

## Abstracts: Rethinking Art Historical Narratives and Canons Helsinki, 9–10 November 2023

*Keynote Speech: Patricia Berman: “Canons Within, Canons Without”*

The exhibition history of Nordic art in North America is a case study in canonization involving regional collaboration and competition, national self-representation, overlapping curatorial missions, diplomacy, and the external shaping of an uncomfortable transnationalism. The talk revisits the organization of the 1982 exhibition “Northern Light” (Washington, DC; Brooklyn; Minneapolis; and Göteborg), the horizon of expectations initiated by the 1912 multi-city exhibition of Scandinavian art, the European reception of the “Northern Light” paradigm, and the persistence of that paradigm. The complex politics of inclusion, the ways in which the internal nationalisms of the Nordic countries intersected with views from without, and differing registers of art-historical chronology and definition shaped a North American canon of Nordic Art in which the period of the 1880s and ‘90s grew as a metonym for larger national and regional histories. The talk considers how inclusions, exclusions, blind spots, and differing local political conditions shaped and reshaped 20th-century trans-Atlantic exchange, as well as ongoing echoes of that phenomenon.

*Firing the Norwegian Canon: Micro-Histories and Roundtable*  
Convenor: **Patricia Berman**

“Firing the Norwegian Canon” is a research initiative organized by the University of Oslo and the National Museum (Oslo) that analyses art-historical canon formation within and integral to the historical nation building initiatives (ca. 1830s-1930s). The Norwegian “canon” project considers art-historical visibility and invisibility and intersects with the research network “NorWhite,” (How Norway Made the World Whiter), which examines entangled societal, technological, and aesthetic conditions of the color white (grounded in Norway’s export, titanium white paint). The “canon” project proposes as one of its methods an expansive multi-authored collection of case studies intended as a challenge to teleological art-historical models for students, researchers, and the larger interested public. This panel offers short “micro-histories” to give a sense of our mission and then a roundtable from which we hope to gather the wisdom of the conference participants.

- **Mai Britt Guleng:** “Anachronous Art Historical Communities”

In constructing narratives of Norwegian art history, art historians shape cross-chronological connections, between themselves, art historians and

artists from several generations. My example will evolve around the presentation of Johan Christian Dahl in Norwegian art historiography.

One art historian who creates anachronous historical art communities based on the research history of Dahl, is Einar Lexow. According to Lexow, Dahl embodies not just his own work but also the values of the 1880s “naturalism” and provides a fundament for the art historian to mark a clear standpoint against the Düsseldorf artists. This situation makes Lexow repeatedly ask if the role of the art historian is that of the critic or the historian. Should the art historian point out the values of their own time, or should the artists who once played an important role be secured a prominent place for all times? When looking into the processes of canon formation, rewriting and evaluation, Lexow’s basic question might still be thought provoking and relevant.

- **Bente Solbakken:** “Goathi and place. Kjell Borgen’s work in Sápmi”

Very early in his career, the Norwegian architect Kjell Borgen (1928–2015) spent summers in Finmark surveying the remnants of traditional Sámi building culture left after the Nazi Scorched Earth-operations in 1944 and 1945. This resulted in a lifelong engagement with Sámi culture and a deep fascination for the Sámi *darfegoahti* (turf hut), both as a scholar and as an architect. In this talk I will outline how Borgen experimented with creating a contemporary Sámi architecture referencing traditions. In the 1990s he combined his deep knowledge of Sámi vernacular and the *goahti* with contemporary theories of ‘place’ in several designs for museum buildings, such as *Várjjat Sámi Musea* (1994).

- **Eilif Salemonsén:** “Beyond National Romanticism: Adolph Tidemand and French History Painting”

Norway’s Adolph Tidemand (1814–1876), a prominent painter related to the so-called national romantic movement, is associated with sentimental, idealized portrayals of Norwegian farmers in their “Sunday clothes.” These images contributed to the construction of a Norwegian cultural identity. However, beneath the surface of many of Tidemand’s seemingly straightforward scenes from the Norwegian countryside lies a rich but overlooked dialogue with international art and ideas: This presentation focuses on Tidemand and the French neoclassical painter Jacques-Louis David. The solidity of Tidemand’s drawing, which has rightly been regarded as a testament to his early development at the Royal Danish Academy of Art,

as well as the moral narratives and classical heroism conveyed by his subjects, could be seen as an indirect influence from David.

A more practical kind of French influence reached Tidemand in Düsseldorf in 1848, as revolutionary unrest spread across the continent from Paris, prompting the artist and his family to move to Christiania (now Oslo). There, Tidemand became one of the founders of the Artists Association (Kunstnerforeningen) that produced three theatrical shows in Christiania Theater in March 1849, each recreating one of Tidemand's compositions as tableaux vivants. A drawing of one of the compositions (that was not finished as a painting) *Fanitullen*, ("The Devil's Song"; National Museum, Oslo), seems to be a compositional recapitulation of David's *The Tennis Court Oath* (1791), celebrating one of the foundational events of the French revolution of 1789. Did Tidemand, by setting a dark and violent Norwegian folktale into dialogue with David's image of revolution, address the current political upheaval in Europe, that in a very concrete way had been the direct reason for his departure from Düsseldorf for Christiania in the first place? Such connections, invite us to reconsider Tidemand's position within the art historical canon as an artist engaged in a broader international dialogue; contributing to a wider reevaluation of his artistic legacy.

- **Tonje Haugland Sørensen:** "Contesting canon one tree at the time (or engaging national romanticisms through the perspective of materiality and material circulation)"

Thomas Fearnley's (1802-1842) landscape *Labrofossen* (1838) shows a roaring waterfall surrounded by a lush fir forest. Behind the forest rises a tall mountain and the whole landscape is draped in dramatic patches of sunlight. The painting is widely considered as one of the central, canonical works in Norwegian national romantic painting. This presentation will deal with that canonical status, but will do so by focusing on an often overlooked aspect of the painting; in the paintings foreground, partially silhouetted by the cascading waterfall are several logs of lumber. They are clearly cut by saw and the bark removed and thus are evident of log rafting.

Lumber has historically been one of Norway's most important export commodities. Moreover, the vast profits made from lumber export was a central part of the fortunes of a large number of individuals (and their families) who would in turn be pivotal in creating the Norwegian nation state from the late eighteenth century onwards. However, despite the vital importance of the lumber trade for Norwegian economy and politics, the entanglements of the lumber trade to the development of art has not been

explored. This presentation will ask what happens when we focus on lumber and its connections -or on materiality and material circulation - and how such a focus can challenge the canonical reading of national romanticism.

- **MaryClaire Pappas:** "The Contemporary Norwegian Art Exhibition (1917) and the formation of the genealogy of Norwegian modernism"

In 1916, the Swede Sven Strindberg, the director of Stockholm's newly-opened Liljevalchs Art Hall, and the Norwegian artist Erik Werenskiöld collaborated to arrange a selected exhibition showcasing the 'best' of Norwegian contemporary art. This exhibition occurred in 1917 as the Contemporary Norwegian Art Exhibition (Nutida Norsk Konst) and was curated by Werenskiöld, Jens Thiis, then director of the Norwegian National Gallery, and the artist Jean Heiberg. The exhibition combined works by established leaders in the field, such as Harriet Backer, Werenskiöld, and Edvard Munch, with a young generation of expressionist-leaning artists, including Henrik Sørensen, Heiberg, Axel Revold, and Per Krogh. The curatorial strategy was to create a genealogy of radical modernism extending from Backer, Werenskiöld, and Munch through the younger generation of Norwegians, with color as the defining feature of Norwegian modernism. Indeed in 1917 Swedish critics argued the Norwegians radiated a unified cultural image of radical modern painting defined by color. In this brief presentation, I will analyze the curatorial choices and narrative of the exhibition and its impact on the canonization of Norwegian modernism. This genealogy is still at play today in shaping the contours of the narrative of Norwegian art in the 1910s, for example, in the presentation of the Rasmus Meyer Collection at KODE Art Museums and Composer Homes, or in textbooks such as Gunnar Danbolt's *Norsk Kunsthistorie* (Norwegian Art History).

