



## 2021 ESNA CONFERENCE

*Thinking in the Box: The Benefits of Artistic Tradition in the Nineteenth Century*

ESNA | RKD

Online via Zoom | 26-27-28 May 2021

# ESNA

european society for nineteenth-century art



## *Thinking in the Box:*

### *The Benefits of Artistic Tradition in the Nineteenth Century*

**Online via Zoom, 26-27-28 May 2021**

**Organized by ESNA (European Society for Nineteenth-Century Art), RKD –  
Netherlands Institute for Art History, The Hague**

Tradition is art history's eternal Other: it is that which must be overcome, resisted, thrown off or, if a compromise must be made, creatively appropriated. The history of the art of the nineteenth century, that 'great' age of innovation, progress and revolution, is more than any other rooted in anti-traditionalist sentiment, steeped in a rhetoric that privileges innovation and bound to narrative structures geared against artistic tradition. Modernist and other teleological histories of nineteenth-century art have always emphasised change and novelty. But even revisionist accounts of the art of the nineteenth century leave scarcely any room to consider tradition in its own right. These have generally either sung the aesthetic praises of traditional art without much further reflection, or have discussed academic art as innovative in *another* way, either within a traditional framework or in the sense that the art under consideration points forward to developments other than those associated with formal modernism.

This rejection of artistic tradition may be due to its use in fascist and totalitarian ideologies, but is also the result of a structuralist approach within the discipline of art history that continuously opposes new and old (with 'old' always being the marked term). Ironically, this structural divide is in part a product of the nineteenth century itself: it stems from the rising historical (and art-historical) consciousness of the time and its clash with a strong belief in change and progress. This all-too-simple opposition between what *was* and what *will be* still shapes our understanding of the artistic act. True art, it seems, must be the creation of something out of nothing—a belief stemming from the early-nineteenth-century romantic philosophy of art and, later, a major tenet of modernist criticism. The result has been that art historians are rarely able to think around the categories of tradition and innovation and nearly always address tradition solely as a problem. Seldom is the richness of artistic tradition itself explored.

The question remains whether this rejection of artistic tradition does justice to what art really is, or, better, what it was understood to be in the nineteenth century. For Charles Baudelaire, the answer would have been in the negative. In his Salon of 1859, he observed that 'poetry and progress are like two ambitious men who hate one another with an instinctive hatred'. This conference considers artistic tradition not as

the nemesis of creation but in its own right. It aims to examine the potential artistic, commercial and even political benefits of thinking *in the box* – of continuing artistic tradition(s), working within them or reverting to them during the (long) nineteenth century. What could tradition yield for artists and the way they understood their art that innovation could not? What could it do for audiences and what they might have sought in artworks? What could it achieve for patrons, with their various social, political and aesthetic agendas?

#### Organising committee

Jan Dirk Baetens (Radboud University Nijmegen), Mayken Jonkman (RKD – Netherlands Institute for Art History, The Hague) and Myrthe Krom (Teylers Museum, Haarlem).

#### Scientific committee

Maite van Dijk (Museum More, Gorssel), Rachel Esner (University of Amsterdam), Liz Prettejohn (University of York), Jenny Reynaerts (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), Marjan Sterckx (Ghent University), Chris Stolwijk (RKD – Netherlands Institute for Art History, The Hague, and University of Utrecht).

ESNA  
THINKING IN THE BOX  
Conference Programme 2021



**Wednesday 26 May 2021**

14:00 Welcome by Chris Stolwijk (RKD-Netherlandish Institute for Art History)

14:15 Introduction by Jan Dirk Baetens (Radboud University Nijmegen | ESNA)

14:30 **Keynote lecture**

Elizabeth Prettejohn (University of York): *"Thronging it like echoes": Rossetti, Leonardo, and the Western Tradition*

15:15 **Break**

15:30 **I. Old Masters, Modern Painters**

Chairs: Mayken Jonkman (RKD | ESNA) and Jan Dirk Baetens (Radboud University Nijmegen | ESNA)

- *A private perspective on the past: how the model of Netherlandish 17th-century genre painting helped shaping historical imagination in early 19th century art* by Eveline Deneer (University of Utrecht)
- *Beyond the Tropes of Modernity: The Revival of Michelangelo in Late Nineteenth-Century Art* by Sara Vitacca (Université Paris 1 Panthéon – Sorbonne)

16:30 **End day 1**

**Thursday 27 May 2021**

14:00 **II: Art Historical Narratives and the Formation of the Canon**

Chairs: Rachel Esner (University of Amsterdam | ESNA) and Maite van Dijk (Museum More, Gorssel | ESNA)

- *Rethinking Tradition: Drawing as a Preparatory Tool, from David to Delacroix* by Tamar Mayer (Tel-Aviv University)
- *Between a Rock and a Hard Place: The use of tradition in Dutch criticism 1800-1850* by Jenny Reynaerts (Rijksmuseum Amsterdam):
- *William Hood Stewart's Album of Cartes de Visite and the Rise of Spanish Painting* by Daniel Ralston (Columbia University)

15:15 **Break**

15:30 **III: Spirituality and Morality**

Chairs: Jenny Reynaerts (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam | ESNA) and Myrthe Krom (Teylers Museum, Haarlem | ESNA)

