysis that pertain to pseudomorphism?

- How does pseudomorphism help us evaluate the legacy of formalism today? Can it help us move past, re-interpret, or expand upon formalism?
Pseudomorphism is often thought of as ahistorical, untrained, and rash, but can one also consider pseudomorphism to be a method? How can archival research and pseudomorphism be brought together?

- Can we consider the work of the curator, who classifies artworks by era, movement, political context, genre, form, or medium, as pseudomorphism? How do curatorial approaches practise a kind of pseudomorphism (if any) in bringing works together to 'fit' a museum's programme?

- To insist on affiliation may raise ('Workshop of Titian', for example) or diminish (copycat) the value of an object. How do disputes around pseudomorphism pertain to value creation on the art market?

Possible topics include: curatorial strategies focused on comparison, such as the Bode Museum's Beyond Compare exhibition (2017-19); understandings of pseudomorphism from other disciplines, e.g. Oswald Spengler's (1918) pseudomorphosis; the category of tourist art and its perceived inauthenticity (see: James Clifford, The Predicament of Culture, 1988); memes; the doppelgänger; ekphrasis; artistic strategies of borrowing, copying, and modifying found objects, such as Elaine Sturtevant.

Please submit for evaluation an abstract of approximately 500 words, written in either English or German. Proposals will be evaluated by our editorial team, and selected contributors will be invited to write a 3,000 to 5,000 word paper. Experimental formats (visual essays, prose pieces, poems, etc.) are also welcome. Contributions will appear in the fourth issue of re:visions, which is slated for publication in early 2024. In addition to academic papers responding to the issue's theme, we are looking to publish reviews between 1,500 and 2,500 words long on any art-related topic. We particularly encourage members of communities underrepresented in academic writing (including queer and BIPoC authors) to hand in contributions.

The deadline for submissions is August 7th, 2023. Please email your proposal as a Word document and a short CV to redaktion@revisionsjournal.de.

re:visions is run by student volunteers at Freie Universität Berlin affiliated with the Art Historical Institute and therefore does not offer author honorariums.

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