- **Ingrid Halland:** "Is White Paint Racist? Archival gaps and public participation as methods in art historical research"

This short talk will present the exhibition *TiO2 Prøvefelt at ROM for kunst og arkitektur* (2023) as a case study to discuss methods for public participation in art historical research. The exhibition is a part of the research project 'How Norway Made the World Whiter' (NorWhite) that studies a Norwegian innovation: the white pigment titanium dioxide (TiO<sub>2</sub>) through a historical, aesthetic and critical lens – focusing on how the pigment transformed surfaces in art, architecture and design. A key part of the project is to catalogue and digitalize the unexplored archive relating to the TiO<sub>2</sub>

innovation. Some archival material—advertisements for titanium white paint from the 1920s and 1930s—are clearly racist.

As a part of TiO2 Prøvefelt, the research team invited the public to make up their own minds about the problematic archival material. This talk asks: How can art historical research engage with the public in a way that nuances and complicates the research hypothesis?

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***Presenters (in alphabetical order) and abstracts:***

**Charlotte Ashby: “Rethinking Coloniality in the British Art World around 1900”**

As art and design historians, we have long been aware of the presence in Europe of objects of non-European manufacture, which reflected the collecting mania of the Imperial archive. Some facets of this have received more attention than others, such as the powerful influence of Japanese visual and material culture on the European imagination in the late nineteenth century. Within the British context, the flood of objects from across the world into British homes through the nineteenth century was so extensive that it risks becoming invisible.

This paper will consider the presence of Chinese and Indian art objects, which were extensively collected and displayed in Britain. Through an analysis of the representation of these objects in art journals, and other publications aimed at a similar educated audience, it is possible to begin to trace how they acted within the British art scene. How were these Chinese and Indian objects perceived by the critics and designers who mediated culture and middleclass taste in Britain? What were these objects and images doing in the hands and minds of British cultural actors? What role did they play in the development of British art discourse?

I am focusing on the decades immediately before and after 1900, as this represents a period of rapid transformation in the discourse. I wish to address the disjunction between the contemporary ubiquity of these objects and the silences surrounding their contribution to the parallel movements of Arts and Crafts and Aestheticism. Disciplinary divisions between the work of historians of British art and historians of Indian and Chinese art mean that, though all these fields are well developed, connections are under-examined. The modern, professional

impulse to ‘stay in one’s lane’ creates particular problems for the study of a period in which these divisions were highly permeable. There were differences in the values ascribed to Chinese and Indian art of different sorts, but there are also commonalities. Chinese and Indian art objects were powerful actors in British art discourse because of the way they were able to act as floating signifiers. Their availability was a marker of imperial modernity. At the same time, the antiquity of these objects, lost in the mists of time, was frequently alluded to and used as a way to anchor a precarious present to the unchanging past. They were bearers of a thousand years of history, but this history and culture remained stubbornly opaque to British audiences and therefore curiously timeless. This inability to understand emic context, rendered these objects mute to European ears and resistant to European classification systems, but this silence created new possibilities to value what the eye saw and hand felt. This pure sensation was embraced by British art theorists and metamorphosed over time to the ‘pure form’ of Roger Fry’s new formalism. I intend to use this study to explore the effects of reintroducing the coloniality at the heart of the construction of British art history and British art culture.

**Jane Boddy: “The battle for modern art: Avenarius vs. Meier-Graefe on artistic definition and canon formation”**

As modern art in Europe was moving toward various forms of abstraction in the early 1900s, critics vied to name new artists, recognize the “vital” groups and, from here, plot future artistic developments. Yet why were some artists incorporated into the mainstream while others were left on the periphery of recognition? And moreover, what aesthetic challenges do the formation of historical canons present in the reevaluation of artists today? This paper addresses these questions by examining a clash between two prominent German art critics, Ferdinand Avenarius and Julius Meier-Graefe.

While both Avenarius and Meier-Graefe adhered to a teleological perspective on the progression of art, their visions of what constituted modern art and the artists that fell within its purview diverged significantly. Avenarius championed Phantasiemalerei, a concept that emphasized the role of imagination and mythology in shaping modern art. In contrast, Meier-Graefe concentrated on medium specificity and the concept of “aesthetic unities”—i.e., immutable artistic essences. In this paper, my focus centers on their contrasting assessments of Arnold Böcklin, an artist emblematic of Phantasiemalerei. In addition, I discuss the positioning of Katherine Schöffner within Avenarius’s argument. The significance of Schöffner not only raises interesting questions about processes of

canon formation but also presents aesthetic and art historical challenges in the reevaluation of her work as an early proponent of non-representational art.

### **Ronnie Close:** “Aesthetics of Censorship: Egyptian State Control of Western Photography”

I would like to present a conference paper based on the research from my forthcoming book, *Decolonizing Images: A New History of Photographic Cultures in Egypt* (2023), Manchester University Press. In the paper I would look at role of the photographic image in the production of knowledge-making as part of a different history of the medium. Through the invention of photography Egypt met with western modernity head on but went on to reclaim it and mediate the image into the technological 21st century paradigm. This paper looks at the censorship of western photographic images in contemporary Egypt to question the aesthetics of such iconoclastic interventions. Specifically, this examination focuses on a series of photographs gathered from photographic history books sold in Cairo bookstores. These censored photographic images to speak to the ideological role of the state and the complexity of image politics in contemporary Egyptian society. Imported photographic art books are scrutinized for approval by governmental agencies ahead of sale to the public. In these collections various well-known photographs have been transformed in the publications available in Cairo’s bookstores and some of these books include, *The Photo Book: A History Vol. 1* (Badger & Parr, 2004) and *Photographers A-Z* (Koetzle, 2011) amongst others. After passing through the state-run organization, *al Riqqaba Ala El Musanafat El Fanneya* [Censorship of Creative Arts], a veiled filter stands between the public and the original photographs. The process entails hand-painting each photographic image in each book edition to block the gaze onto the naked body. In this iconoclastic transformation of the original photograph there exists certain aesthetic ambitions in the bowdlerising act, which, can, at times appear to resonate with the spirit of experimentation found in photomontage. In this way the photographic surface becomes a space for the encounter between the original photograph and the censorship act as the human body is caught between conflicting gazes.

### **Claire Dupin de Beyssat:** “Oblivion and Posterity. Why do (or don’t) painters go down in art history?”

Among art historians, including those specialising in 19th century French painting, how many today remember Charles Busson, a landscape painter who won several medals at the Salon between 1855 and 1878 and was cited as a master by nearly forty exhibitors? How many could cite a work by Benjamin

Ulmann, Prix de Rome in 1859, awarded three times at the Salon and knighted with the Légion d'honneur in 1872? In fact, few painters who exhibited and had a career at the Salon in the second half of the 19th century have aroused the interest of researchers: of the 619 artists who received a medal at the Salon, for example – and were therefore recognised in their time – 331 have never been the subject of the slightest monograph, even in the form of an article or university thesis. In this respect, research in 19th century art history remains amputated, blind and ignorant of a large part of contemporary artistic production, both from a quantitative and qualitative point of view.

