

Form, Style, Principles (Zurich/online, 18–20 Nov 24)

University of Zurich, Rämistr. 59, Aula / online, Nov 18–20, 2024

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Form, Style, Principles: Art Historical and Theoretical Reflections – A Conference of the Wölfflin Edition.

Recent discussions in aesthetics and art history, literature, and visual studies have seen a renewed interest in questions of form and formalism. Whether in connection with algorithmic thinking, computer vision, and artificial intelligence, or with transcultural comparisons, revised narratives of modernism, re-conceptualisations of formlessness, and cognitive reflections on connoisseurship, form and formalism have regained currency in current discourses on a transhistorical and transdisciplinary level. It has become clear that an “archaeology of knowledge” about these crucial notions is indispensable in teasing out their critical potential and in productive application of what has also been termed “new formalism” or “post-formalism”.

Against this backdrop, the name Heinrich Wölfflin resurfaces in both historiographical and theoretical accounts. The newly published critical edition of his collected works, available both digitally and in print, invites us to take a fresh look at both longstanding and urgent concerns of art history, thinking about and beyond Wölfflin. His claims regarding the historicity of both form production and its perception are newly relevant not only concerning the burgeoning “age of technical reproduction” of artworks but also in light of broader media histories and changing media ecologies in the present. In-depth analyses of his drawing practice and his use of language resonate with reflections on the epistemic role of sketching in scientific production and on the performative aspects of scholarship and teaching. In times of post-digital image production and the proliferation of media platforms, Wölfflin’s insistence on the indispensable value of a visual education raises the question of the specific responsibility of art history and visual studies on a broader horizon, and their ability to reach a much wider audience, confronting issues such as human vs non-human image production, manipulation, and instrumentalization. From a historical perspective, reconstructions of the geneological circumstances of Wölfflin’s writings provide insight into the social networks, institutional infrastructures, museum landscapes, and transnational exchanges that contributed to shaping and repeatedly revising conceptual models.

Furthermore, the political and ethical implications of practicing art history as a science of form emerge ever more clearly from the history of formalism as a contested methodology, after decades of polemics against its alleged essentialist and apolitical nature. Its association with the concept of norms and with various ideologies, but also with patterns of resistance, forms of social communication, and of individual existence are telling examples of the fundamental non-neutrality of both form and its study. Even quality judgments in art, the analysis of artistic techniques, the contemporary relevance of information design and coding may have far-reaching

consequences.

What is the current understanding of Wölfflin's position within the history of formalism? Have recent debates affected the conservative traits usually associated with the author? In what ways can a close reading of a seemingly canonical author still suggest a productive estrangement and provoke new questions from today's perspective? Can a rethinking of the notions of form and formalism itself become a key to a more inclusive reflection on methodology in the light of contemporary challenges facing the humanities?

In this colloquium, speakers from various backgrounds will engage with these and related questions discussing historical, current and emerging issues in understanding form and formalism.

The conference can be followed online:

<https://uzh.zoom.us/j/63469000384?pwd=IHZvlvauFbiADKJKlCqIqxxHO7Ebm.1>

Meeting-ID: 63469000384

Passcode: 614377

PROGRAM

Monday, Nov. 18

15:00–15:15 Tristan Weddigen (Univ. of Zurich / Bibliotheca Hertziana), Oskar Bätschmann (Univ. of Bern), Joris van Gastel (Univ. of Zurich)

Welcome

Panel I

15:15–15:30 Oskar Bätschmann (Univ. of Bern)

Introduction

15:30–16:15 Ute Engel (Univ. of Halle-Wittenberg)

Cross-examinations. Heinrich Wölfflin and His Contemporaries or: The Emergence of Formalism as a Productive Intellectual Debate c. 1885 to 1915

16:15–16:45 Break

Panel II

16:45–17:00 Tristan Weddigen (Univ. of Zurich / Bibliotheca Hertziana)

Introduction

17:00–17:45 Maria Stavrinaki (Univ. of Lausanne)

Postwar Patterns: A False Formalism

17:45–18:30 Whitney Davis (UC Berkeley)

Queering Formalism

Tuesday, Nov. 19

Panel III

9:00–9:15 Giovanna Targia (Univ. of Zurich / KHI Florenz)

Introduction

9:15–10:00 Mitchell B. Frank (Carleton Univ.)

The Old and the New in the New Art History

10:00–10:45 Caterina Caputo (Univ. of Venice)

Form(alism) and Beyond: Herbert Read and the 'Meaning of Art'

10:45–11:15 Break

Panel IV

11:15–12:15 Round table

Chair: Christine Grundig (Univ. of Zurich)

Shaping the future of Digital Scholarly Editions - but how?

Harald S. Liehr (Schwabe-Verlag), Elena Spadini (Univ. of Basel), Elisa Bastianello (Bibliotheca Hertziana), Yann Stricker (Univ. Library Zurich)

12:15–13:15 Lunch

13:15–14:15 Leonie Wohlgemuth, Sven Meier (both Univ. of Zurich)

Site Visit: Wölfflin-Zimmer, Wölfflin busts

Panel V

14:15–14:30 Teresa Ende (Univ. of Zurich)

Introduction

14:30–15:15 Megan Luke (Univ. of Tübingen)

What the Eye Does Not See: On Photographic Facture

15:15–16:00 Andrea Pinotti (Univ. of Milan)

Style Between Individuality and Dividuality: Wölfflin and the Neural Style Transfer

16:00–16:30 Break

Panel VI

16:30–16:45 Tobias Teutenberg (Bibliotheca Hertziana)

Introduction

16:45–17:30 Larisa Dryansky (Sorbonne Univ.)

Asger Jorn's Formalism

17:30–18:15 Simon Baier (Univ. of Oslo)

From Form to Format

18:45 Nina Arnold (Univ. of Zurich)

Site Visit: The Ganymede, Bürkliplatz

Wednesday, Nov. 20

Panel VII

10:00–10:15 Joris van Gastel (Univ. of Zurich)

Introduction

10:15–11:00 Hans Christian Hönes (Univ. of Aberdeen)

Formalism, Disciplinarity and the Future of Art History

11:00–11:45 Claudia Blümle (HU Berlin)

Seeing is Relative. Heinrich Wölfflin in the Museum

Final Discussion

11:45–12:30 Evonne Levy (Univ. of Toronto)

Wölfflin in the Rear View Mirror

12:30–13:15 General Discussion

Chair: Tristan Weddigen (Univ. of Zurich / Bibliotheca Hertziana)

Scientific Organization: The team of the Wölfflin edition project (woelfflin@khist.uzh.ch)

www.woelfflin.uzh.ch

<https://www.biblhertz.it/events/38526/2598514>

Reference:

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