

## 3 Sessions at 2015 Nordic (Reykjavik, 13–16 May 15)

Reykjavik, Iceland, May 13–16, 2015

Deadline: Sep 25, 2014

[nordicarthistory.org](http://nordicarthistory.org)

Isabel Wünsche, Jacobs University Bremen

NORDIK 2015 – Mapping Uncharted Territories

The 11th Triannual Nordik Committee for Art History Conference

13-16 May 2015

University of Iceland and The Nordic House Reykjavík

[1] Progressive Art Education and the Spread of the Modernism beyond Europe

[2] Uncharted nature: Nordic Landscapes in the Era of the Anthropocene

[3] Vikings, Gods and Heroes. Northern Antiquity in Visual Art after the Middle

Ages

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[1] Progressive Art Education and the Spread of the Modernism beyond Europe

SESSION ORGANIZERS:

Dr. Melanie Klein, Freie Universität Berlin <melanie.klein@fu-berlin.de>

Prof. Dr. Isabel Wünsche, Jacobs University, Bremen <i.wunsche@jacobs-university.de>

The crucial role that progressive art education played in the spread, reception, and adaptation of Modernism beyond Europe has largely been neglected in art historical writing. The session examines the interrelations between modernist art and concepts of progressive education and the impact of art in relation to Reformpädagogik. It discusses educational activities, ideas and reformist efforts of modernist artists and art educators at art schools and workshops that shaped the emergence of Modernism in Africa, Asia, Australia, Latin and South America. Particular focus is laid on its reception and transformation within the cultural traditions and local art scenes of these regions. Furthermore, the session wishes to contrast various pedagogical efforts with theoretical positions and institutional policies of major exponents of modernist art history and to address gender roles as well as reciprocal effects between educators and students in the production, dissemination, and reconfiguration of modernist art beyond the Western World.

Questions about what role art should play in Africa, Asia, Australia, or the Americas, what cultural image or 'inner' condition it should transport, how it could be related to 'traditional' creativity, and how it should be positioned in the face of emerging Modernisms were of prominent importance within the contact zone of educational institutions. For example, European art teachers in South Africa first established provisional art educational venues for Black students within the curricula of mission schools and then as workshops and schools in their own right. They transferred modernistic concepts from Europe - like the concepts of

authenticity and originality - into the African context yet were also confronted with restricted material conditions as well as divergent conceptions and expectations of their students.

A closer look at selected case studies reveals ambivalent and polyphonic theoretical approaches of educators and different visual translations of students. Here, the teachers' attitudes seem to oscillate between the search for an 'authentic' idiom in the native art of the region and the claim to partake in global archives and in the making of an art history that is imagined as universally applicable. Students, however, follow diverse paths: some delve into the imitation and interpretation of European models, others continue their studies abroad and become part of a modern art world. After all, art educational institutions perceived as transcultural contact zones exemplify a genesis of modern art from Africa, Asia, Australia, or the Americas that was formed by differing and mutually influencing perspectives rather than permanent homogeneous schemes.

Papers might explore, but are not limited to the following topics:

- Roots and routes of modernist and avant-garde "travelling concepts" in educational venues
- Transformations and deviant definitions of such concepts
- Material and intellectual context of art production and the generation of art historical narratives
- Definition of agency within contexts of limitations and freedom
- Dynamics of gender relations within educational contact zones

We invite paper proposals to the sessions from a variety of fields, including art history, art pedagogy, cultural history, visual culture, and anthropology. Please submit an abstract (500 words) plus a brief CV (300 words) along with your contact information in one single Word or PDF file by September 25, 2014. Please direct your communication both to the session chairs and to the conference organisers at: [papers.nordik2015@listfraedi.is](mailto:papers.nordik2015@listfraedi.is)

For more information on the conference with 22 sessions spanning a wide range of topics visit: <http://nordicarthistory.org>

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[2] Uncharted nature: Nordic Landscapes in the Era of the Anthropocene

SESSION ORGANIZERS:

Ann-Sofie Nielsen Gremaud, PhD in Visual Culture: [annsofiegremaud@gmail.com](mailto:annsofiegremaud@gmail.com)

Gry Hedin, PhD in Scandinavian art and literature: [gryhedin@hotmail.com](mailto:gryhedin@hotmail.com)

In the era of the anthropocene, artists and scientists are facing a new paradigm in their attempts to map nature. This session focuses on art as Anthropocene laboratory where human control, mapping, and aestheticizing of landscape is thematised. It is our aim to cultivate a discussion of how art has interacted – and still interacts – with the natural sciences in interpreting the Anthropocene in relation to Nordic landscapes. We want to focus on contemporary art but also want to bring forward previously overlooked connections between contemporary and historical representational practices as human impact on landscape as well as the difficulty of controlling nature is a theme that artists and scientists have dealt with from c. 1800.

FULL DESCRIPTION:

The Anthropocene thesis, that human activities have had a significant and irreversible impact on the Earth's ecosystems, was formulated by Crutzen and Stoermer in the 2000s. Thus today, artists and scientists are facing a new paradigm in their attempts to map nature. Currently this thesis is high on the agenda and

has placed the Arctic as a new geopolitical center. Thus a region previously defined as periphery has turned to the center of attention, and a discourse that is inevitable in the Nordic region is influencing the way landscape and nature is understood.