The ambition of this paper will be to explore the blind spots visible in the canonical history of nineteenth-century art, which still focuses largely on a relatively small group of artists and works. To this end, my paper will draw on the corpus of artists and submissions exhibited in the Salon's “Painting” section between 1848 and 1880, which includes nearly 75,000 works and over 10,000 individuals. More specifically, through statistical analyses supplemented by case studies, the aim will be to identify the factors that lead to posterity or, on the contrary, to oblivion and to reveal the “survivor bias” that persists in the history of art of this period. This study will thus make it possible to account for the criteria on which the historiographical canon on nineteenth-century French art was based, whether aesthetic – a marked preference for “modernity” –, social – a misogyny observable in the selection by history – or even structural – a latent mistrust of works and artists supported by the State, for example.

In a second step, this paper will adopt a more prospective approach, showing what solutions might allow these historiographical biases to be corrected. From the social history of art to the digital humanities, the aim will be to show that this canonical historiography, as prevalent as it is, is not unsurpassable and can, if not be replaced, at least coexist with other narratives on 19th century art.

### **Eve Grinstead:** “Redefine the Art Historical Canon? Sometimes it is never applied: the Rise of the Art Scene in the United Arab Emirates”

By virtue of its origin, the word "canon" itself implies a Western history. Today, it is more crucial than ever to challenge the academic canon in a time when the *status quo* is constantly questioned and historical precedents are no longer the default method of choice. This activity is undoubtedly simpler when carried out in a country with no established art historical traditions. The United Arab Emirates' art scene offers several examples of deviating from the canon, and, in opposition, sheds light on how the canon might be created and spread elsewhere.

In fact, this example goes beyond demonstrating “canon criticism:” it provides a case of never having to go against the canon, because the canon (as we know it) was never applied there. Soon after the Trucial States were merged to form the UAE in the 1970s, this federation's art scene started to take shape. A woman founded the country's first gallery, Majlis, in 1979, and women to this day hold the majority of executive positions in the Emirati art scene. Due to its sparse population, the UAE is home to a sizable foreign community; this is also true of the cultural scene. To emigrate anywhere inevitably means leaving one's home— one's “center” —for a new one, a peripheral one. Thus, the mere fact that foreigners make up the majority of those who founded the local art scene suggests a comfort with departing from tradition, whether Western or not. Indeed, this call for papers inquires as to whether doing work at the purported margins entails operating outside of institutions. Absolutely, especially given that there weren't any institutions to begin with, and that the entire local art scene was established as a periphery. Another illustration of how deeply ingrained the Western canon is in academia is the notion that the institution is necessary for the existence of art or art history. An “alternative narrative” of art history could be any narrative that does not fit into the standard, Christian, Western model, and thus can be conveyed in ways that do not fit on this well-trodden path (*i.e.*, through institutions). The art scene in the UAE was not created by academies, universities, or museums, and it was thus not maintained by them either. Instead, it was created independently by women who noticed its absence after moving there and having exposure to other art scenes elsewhere. Another unanticipated female contribution— that of the local princesses and their construction of non-profit art centers— supported their revolutionary efforts to fill this void by creating galleries and foundations. As a result, this art scene shows a rejection of the canon, not just because individuals rather than institutions developed it but also because the majority of these individuals are female.

**Charles W. Haxthausen:** “Reimagining Art History: Carl Einstein's Handbuch der Kunst”

Left unfinished at his suicide in 1940, Carl Einstein's final project, the *Handbuch der Kunst*, a historical manual of world art, was his most ambitious. Projected to encompass five volumes and probably intended for a general public, the *Handbuch* was Einstein's attempt to construct a radically new kind of art history, truly global in scope. It would encompass not only Europe and the arts of the dominant cultures of Africa, the Americas, Asia, the Near East, and Oceania, but also those of overlooked, marginalized peoples. Europe was to have no privileged place in this account— Western art, with its celebration of aesthetic

values and individual achievement, would be revealed as an anomaly in human history, a contraction of art's power and social significance. As outlined in a detailed exposé, this art history was to focus not on aesthetic values but on art's changing functions— social, political, religious, and psychological— within human culture, from pre-historic times to modernity. For Einstein, art history as practiced had been largely a history of works that were “rare exceptions,” in effect “a history of monsters,” of freaks; image-making, he insisted, was “an ability common to all humans.” This was to be a history of a quintessentially human action, the act of representing in images, and would therefore include collective and “average achievements.” Essentially an historical anthropology of the image, it was also to include children's drawings, dream imagery, and “the mass of so-called worthless artworks.” Einstein is best known as the author of the first book by an art critic or art historian to assess African sculpture as art (*Negerplastik*, 1915). In a second book, *Afrikanische Plastik* (1921), he sought to launch the art-historical study of African sculpture, thereby expanding the Eurocentric canon of the discipline. In the later 1920s and early 1930s, his writings on modern art were influenced by his immersion in the anthropological literature (e.g., Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, Marcel Mauss) as he enthusiastically declared a “primitivization” of European culture, a return to a collective myth, to be at hand— a belief he abandoned, bitterly, by 1935. In a forthcoming article I argue that it was Einstein's study of the arts of Africa and other non-European cultures that led to his disillusionment with the European avant-garde and his devastating critique of modernism and the practice of Western art history.<sup>1</sup> In this state of disillusionment Einstein forged his conception for the *Handbuch*. It was his attempt to rethink art, its history, and what he now saw as the failed project of European modernism within that history. Although dating from the 1930s, Einstein's extensive notes for his *Handbuch*, astonishingly radical for their time yet largely overlooked by art historians, are a fertile resource and stimulus for reimagining art-historical narratives and canons for the future.

<sup>1</sup> “Fatal Attraction: Carl Einstein's ‘Ethnological’ Turn,” in: *Art and Anthropology: Modern Encounters, 1870– 1980*, ed. Joseph Imorde and Peter Probst, Los Angeles: Getty Publications (forthcoming, fall 2023).

**Chloë Julius:** “Barbara Rose, the end of painting, and the Beginnings of a New Art Historical Narrative”

Within the historiography of American art, Barbara Rose's reputation as a conservative was secured in 1979. This was the year in which Rose mounted *American Painting: The Eighties* at New York University's Grey Art Gallery, a curatorial statement that alienated her from those who viewed the terms ‘new’ and ‘painting’ to be mutually exclusive. For Hal Foster, writing in *Artforum*, the

exhibition's titular claim on the 1980s before the decade had even begun was "preposterous."<sup>1</sup> How could such a position be maintained, when – as Foster had it – "one feels that nostalgia for the old, as much as faith in the new, compels Rose." Elsewhere in the review, Foster glossed that nostalgia with the words "conservative", "reactionary" and "revisionist". Two years later, Rose's conservatism was stressed again in Douglas Crimp's article "The End of Painting".<sup>2</sup> It is easy to forget that Crimp's own polemic laying claim to the 1980s was indexed to Rose's perceived conservatism, containing as it did a rallying, avowedly postmodernist, call to finally complete Paul Delaroché's 1839 prognosis that the invention of photography would trigger the death of painting. But this is precisely how "The End of Painting" began, whose first line snipes: "On one of those rare occasions during the past decade when Barbara Rose abandoned the pages of Vogue magazine in order to say something really serious about the art of our time...."

