What Lies Ahead for Art History & Visual Studies? (Oslo, 4-5 Dec 25)

Oslo, Dec 4–05, 2025
Registration deadline: Nov 21, 2025

Oystein Sjastad, University of Oslo

In 1875, Lorentz Dietrichson (1834-1917) was appointed Professor of Art History at the University of Oslo. With this professorship, art history was established as an academic subject in Norway. This year, we celebrate 150 years of a discipline that has undergone numerous transformations. The development in Oslo follows international trends. Not only have the numbers of faculty and students drastically multiplied, but art history has also expanded its scope of interest to include visual studies and lived through the many theoretical “turns” in the humanities during the last fifty years.

Furthermore, there is now a clear ambition to adopt a global perspective in both teaching and research, radically opening up the horizon of the discipline. These and similar transformations have set new premises for our discipline in a world that is very different from Lorentz Dietrichson’s late 19th century. What are the implications for our understanding of the field, and for us as art historians – what is art history today?

While celebrating art history’s 150th anniversary at the University of Oslo, we also take the opportunity to reflect on questions like these, to take stock of our discipline, and look towards the future of art history and visual studies. This conference aims to share historiographical perspectives and make colleagues across the world reflect together on challenges and opportunities for research and teaching in art history and visual studies.

We are delighted to welcome our two prominent keynote speakers are Mårten Snickare (Stockholm University) and De-nin Lee (Emerson College), as well as more than twenty other presenters to Oslo in December, and invite everyone interested to participate!

The conference is in-person only and there is no conference fee. Please sign up for participation before 21 November. Pflease find the registration form here: https://nettskjema.no/a/550844#/page/1

PROGRAM
Please find a pdf version of the program here: https://www.hf.uio.no/ifikk/english/research/news-and-events/events/conferences/2025/program-publisering.pdf

THURSDAY 4 DEC 2025

Venue: University of Oslo's Historical Museum, Fredriks gate 2

10.30-11.30: Pre-conference Walk – guided tour around the University of Oslo, Central campus.

11-00-13.00: Registration and coffee Visit to the various exhibitions at the Historical Museum

13-00-13.15: Institutional greetings and opening of the conference

13.15-14.15: Keynote: De-nin Lee (Emerson College), "What Lies Beneath: A Planetary Perspective for Art History"

14.30-16.00: Session 1: Historiography
- Mai Britt Guleng (National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo): "Exchanging the 'What' with the 'Why'"
- Charles W. Haxthausen (Williams College): "Reimagining Art History: Carl Einstein's 'Handbuch der Kunst'"
- Marcel Engdahl (Uppsala University): "Projecting Art History: Viktor Rydberg and the Sciopticon"

16.00-16.30: Coffee and snacks

16.30-18.00: Session 2: Ludic Art History: A Playful Practice and Theory of Images
- Hans-Henrik Lohfert Jørgensen (Aarhus University): Ludic Art History: Animation
- Laura Skinnebach (Aarhus University): Ludic Art History: Dolls
- Mads Heilskov (Aarhus University): Ludic Art History: Materiality

18.00 Reception

FRIDAY 5 DEC 2025
Venue: University of Oslo Blindern Campus, Georg Morgenstiernes hus

9.00-10.30
Session 3A: Looking at old material in new ways
- Martin F. Lesák (Istituto di Norvegia di Roma): "Exploring New Paths for Art History: Ritual Processions and Medieval Reliquaries from Conques"
- Jeffrey Lieber (Texas State University): "'A Misdirected Life': On Roger Hinks' Journal"
- Mariana Bodnaruk (University of Warsaw): "Queer and Trans as Perspective: Recent Methodological shifts in Art history"

Session 3B: Art history and image technologies
- Miguel Gaete (University of Melbourne): "Doing and teaching art history in the wake of AI" (online)
- Noemi Quagliati (Ca'Foscari University of Venice): "Visual Interpretations: Art History in the Age of Imaging"
- Anna Orrghen (Uppsala University): "Managing BOB: the challenges of AI art in contemporary museum collections"

10.30-11.00: Coffee and snacks

11.00-12.00: Keynote: Mårten Snickare (Stockholm University): "The Art Historian as Conservation-

ist: Towards an Ecology of Art”

12.00-13.30: Lunch

13.30-15.00
Session 4A: Visual studies didactics
Nina L. Vesterberg (NTNU Trondheim), Asbjørn Grønstad (University of Bergen), Anders Lysne (University of Bergen) & Synnøve Marie Vik (KODE Bergen): “Mapping Visual Studies for the Future: On Writing a Textbook” (panel)

Session 4B: Materials and materialities
- Helene E. Birkeli (University of Bergen): “Speculative matters in art history”
- Seyed Abdolreza Hosseini (University of Vienna): “The Inevitable Interdisciplinary: Pounce Papers as a Challenge to the Agency of the Historian”
- Line Bonde & Martin W. Jürgensen (National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen): “Dormant Stone: Rediscovering 12th-century sculpture”

15.00-15.30: Coffee and snacks

15.30-17.00
Session 5A: Art history didactics
- Haohao Lu (John Cabot University): “Teaching the Playful Renaissance”
- Julia Modes (University of Arts and Design): “Research-Based Learning as a Future of Art History Teaching”
- Cassandre Roy (University of Montreal): “Didactic Reimagining and Paradigmatic Shift: Developing 21st-century skills with Art History”

Session 5B: A global turn?
- Cole Gruber (University of Chicago): “The origins of art and the discipline of art history (online)
- Chuu Krydz Ikwuemesi (University of Nigeria): “Global or Globalised: Art History in Africa and the Politics of Hegemony” (online)
- Foad Torshizi (Rhode Island School of Design, Providence): “Unreading Global Art History: The Contemporary Art World and the Ethics of Interpretations”
- Stephanie von Spreter (Independent scholar): “Speculative Methodologies for New Nordic [Feminist] Art Histories”

17.30-18.00: Concluding remarks

For further information please visit the conference webpage: https://www.hf.uio.no/ifikk/english/research/news-and-events/events/conferences/2025/150-years-of-art-history.html

Reference:
CONF: What Lies Ahead for Art History & Visual Studies? (Oslo, 4-5 Dec 25). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 4, 2025 (accessed Nov 23, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/50772>.