We wish to discuss how artists' conceptualizations of the landscape of the West Nordic region and Scandinavia have contributed to the development of this thesis. Currently artists are involved in the new conceptualization of the Arctic as a region where natural resources and melting ice has made the relationship between man and nature a primary focus. The thesis states that the era starts with industrialism when steam engines left traces in the geological strata as analyses of polar ice cores have revealed. Indeed human impact on landscape as well as the difficulty of controlling nature is a theme that artists and scientists have dealt with from c. 1800, and we want to address the historic links between contemporary art and earlier practices as these are yet to be examined and discussed.

Thus today and historically, science and art are in close interaction in the interpretation of the Anthropocene. Though their modes of representation are different, they share a common desire for insight and a wish for a coming to terms with our place in nature. The objective of this session is to investigate relationships between these different representational cultures, along with their respective research methods. Here is a point of convergence for the – often different – questions that art and science pose. Interfaces emerge between the practices and foci in relation to landscape as research field for interpretation and representation of environmental changes. Thus this session focuses on art as Anthropocene laboratory where human control, mapping, and aestheticizing of landscape is thematised. It is our aim to cultivate a discussion of how art has interacted – and still interacts – with the natural sciences in interpreting the Anthropocene in relation to Nordic landscapes and to bring forward previously overlooked connections between contemporary and historical representational practices.

Questions dealt with in this session could be (but are not limited to) the following:

- How do artists deal with the Anthropocene in their depiction of Nordic landscapes?
- The influence of artists on scientists in relation to the Anthropocene.
- The collaborations between scientists and artists in the investigation of Nordic landscapes.
- Alternative discourses and views on climate change in Nordic art.
- The influence of sciences such as anthropology, geography, geology and biology on Nordic landscape art.
- The relationship between technological developments and artistic approaches.

Submit a 1–2 page abstract, brief c.v. (two pages max.), and full contact information by September 25, 2014.

Please direct your communication both to the chairs and to the conference organisers at:  
papers.nordik2015@listfraedi.is

<http://nordicarhistory.org/press>

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[3] Vikings, Gods and Heroes. Northern Antiquity in Visual Art after the Middle Ages

SESSION ORGANIZER:

Dr. des. Sarah Timme (née Lütje)

Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main

Institut für Skandinavistik

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Description:

The session asks for the post-medieval reception of Northern antiquity in visual art, for artworks inspired by Old Norse literature (e.g. Poetic Edda, Prose Edda, Sagas) or covering other subjects from the Northern past (e.g. Vikings, rune stones or burial mounds). There has been an interest in such subjects from the Renaissance on, though in the early modern era it was quite sporadic (e.g. book illustrations in Johannes Magnus' *Historia de omnibus Gothorum Sueonumque regibus* [1554] or the Kronborg Series commissioned by the Danish king Christian IV. in 1637) but became increasingly strong from the end of the 18th century. In the context of Classicism and the Romantic Movement Northern antiquity served as an alternative and complement to the classical tradition for artists such as Henry Fuseli, William Blake or Nicolai Abildgaard. During the 19th century plenty of artworks were produced that intersected with these interests, in sculpture and painting (Bengt Erland Fogelberg, Peter Nicolai Arbo) as well as in the genres of the emerging mass culture: book illustration and later on advertising. In Germany especially, but also in other countries, Richard Wagner's operatic adaptation *The Ring of the Nibelungs* (1876) also led to a spread of the subject through the visual arts. Two strands of reception can be distinguished here: a conservative and nationalistic one in the context of primarily German Wagnerism (featuring little known artists such as Herrmann Hendrich or Franz Stassen), and a more international and modernistic response represented by artists mostly concerned with the aesthetic quality of Wagner's work (e.g. Henri Fantin-Latour, Odilon Redon, Edward Burne-Jones). The interest in these subjects has not waned during the 20th and 21st centuries as artists such as Anselm Kiefer, Bjørn Nørgaard and lately Jonathan Meese all treat subjects derived from Northern antiquity.

This immense field has received little attention from researchers until now. There are some surveys on reception primarily in Scandinavia and a few exhibition catalogues. Also the Wagnerian strand has attracted some attention. However, very little has been written regarding reception outside Scandinavia, and there are a lack of thorough case studies and almost no research conducted on popular images not traditionally regarded as fine art (book illustrations, advertising, etc).

The session therefore seeks to assemble researchers on this topic to help build a network that is still lacking. It aims therefore to present a survey of the state of research in the broad field outlined above and

welcomes talks referring to the following topical questions:

- How is Northern antiquity represented in artworks?
- What iconographic traditions can be described?
- Which type of formal representation is chosen for the subjects?
- What are the sources the artists depend on?
- Which texts and images transmit the knowledge of the subjects to the artists? In which contexts do the artworks emerge?

Reykjavík represents a very apt venue for this session given the number of medieval textual sources that are of Icelandic origin.

Submit a 1–2 page abstract, brief c.v. (two pages max.), and full contact information by September 25, 2014.

NB: Please direct your communication both to the session organizer (timme@em.uni-frankfurt.de) and to the conference organisers (papers.nordik2015@listfraedi.is).

Reference:

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