In falling on the wrong side of the 'End of Painting' debate, critic, art historian and sometime curator Barbara Rose also ended up on the wrong side of the of art historical narrative of American art. That narrative began in the 1970s, and while we no longer refer to it as postmodernism, the challenge to modernism levelled in its name continues to shape how American art history is narrated today. Rather than adding to the mounting postscripts on the 'End of Painting' debate, therefore, this paper will return to the beginnings of postmodernism to survey the intellectual contribution of one of its forgotten detractors. Forgotten, because Rose's prior commitment to the future of American art in the 1960s made her subsequent critique an art-historical conundrum. That the majority of modernist critics in America withdrew from contemporary art after modernism is understandable. Far more curious, however, is the withdrawal of a critic so invested in the possibility of art after modernism. This is the unique purchase Rose's critique has on the historiography of post-1960s American art. By resurfacing her buried intellectual history, I intend to advance a new of thinking about art historical narratives, one that pays attention to dissent as much as accord, and which takes paths untraveled as seriously as the path we took.

<sup>1</sup> Hal Foster, 'A Tournament of Roses', *Artforum* (November 1979)

<sup>2</sup> See: Douglas Crimp, "The End of Painting", *October*, Vol. 16 (Spring 1981)

### **Kaija Kaitavuori: "Colonial Currents and Counter Currents in Art"**

The Cubists' fascination with African and Oceanic art and its revolutionary influence on the development of Western art in the early 1900s is an important stage in the development of modern art. Meanwhile in Africa, in what is now Nigeria, there was a reciprocal interest in Western figurative art, which

eventually led to the establishment of academic art education in Africa. This second story, however, is much less known and, when it is told, the adoption of Western influences has generally been seen as passive and even damaging.

Now that 'others' also have a growing voice and space to bring their own perspectives and definitions to the cultural and art historical debate, Western and non-Western narratives need to be retold from new perspectives. Issues are raised, such as appropriation, the relationship between tradition and modernity, and the broader Western practice of classifying the products of visual expression as either ethnographic objects or art.

With the help of a couple of case studies, the presentation will examine the rearrangement of these boundaries and categories in a situation in which Western art history is increasingly aware of the contractual nature of different classifications and canons. Cultural communities appear as communities of faith in which the status of an object is determined by a shared, even if constantly contested, belief or imagination (Bourdieu's 'illusion').

### **Krista Kodres: "Borders and Explosions: Transnational art history discourse(s) and the national context in dialogue in Estonia in the 1920s and 1930s"**

In my paper I aim to contribute to discussions of the relations between art history's nationalism and transnationalism by introducing the cultural semiotic ideas of Yuri Lotman. The object of my inquiry is the process of inventing the "history of Estonian art": how art historical texts written in Estonia in the 1920s and 1930s made sense of the history of Estonian art, clarified what objects had to be included in/excluded from the local historical artistic heritage (which was previously seen as "colonial" and "alien"), and defined the role of art and its history in society. Without doubt, the models for constructing the general narrative and the art canon were discovered outside of the young republic, which had in 1918 established its legal and internationally recognised borders. What were the models that were chosen from the already existing transnational disciplinary arena of art history? In what ways were they considered to be useful for the purpose that the writers shared with the society: to build up national culture?

Yuri Lotman's theory of the semiosphere (1984) deals with the communication of cultures. Lotman postulated, firstly, that all cultures have (imagined) borders and, secondly, that all cultures exist via communication with other cultures. The borders of cultures are "porous" and serve as filters or translational mechanisms.

It is the borders/border areas of a culture where the “decisions” are made as to what kind of information can be passed on to the “core” of a culture. The speed of passing over the border, i.e. appropriating and adopting information in one’s own interests, is contextual and depends on many local factors and actors. I argue that Lotman’s theory is also useful in addressing the practices of transnational communication and exchange in the field of art history. Theory suggests that there is no opposition of national and transnational in cultures; instead, cultures are in permanent states of negotiation and dialogue with the “outside”, and it is their meeting in the “border-zone” that initiates the productive dynamics of the meaning-making process in a society. Lotman also introduced the concept of the “explosion of culture” (1992) in order to theorise regarding the varying speeds of cultural dialogue and exchange: there are historic moments in every culture “that cut windows into the existing semiotic layer” and initiate radical/rapid changes in the semiosis. Obviously, the year 1918 was for Estonian culture such a moment of “explosion”. It brought about a remarkable enlivening in the field of art history and speeded up the competition over the “proper” narrative of art history. Transnational discourses (such as geography of art, the history of style and *Geistesgeschichte*) played a constructive role in creating a foundation for a new sense of belonging for the Estonian national culture.

### **Maija Koskinen:** “Reassessing International Art Exhibitions in Finland – A New Perspective into Exhibition History of the Second Half of the 20th Century”

When thinking of how important exhibitions are as a form of displaying art, making art public and exposing it for evaluation, it is surprising how little attention exhibitions and their histories have been given in Finnish art history. Art institutions and galleries seldom know their own exhibition history. Some institutions have catalogued the exhibitions but rarely analyzed what kind of art has been exhibited – or excluded – meaning that they do not know their exhibition profile.

The narrative of Finnish art, of course, includes numerous references and examples of significant and groundbreaking art exhibitions, both domestic and international. Often though, the same exhibitions are mentioned time after time, and there is a good reason for that. However, I argue that there are many interesting and important exhibitions which have been forgotten, ignored, or marginalized without a due course because they have been considered awkward, for instance, for political reasons. Therefore, I ask would the canon of Finnish art history look different if more attention had been paid to a greater variety of

exhibitions, especially the international ones? And to what extent the forgotten exhibitions impacted on art, artists, and the art field in Finland?

Using a few foreign exhibitions organized in Finland during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as an example, I challenge the established Finnish art historical canon of significant exhibitions. I also challenge the idea of the origins of these international art exhibitions by demonstrating that a great many of them were organized as part of state-run cultural diplomacy with political intentions. I argue that a more profound and detailed knowledge of the history of art exhibitions changes the idea of how the Finnish art field operated: its battles, choices, and rejections. The history of art exhibitions (in Finland) is yet to be written.

The presentation is based on an on-going research project on international art exhibitions in Finland in the context of the Cold War.

### **Mira Kozhanova:** “Translating transcultural heritage into a national art canon: Practices of appropriation and exclusion in the case of Paris-based artists from the Russian Empire”

My PhD project offers a new perspective on Paris-based artists from the Russian Empire who left their homeland to pursue an artistic career between 1900 and 1917. A closer look at this migratory flow reveals that it consisted predominantly of artists from the western borders of the empire, corresponding to present-day Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, and Ukraine. Artists such as, Alexander Archipenko, Sonia Delaunay, Chana Orloff, Michail Larionov, Jacques Lipchitz, Yakov Nikoladze, Chaim Soutine, or Ossip Zadkine represent a transcultural, multilingual, and religious diversity and yet are often reductively labeled as Russian. Acknowledging their diverse backgrounds, the paper examines the in- and exclusive practices of different national art canons in regard to these migrant artists in both France and Russia. A comparative analysis unfolds two polar perspectives in regard to the significance of these artists within respective national frameworks: The French art discourse integrates these artists into its canon of art, while simultaneously emphasizing the hegemonic role of French art and using the pejorative term *École de Paris* to “label” foreign-born artists. In contrast, artists who had emigrated from the (former) Russian empire were excluded from the Soviet art canon (or not included in it in the first place). It was post-soviet Russian art historiography that appropriated them as a „branch of Russian art“, ignoring the fact that most of these artists were severely limited (or entirely excluded from the predominant cultural realm) during the imperial period, which was precisely the reason for their relocation. An

international comparison of different historiographical perspectives reveals one further underlying issue that needs to be illuminated in order to recognize certain hegemonic attempts: the transcultural identities of these artists who came to Paris from the borders of the empire. A characteristic example of the complexity of such undertakings is provided by the biography of Chaim Soutine (1893–1943), who was born in a shtetl called Smilovichi, which in the course of history belonged to the Royal Republic of the Polish Crown, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Minsk Governorate of the Russian Empire and is currently located on the territory of Belarus. The artist's highly transcultural background as well as his international success can be seen as one of the reasons why his oeuvre is being integrated as part of national art canon from a Russian, Belarusian, Lithuanian, Polish as well as French perspectives.

