

The present collection of *Studies on Art and Architecture* contains presentations given at the annual conference of the Estonian Art Historians' Association in 2007, as well as some complementary articles that were added at the suggestion of the author of this introduction, as they were related to the general subject of the collection. The question that forms the subject, 'Quo vadis, art history?', has for some time been seriously looked into in the international arena of our profession.

In Estonia we, too, obviously need to discuss the history of our profession: how art historical texts have been written here and why they have been written the way they have. The fact that this annual conference was dedicated to the centenary of Armin Tuulse was an additional bonus for us – who else but the first professor of Estonian origin in art history should be remembered at this turning point.

The articles of the first half of *Studies on Art and Architecture* examine the treatment of the history of Estonian art and architecture by outstanding historical figures of Estonian art history. Primarily, attention is focussed on Armin Tuulse, whose analyses of castles and churches are discussed by Kaur Altoa and Kersti Markus. We all know that Tuulse was a pioneering scholar of castles in Europe; his book *Burgen des Abendlandes* (1958) remained a basis for the general typology of castles for a long time. Meaningful organisation of art historical material was the methodological imperative of Tuulse's time. Kersti Markus writes that we know less about Tuulse as a scholar of churches, as the bulk of his work in this area was carried out in exile in Sweden. Among other activities, he was the chief editor of the prominent book series *Sveriges kyrkor*.

Jüri Hain discusses Villem Raam, this time not as an analyser of the architecture of the

Middle Ages, but of modern art. The article presents Raam, a contemporary of Tuulse, as an art historian of a completely different fate, who, after having returned from Siberia, carried, together with Helmi Üprus, the torch that had been lit by Helge Kjellin and Sten Karling, the first professors of art history at the University of Tartu in the 1920s and 1930s. Both art historians of Swedish origin were also interested in modern art and wrote art criticism.

In talking about art history writing in Estonia in the 20th century, we cannot omit Sten Karling. He was Tuulse's teacher; when Karling had to leave Estonia in 1940, he passed his professorship on to Tuulse. Karling's voluminous academic legacy needs to be re-read again. His works reflect the essence of the European art historical discourse of the 1930s, applied to the local historical material. Traces of Karling's method of interpretation are clearly visible in the treatments written in the Soviet period, where nothing methodologically new was added besides Marxism and Leninism. Our colleague Helen Bome is one of the first scholars to open a door to the art historical texts of the Soviet period.

The other aim of the conference 'Quo vadis...' was to initiate a discussion about ourselves right here and right now, about the present state of art history, and its role in our contemporary Estonian society. This, unfortunately, shorter chapter of *Studies* is devoted primarily to these problems – the panel discussion of the annual conference was recorded in writing by its participants. These briefly expressed ideas should, however, be carefully read because they invite us to be more reflective, to learn to examine not only the art that we are analysing but also ourselves as analysers, to realise that our ideas are linked to the more general cultural field

whose impact tends to be not so 'innocent' in most cases.

And finally we come to James Elkins, one of the reformers of modern art history, whose list of works contains, among others, a book with the eloquent title *Our Beautiful, Dry, and Distant Texts: Art History as Writing* (1997). In his article, translated for *Studies* with professor Elkins' kind permission, he asks, 'Is art history global?' and gives an answer full of hope. He hopes that art historians working in different cultures around the world will more and more often ask similar questions about the materials they are studying.

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