**Karolina Łabowicz-Dymanus:** “How to challenge Polish art history writing from a critical perspective?”

For decades, Polish art historians have endeavoured to prove that Socialist Realism, as an artistic practice and art theory, was insignificant except for a few radical years in the early 1950s. It has been emphasized that realistic forms and socialist content were applied briefly, while the modernistic model was "smuggled in" by Polish artists and art historians into socialist art theory in 1953. Realism was subordinated to Stalinism, while Modernism was incorporated into the superstructure as a symbol of modernization and contemporaneity of the Polish People's Republic as early as 1955. As Marxism held an interest in the sociological aspect of art, leading post-war art historians like Juliusz Starzyński, Stefan Morawski, or Elżbieta Grabska introduced critical art history as current art methodology, abandoned in the late 1950s due to its political engagement. Since the early 1960s, Neo-Avantgarde art allowed artists to hide behind progressive forms while avoiding any "leftist/socialist" or political inclinations. The Foksal Gallery circle, for example, promoted French Neo-Avantgarde artists but always emphasized Foksal's disapproval of any political left. At the same time, Polish art historians turned to art history as a study of formalism and iconology, a method favoured by the famous Jan Białostocki and his followers, which dominates Polish art history even today. Consequently, the most popular belief is that Polish art and art theory did not develop a critical approach or social interests until the 1990s when critical art studies were introduced through the West.

Under these circumstances, writing art history in Poland after 1945 requires new studies. It is necessary to approach Socialist Realism and the 1950s from a new, not unambiguously negative perspective that sheds light on rapid modernization and urbanization, social revolution, and civil rights, including women's rights,

free-of-charge healthcare, education and higher studies, or cultural exchange with the Socialist States worldwide occurring at the time. Current methodologies provide tools to expand reflection on Polish political engagement and military support in anti-colonial wars in Africa and Asia, as well as multilateral cultural and artistic exchange with the "Second" and "Third World." In the 1950s, the significant number of women artists participating in prestigious events and state and regional exhibitions dedicated to women artists outnumbered any other women-oriented art shows in later decades. The noticeable engagement of women reflected the then-state politics of supporting women in professional life, which was shortly followed by the ideology of the Mother of Socialist Nation.

Politically driven art and art theory based on Marxism have suffered and still suffer from stigmas and prejudices present in dominating narratives. The former disgrace of forced Soviet ideology and the current conservative political climate in Poland, as well as the war in Ukraine, do not encourage new research on Socialist Realism. Neither foster art theories and studies that employ critical methodologies, which often enjoy a root in Marxism. A more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the problem can reintroduce Socialist Realism to Polish art discourse.

**Essi Lamberg:** “Conceptual prestige in art historical canon formation: analyzing the exclusivity of ‘architecture’”

The aim of this presentation is to problematize the concept of “architecture” in relation to art historical canons. Based on my doctoral research on architects operating in development cooperation, I propose that conceptual prestige is central in the making and remaking of art historical canons. The field of art historical scholarship is constantly expanding towards more diverse research settings. However, art historical disciplinary culture and its scientific identity are still predominantly founded on the accumulation of cultural capital, excluding an abundance of research topics outside of art history’s disciplinary gaze. Recent discussions in Finnish art history have brought up the conceptual and disciplinary hierarchies between architecture and adjacent fields. I want to expand this conversation to be more inclusive of global, or “non-Western”, contexts. The architectural projects undertaken in the global South with Finnish technical assistance have until now remained in the margins of Finnish architectural historiography regardless of their vast scope and the participation of well-known architectural figures such as Heikki Siren, Raili and Reima Pietilä, and Aarno Ruusuvuori. Reasons can be found in the Eurocentric exclusivity of the concept of “architecture”, as well as the significance architectural practice has had for the nationalist narrative of “Finnishness”. By looking at the matter



through conceptual exclusivity I propose that the architectural projects undertaken in the context of development cooperation were not in their own time recognized as “proper”, or nationally qualified architecture. Another reason is that the concept of architecture, as understood in the context of Finnish historiography, is not always applicable or fruitful when looking at “non-Finnish” or “non-Western” contexts. If we want to cultivate more inclusive architectural research, we need to recognize the impact that conceptual prestige holds over us as researchers, accept the conceptual elasticity of “architecture” outside of our own cultural sphere and dismantle the hierarchy that lingers between “architecture” and its adjacent concepts.

### **Brian T. Leahy: “Ray Johnson’s Ignoble Archive: On the Role of Ephemera in Canon Formation”**

In 1973, the enigmatic artist Ray Johnson distributed a postcard announcement for a show with the Betty Parsons Gallery in New York. The exhibition included collages that satirized the increasingly canonical status of Parsons’ mid-century gallery roster, including Jackson Pollock. At the same time, Johnson was sending countless objects, clippings, queries, and other startling missives through the mail to a wide-ranging mix of acquaintances, an activity he called the New York Correspondence School. This paper traces how Johnson’s printed postcard for the Parsons show emerged from the artist’s other multifaceted mail art activities and how he subsequently cannibalized the announcement card back into his collages and letters. The paper argues that Johnson’s creative use of the printed exhibition postcard offers a set of significantly under analyzed theoretical and methodological questions about the status of ephemera in the history of contemporary art. What kind of evidence is the exhibition announcement? How do printed ephemera contribute to canonical formations? How do we consider the materiality, typography, paper stock, and distribution mechanisms of the announcement? Despite a generalized sense of exhibition announcements and other contemporary art ephemera as minor or disposable, they often constitute the bulk of contemporary art archives. 20th century American artists, including Johnson, used printed exhibition ephemera strategically, seeking to insert themselves into historiographic circuits to gain recognition or alternatively attempting to make their work resistant to art historical narratives as a means of retaining control over their work. For art history to undertake a critique of canonization itself—a different task than the critique of the canon’s contents at any one moment—we require nuanced research into how canons get made in the first place, including the role of ephemera such as the exhibition announcement. This paper draws on queer theory, ephemera studies, and Jacques Derrida’s *The Postcard* to demonstrate that printed ephemera, including the exhibition

announcement, are not neutral. Rather, they are complex and strategic forms of media that should be approached as such.

### **Ja Won Lee: “What Matters: Nineteenth-Century Korean Art Reconsidered”**

This paper explores the rise of collecting Chinese antiquities as a cultural capital and the pivotal role of collectors in constructing the new cultural phenomena in nineteenth-century Korea. During the period of rapid economic growth and urbanization in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the function of Chinese bronzes shifted from ritual object to subject of scholarly appreciation. Inspired by their Chinese peers, Korean collectors including members of the Royal family, high officials and wealthy merchants sought to demonstrate their sophistication by acquiring and displaying precious Chinese bronzes. This trend enabled artists to produce the screens that appealed to Korean collectors who were eager to emphasize their sophisticated eye and knowledge of Chinese antiquities. Focusing on how Korean artists appropriated motifs of Chinese antiquities in response to changes in taste, cultural and social behavior, it demonstrates that this newly emerged work of art represents a uniquely Korean subject matter that provides visual insight into the distinctive character of antiquarianism that developed in nineteenth century Korea. This cross-cultural research not only enriches our understanding of the aesthetic principles shaped by collectors and female patrons who have remained in the margins, but it also expands the perspective on the reception of Chinese antiquities in the development of Korean art and visual culture within the context of globalism.

### **Lucila Mallart: “Conceptualising Supranational Artistic Geographies in Europe’s Borderlands: Josep Puig i Cadafalch (1867-1956) and Johnny Roosval (1879-1965)”**

During the 1920s and early 1930s, the Catalan architect, art historian and politician Josep Puig i Cadafalch (1867-1956) engaged in a series of academic contacts with scholars in the Nordic Countries. One of the nodes of these connections was the prominent Swedish art historian Johnny Roosval (1878-1965). Comparing their art historical works reveals a shared interest in developing supranational frameworks for the study of the evolution of artistic style (Mallart, forthcoming 2023). Puig and Roosval were pioneers in the establishment of artistic geographies that challenged the validity of the nation-state as a framework for the study of art history (Kauffmann, Dossin & Joyeux-Prunel, 2015). Puig was interested in framing Catalan art in the context of a Mediterranean artistic region that extended between Catalonia and Lombardy,

and Roosval put forward the concept of the “Baltic North”. This paper explores the academic connections between Puig, Roosval and other Nordic scholars, providing new insights into the ways in which such ideas were constructed and shared across Europe’s borderlands. Conceptually, the paper draws on scholarship on ‘Nordic Modernities’ and centre-periphery relationships developed in the last decade (Arnason & Wittrock, 2012; Nygård & Strang, 2016).

**Cristian Nae: “We Don’t Need Another Hero: Horizontal, Entangled and Constellational Approaches to Writing Transnational Art Histories in Central and Eastern Europe”**

The art historical canon of modern art has been for a long time under pressure to become more inclusive. Repeated calls for “provincializing the West” (Chakrabarty 2000; Piotrowski 2012) stemming from post-colonial theories and practices resulted in changing collections and permanent displays in museums such as MoMA, as well as paying an increasing attention to transnational exchanges, collaborations, and circulations within global art historical narratives. However, were national art historical narratives and museum collections radically transformed, given the growing impetus of writing transnational art histories across the Global South and the former socialist countries? If anything, transnational art histories have epistemically repositioned the formation of artists in national art historical canons, rethinking notions of influence and cultural transference, and highlighting the major role of artistic dialogues and encounters in shaping national art histories in regions such as Central and Eastern Europe, characterized as a confluence of imperial forces and vernacular traditions. Less attention has also been paid in recent art historical writing not only to the marginalization of neo-avant-garde art in art histories (and curatorial discourses) written (and practiced) during socialism, but also the subsequent erasure of what has been considered as socialist “official art” in the post-socialist period, both in the countries in Central and Eastern Europe and in the academic discourse produced in the “former West”.

In my presentation, I tackle the question of the reproduction, revisionism, and unwilling restoration of canonical artists and art practices as cyphers of cultural authority in both national and transnational art historical narratives in the recent art historiography of Central and Eastern Europe. In particular, the problem of attaining heightened visibility in an attention economy generated within neo-colonial epistemic frameworks remains of uttermost importance. I intend to critically analyze three major methodological proposals for delinking (Mignolo 2007) art histories from national canons and challenge at the same time the Western-based art historical canon: “horizontal” (Piotrowski 2009), “entangled”

(Kallestrup 2022; Rampley 2021), and “constellational” (Seggerman 2019; Nae 2023) approaches to transnational art historical narratives.

I intend to investigate not only the practical difficulties involved in these endeavors, but also their capacity to produce emancipatory narratives, challenging at the same time the establishment and consolidation of new transnational canons of artistic practices and (mainly white and patriarchal) authoritarian artistic figures which, dominated the artistic networks constructed during socialism, despite the calls for international solidarity and equality prevalent in the artistic discourse of those times.

**Lotta Nylund: “How Alexander Lauréus (1783–1823) Became a Finnish Artist – An Example of National Canon Formation”**

Alexander Lauréus was born in Åbo / Turku, a significant town in the 18th century Sweden and present-day Finland. In 1802 Lauréus moved to the capital, Stockholm, to study at the Royal Art Academy and developed into a successful genre painter. Despite being a Swedish subject throughout his life, Lauréus is regarded as an important Finnish artist. This paper explores the Finnish national canon formation through the case of Alexander Lauréus. By analyzing the historiography of Finnish art history, collection formation, and important exhibitions during the formative years of Finnish art history (c. 1850-1950), this paper investigates the point at which Lauréus was incorporated into the Finnish art historical canon and woven into a nationalist narrative. The paper presents a few examples illustrating how the Finnish nationalist perspective has shaped interpretations of Lauréus. Lastly, it discusses how we can within art historical research and museum practices challenge nationalist narratives and approach national art history in a more nuanced way.

**Lauri Ockenström: “What about beauty and order? Vitruvius’s De Architectura, canons and narratives”**

Vitruvius’s *De architectura* (On architecture) has had a decisive impact on the development of many art historical and architectural narratives, canons, and entrenched classifications. For example, the division into the Doric, Ionian and Corinthian “order”, the three classical goals of architecture (*firmitas, utilitas, venustas*) and the chronology of Roman wall painting styles are based on it. Furthermore, the stylistic ideals, referred to as Vitruvian, have been a central component of the Eurocentric and colonialist visual manifestation of power and cultural identity in modern era.

The canons and narratives based on Vitruvius' *opus magnum* have naturally been subject to critical re-evaluation, with attempts to modify and renew them and to expose their deficiencies – for instance, it has been argued that wall painting styles were in fact chronologically overlapping. Nevertheless, Vitruvian concepts continue to dominate many fields of research and control the ways in which the history of architecture and painting is being popularised. In particular, the stylistic division of classical temple architecture and the chronology of Roman wall painting are still described within the framework and terminology provided by Vitruvius' work. Often the new interpretations have not meant abandoning the Vitruvian framework, but a different way of describing the development within the same matrix. Therefore, it can be argued that the critique of Vitruvian canons has remained somewhat incomplete, and there is still a need to reconsider them from fresh perspectives. This paper examines to what extent Vitruvius' work itself provides a basis for the narratives and canonised classifications associated with it. I shall argue that some key concepts and narratives based on Vitruvius rely on a misinterpretation or deliberate misuse of the original text. As examples, this paper examines the temple types, goals of architecture, and wall painting styles, in which Vitruvius seems to have had very different starting points compared to modern ways of classifying Roman wall painting styles.

One valuable aspect of Vitruvius's work is the firsthand information it provides regarding the author's own views on canons. In the preface of the third book, Vitruvius presents a critical and straightforward view of the formation of the canons. The statement is an undervalued source and potentially the earliest extant Latin criticism of art historical and architectural canons. The author's own negative attitude towards canons also forces us to re-evaluate the classifications and narratives created on the basis of the work.

This paper is based on research conducted during the translation process of a Finnish version of Vitruvius's work.

**Tutta Palin:** “The Arrière-garde, the Middlebrow, and Modernism: The Popularisation of Fine Art Publicity in Finland”

Modernism in visual art is usually perceived as consciously non-nationalist or, at the least, indifferent to nationalism. Conversely, in art historical research, a plethora of regional vernacular modernisms, or phenomena identified as modern, has been outlined as an outcome of the postmodernist debate. In the case of a small nation or linguistic area such as Finland, it may be difficult to distinguish between ‘nation’ on the one hand and ‘region’ or ‘place’ on the other.

Everything local does not necessarily equal nationalism. However, an interest in centrifugal or pluralist cultural topographies may be confused with methodological nationalism. Today, modernisms' geographic asynchronies are duly acknowledged theoretically. However, in practice, they may remain baffling faced with deep-rooted art historical hierarchies.

In geographically small cultural fields, borderlines such as those between ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture can shift and relocate with surprising flexibility. An example is the specific, half-popularised functions of a ‘belated’ reception of modernist movements, such as Impressionism or Dadaism, in Finland. However, in modernist visual art studies, the concept of the middlebrow, as dispersed in literary and film studies, remains undertheorised. We do not really have the vocabulary needed to consider the overlap and mutually productive cross-fertilisation of the ‘high’ and the ‘low’ in pre-Pop Art. Therefore, we remain blind to a rather broad range of historical phenomena. (As for the 19th century, this was attempted through the *juste milieu* concept.)

This paper will address this problem through a set of symptomatic cases drawn from Finnish early 20th-century art writing, published in booming modern art reviews and illustrated magazines. Hence, this work will weigh the usefulness of a concept such as middlebrow.

This paper is part of the speaker's project funded by the Kone Foundation, the latest outcomes of which include the article ‘High, Low and In-Between: The Modern Art Press in Finland, 1910–1940’, in *MODERN ART REVIEWed: Art Reviews, Magazines and Gallery Bulletins in Europe, 1910–1945*, edited by Malcolm Gee, Kate Kangaslahti and Chara Kolokytha (Berlin & Boston: De Gruyter, 2022, pp. 51–75).

**Hanna-Leena Paloposki:** “The Finnish Art Society and Artists' Letters: Reflections on Heritagisation, Archival Collections and the Art Canon”

From its foundation in 1846, the Finnish Art Society committed itself to the ambitious aim to create – in practice – the artistic life with artists, education, artworks and audiences, in Finland, which was then the autonomous Grand Duchy of Russia. The Society, the forerunner of the current Finnish National Gallery, thus had a pivotal role in the Finnish art field, and its gradually grown art collection is the present-day national art collection. In my presentation, I will, however, turn my gaze from artworks to archival collections. In 1889, the board of the Society made the decision to start collecting artists' letters and

subsequently other documents to provide source material and background for the research of art. The decision was both important and far-reaching as it also meant the start of research into the Society's art collections, and the Collection of Artists' Letters is still one of the most studied archival fonds at the Museum.

I will study the Collection of Artists' Letters as part of the nationalist-oriented aims of the Finnish Art Society and its past collecting policies during the last decades of the 19th and the first decades of the 20th century. Although it is challenging to form a clear picture of the formation and growth of the Collection as the provenance information on the different letter collections included in it have not been preserved, I try to follow its heritagisation process. With the help of archival research and letter metadata, I will explore the Collection in the context of the Society's other functions and art collecting. Whose letters were among the first acquisitions and what was the role of the leading figures of the Society? Who is actually represented in the Collection? I will explore whether it is possible – and relevant – to study the Collection of Artist's Letters from the point of view of the formation of the Finnish art canon, as a part of the narrative of Finnish Art which the Finnish Art Society aspired to create.

#### **Edward Payne: “Why ‘El Greco to Goya’?”**

Does Spanish art history begin with El Greco and end with Goya? The prevalence of the formulation “El Greco to Goya” in English-language scholarship ultimately suggests a tension between canons and repertoires. The biographical construction of Spanish art can be traced back to Antonio Palomino, nicknamed the “Spanish Vasari” for his *Lives of the Eminent Spanish Painters and Sculptors* (1724). The Scottish art historian William Stirling continued this trend, publishing the first monograph on Velázquez in 1855, followed by Carl Justi's study on the artist in 1888. To what extent is the “El Greco to Goya” survey a practical or a problematic model for narrating the history of the visual arts in the Hispanic world? What elements have been erased from this story, and what alternative “itineraries” might be proposed?

A timeless catchphrase, “El Greco to Goya” is also a seductive trap. This paper will argue that the construction has been consistently deployed as a synecdoche for “Spanish art” broadly conceived, and that it has significantly shaped the perception of this “national school” in Anglo-American scholarship. After tracing a number of examples where the phrase has been coined, this paper will suggest that it reveals three notable ambiguities. First, beyond a narrative of canonical artists and artworks, the “El Greco to Goya” story typically presents a veiled survey of the Prado's collections. Second, in spite of its apparent attempts to

define a “national” school, it ultimately points to a *transnational* school of artists. Third, while the explicit narrative is one of painting, the implicit narrative transcends this single medium to unfold a more extensive repertoire of various media and techniques.

#### **Margot Renard: “Mutual Estrangement: Comics and Art History, Comics without Art History”**

The publication, a few months ago, of two studies on comics seen through the history of art has underlined with unprecedented accuracy how much the history of art has always ignored the vast and complex genre of comics, from its first forms in the 19th century, with the “literature in prints” of Rodolphe Töpffer, up to our present time. Why such a situation, when the comic strip is, by essence, made of drawings and semiotic signs, and as such belongs to the field considered by art historians? Several reasons can be put forward: the hybridity of the medium, the plurality of authors working on the same album (draftsman, scriptwriter, inker, letterer, etc.) which does not correspond to the traditional romantic construction of the “genius artist”, the vision of comics as belonging to “low art” rather than “high art”, etc. This paper proposes to question the reasons for this situation, and how approaching comics through art history would prove to be most fruitful. I will discuss the methodology I am applying in my current research project on French historical comics as a new way of considering history. For this project, I combine art history, my discipline of specialization, with approaches from literary studies (narratology, semiology), visual studies, heritage and memory studies and cultural history. This hybrid methodology allows me to apprehend the complexity of the language of comics and specifically of history comics, in their forms but also in the representations of the past, the political discourses they convey, and the intericonic relationship they build with other historical representations. Finally, I will reverse the questioning to examine the way the study of these comics can help us rethink the art historical canon.

#### **João G. Rizek: “Expanding the Universal: Mário Pedrosa and Indigenous Art”**

The imminent Brazilian art critic Mário Pedrosa (1900 - 1981) examined the majority of last century's most consequential artistic manifestation throughout his long career, from European modernisms to Japanese avant-garde. Still, his approach was constantly animated by the aspiration to verify how these different languages resonated in his home country. Instead of interpreting them solely by their geographical and historical pertinence, he asked how they could and should

be read in Brazil. However, this move also operated inversely, meaning that Pedrosa was always equally wondering how Brazilian manifestations could impact the international landscape. One of his last moves, in this regard, was the examination of the artistic and cultural manifestations of Indigenous populations as demonstrated, for instance, in his last text chiefly dedicated to art, “Discurso aos tupiniquins ou nambás,” from 1975. The text addresses the political situation in Brazil as if given a speech—a “Discurso”—to the country’s originary peoples. It also essays a broad panorama of the state of the world seen from a local perspective, that is, from the Brazilian perspective. By analyzing these manifestations, as well as through their political and sociological vision, Pedrosa attempted to see to what measure the Indigenous populations’ view could counteract what, for him, was the dominant view in the Northern Hemisphere. That is, how an Indigenous worldview, manifested through art, although not exclusively, could provide a different progress model, based not on any teleology but on different schemes. How, moreover, the prevalent economic production system could be questioned by way of the many forms of social organization essayed by Indigenous groups. How, in sum, the assimilation of Indigenous “artistic” manifestations into the general canon of art history could not only enlarge it but also disrupt it, laying the basis for a different idea of what art history could be. By stressing the profoundly ancient view of Indigenous groups as a way of forging a new societal pact, a renovated sense of progress, and even of art history, Mário Pedrosa was also paradoxically considering the modernity contained in these world-visions, collapsing a given sense of history. A utopian vision was at hand. Almost 50 years after the publication of “Discurso aos tupiniquins ou nambás,” one is left wondering what this utopia would have entailed, artistically and politically.

### **Daniel Spaulding: “Posteriority, or: Another Canon for Collage”**

In recent years, scholarship on collage has expanded beyond its well-known modernist instances in Cubism, Dada, and Surrealism to consider vernacular—and often queer—forms such as scrapbooks and silhouette portraits. In this paper, I consider one particularly influential interpretation of canonical modernist collage in the light of an emerging queer aesthetics of the medium. Specifically, I aim to retrospectively redress a missed connection that might have happened, in the 1990s, between the semiotic theorization of collage in writings by Rosalind Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois and deconstructive queer theory (most importantly in Lee Edelman’s concept of *Behindsight*, which he develops in his 1994 book *Homographesis*). My key object is a recent collage series by the contemporary artist Richard Hawkins that is subtitled *A Treatise on Posteriority*. These works combine reproductions of the backsides of classical statues with a

text that speculates, profanely, on moments of “alternate frontality” in Greek and Roman sculpture. Hawkins treats his male objects of desire, whether River Phoenix or Antinous, in much the same way: cut from their print matrix, and peeled away from their intended unidirectional orientation, they become lodestones of a queer impulse to seek sensuality behind every reified form. “Posteriority” is a name for a subterranean modernist tradition that is oriented not towards the Greenbergian teleology of “flatness” but rather to the exposure of the artwork’s rear, thus throwing a new light on the figure/ground reversals that have always been seen as central to the early collage works of Picasso and Braque. In Picasso, famously, pieces cut from the same sheet of newspaper sometimes reappear reversed in the same pictorial field, with distinct semantic roles. Some fifty years later, Clement Greenberg would observe that Cubist collage “pretty much turned traditional illusionist paintings inside out,” swapping clear spatial distinctions for a churning field of nonbinary low relief—a physicality that “had, in effect, been extruded from the picture plane.” In another essay, on the painter Kenneth Noland, Greenberg notes that the “confessed wovenness and porousness” of the artist’s stain paintings “suggest a penetrable, ambiguous plane, opening up the picture from the back so to speak.” For his part, Michael Fried (the homophobia of whose attack on “literalism” has recently come to light) tellingly paraphrased Greenberg by writing that, “in the work of Pollock and Newman, but even more in that of Louis, Noland, and Olitski, the new illusionism both subsumes and dissolves the picture surface—opening it, as Greenberg has said, from the rear.” These are moments in which the modernist deconstruction of figure-ground relations flashes a repressed queer vocabulary. I accordingly argue that the subversion collage wreaks upon the traditional coherence of the picture plane might have less to do with the fact that the elements of collage have *edges* than with the fact that they have *backsides*. This insight transforms the canons of both classical sculpture and classical modernist collage—queering the canon from within, so to speak.

### **Minna Valjakka: “Artistic Diaspora: Creating for (trans)national rights of existence”**

During the socio-political upheavals in East and Southeast Asia in the past decade, many artists have felt the need to emigrate while many still prefer to stay. Whereas both groups share the aim to continue artistic resilience to improve the societal circumstances in their country of origin, they often differ in their perceptions on the most feasible methods and strategies to do so. At the same time, the rising tensions between these groups may build towards competition for international attention and resources, leading to accusations of both parties for “selling out” or “collaborating” with authoritarian regimes or international

stakeholders. In the shadows of undemocratic developments and growing uncertainties, both groups often aim to enhance and utilize positive aspects of nationalism with(in) arts. However, they often rely on transnational networks of support.

Through selected case studies of Burmese and Hong Kong artists immigrated into Europe during the recent years, this paper will examine the changing importance of national art historical canon for the creative diaspora and their position in the margins of the global art discourse. To what extent migrant artists need to acknowledge their national identity to maintain the support from the international audience? Can transnational approach to art offer them better possibilities? Is forgetting injustices an option that would facilitate settling into the new art scene?

### **Tanja Zimmermann: "Naïve Art and the Emergence of New Art Canons in the 20th and 21st Centuries"**

The so-called Naïve art made by amateur artists is an important phenomenon for considering the artistic system from its margins. In times when the art canon is questioned, it attracts broad interest also by the professional stakeholders who exhibit it in leading museums. No matter how it is defined, it is often a catalyst in discursive processes concerning concepts of originality or authenticity. First discovered by avant-garde artists and collectors at the beginning of the 20th century, it again caught attention during the 1930s, this time by supporters of various conservative currents, mostly of figurative art. While the early avant-gardes appreciated these artists as their own forerunners or followers, tendencies that are more traditional perceived them as a moderate, more widely acceptable type of artistic production. In these contexts, Naïve art often replaced so-called "Primitive" art of non-European First Nations admired by the avant-gardes. During the period after the Second World War, Naïve art again moved into the centre of political-aesthetic debates, and even diplomacy. Now, it allowed negotiating between "free" or unbound abstract art in the West and socialist realism in communist countries. Naïve works of art became one of the most often-exhibited objects across the Iron curtain. After socialist Yugoslavia broke with the Soviet Union in 1948, it even replaced socialist realism. When Tito and other political leaders, in 1956, initiated the Non-Alignment Movement, it was even perceived as a bridge between art in the industrial and the undeveloped countries of what was then called the Third World. Ongoing research is devoted to the question if it was also officially encouraged in the Global South – in a period when primordial folk and religious art started to disappear.

During the last decade, Naïve art especially of First Nation and women artists attracted attention, for example last year (2022) at the documenta in Kassel and the Biennale in Venice. Both aimed at re-visioning the art canon, the former mostly by including global art, the latter with a feminist (however certainly more Euro-Atlantic) accent. Actually, Naïve art is also interesting in terms of material culture studies: From the very beginning, new materials and techniques (e.g. reversed glass painting, bricolage, and textile) were used in this field of non-professional aesthetic production. They allowed also self-thought women artists and ethnic minorities to attract public attention. On the other hand, Naïve art was and still is exploited as a means of assimilation, for example in the Soviet Union or in other authoritarian regimes.

In the paper, I will introduce into this hitherto unexplored field by presenting some examples of art criticism and historiography on Naïve art. My aim is to demonstrate that it was not just a local but also a global phenomenon. Whether discussed as popular, folk or outsider art, it contributed more than marginally to the formation of discourses and ideologies around what was accepted as "genuine" art. Thus, Naïve art will be presented as an important symptom for the formation and transformation of contemporary art canons.