- *On the Verge of a Catastrophe: The Crisis of European Civilisation and the Great Artistic Tradition: Athanasius Raczyński's (1788-1874) Dream about the Ethical Power of Paintings* by Michal Mencfel (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań)
- *Belgian Symbolism and the Italian Trecento and Quattrocento: The Use of the Category of Primitives* by Laura Fanti (Université Libre de Bruxelles)
- *Ary Scheffer and the Dutch Réveil: The Success of Tradition in Renewing Religious Art* by Marieke Maathuis (independent):

16:45 **Break**

17:00 **Keynote lecture**

Cordula Grewe (Indiana University): *Modernism's Peripheries*

17:45 **End day 2**

**Friday 28 May 2021**

14:00 **IV: (Un)traditional Educations**

Chairs: Jan Dirk Baetens (Radboud University Nijmegen | ESNA) and Mayken Jonkman (RKD | ESNA)

- *Queering Tradition from Within: The Curious Case of Kristian Zahrtmann, Tutor to Two Hundred Modernists* by Rasmus Kjærboe (National Gallery of Denmark)
- *Towards professionalism: Spanish traineeship in academic Rome (1830-1873)* by Elisabetta Maistri (Durham University)

15:15 **Break**

15:30 **V: Why Sculpture is not Boring**

Chairs: Marjan Sterckx (Ghent University | ESNA) and Rachel Esner (University of Amsterdam | ESNA)

- *Neo-Florentine Sculpture in Late Nineteenth-Century France: Perspectives from the Gazette des Beaux-Arts (1861-1881)* by Federica Vermot (Université de Lausanne)
- *"Towards a New Classical Order": Aristide Maillol, Maurice Denis and Greco-Latin Cultural 'Nostalgia' in France* by Rachel Coombes (St. John's College, University of Oxford)
- *Emanuel Fremiet: Terribly Repulsive but Wonderfully Vigorous* by Dick van Broekhuizen (Museum Beelden aan Zee)

16:30 **Concluding remarks** (Mayken Jonkman, RKD | ESNA)

16:45 **End day 3**

## ABSTRACTS



### **Keynote lecture**

#### **"Thronging it like echoes": Rossetti, Leonardo, and the Western Tradition**

Elizabeth Prettejohn | University of York

ABSTRACT | At the very beginning of his career, around 1850, Dante Gabriel Rossetti wrote a sequence of sonnets about paintings by the Old Masters, including a homage to the great altarpiece by Leonardo da Vinci familiarly known as *The Virgin of the Rocks*. Historians of English literature have had little difficulty in interpreting these poems as strikingly innovative, and even as influential precursors to modernist poetry. And yet the parallel project in the visual arts – the art of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, their associates and followers – has had a much more equivocal reputation in criticism. From Charles Dickens's attack of 1850 on the 'retrogressive principle' in Pre-Raphaelite art to the reviews of Tate's Burne-Jones exhibition in 2018, critics have struggled to comprehend how artists could turn their backs on nineteenth-century modernity to embrace, instead, the art of the Old Masters.

In this paper I ask why it has proved so difficult to admire, or even to understand, the undisguised reverence for the European tradition of painting in the art of Rossetti and his close associates. I shall take as my principal example Rossetti's previously unexplored relationship with 'that stunner' – Leonardo da Vinci.

BIO | Elizabeth Prettejohn is Professor of History of Art and Head of Department, History of Art, at the University of York (UK). A presiding concern, throughout her career, has been the perceived tension between tradition and modernity in nineteenth-century art. Her books include *The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites* (2000), *Beauty and Art 1750-2000* (2005), *Art for Art's Sake: Aestheticism in Victorian Painting* (2007), *The Modernity of Ancient Sculpture* (2012), and *Modern Painters, Old Masters: The Art of Imitation from the Pre-Raphaelites to the First World War* (2017). She has co-curated exhibitions on Lawrence Alma-Tadema, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and John William Waterhouse.

**Session 1. Old Masters, Modern Painters** (Chairs: Mayken Jonkman (RKD | ESNA) and Jan Dirk Baetens (Radboud University Nijmegen | ESNA))

**A private perspective on the past: how the model of Netherlandish 17th-century genre painting helped shaping historical imagination in early 19th century art**

Eveline Deneer | Utrecht University

ABSTRACT | The first decades of the nineteenth century witness the emergence of a new type of imagery in European painting: that of a ‘private’, intimate view on the past and on historical societies and individuals. Until then, representations of the past largely followed traditional historiography’s focus on the important “names and dates” related to public state affairs and dynastic history. This change of perspective gave way to new themes and motifs which had no clearly defined position within the academic hierarchy of the genres, thus presenting artists with the challenge to formulate an appropriate artistic language to visualise them.

In their search for solutions to this problem, many painters, rather than radically breaking with existing aesthetic paradigms, actually turned to models from the past. The models offered by the tradition of Netherlandish 17th-century genre painting hereby strike as particularly important and recurrent : painters from all over Europe found in the intimate imagery of older genre painting of the Northern Schools a key reference in their pictorial interpretation of new perspectives on the past.

The present paper proposes to explore this phenomenon and to reconsider its significance in the light of current debates within the art historical discipline. For, as this example shows us, the very notion of artistic tradition could actually help us to get a better understanding of certain strategic solutions developed by artists in the face of the challenges of their own time. Also, the idea of a Europe-wide common reference to a specific artistic tradition forces us to reconsider some of the national – or even nationalistic – outlines that still resonate in the methodological foundations of our discipline.

BIO | Eveline Deneer is Lecturer in Art History at Utrecht University (the Netherlands), and research assistant at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. She received her PhD in 2019 at Université Paris 1-Panthéon-Sorbonne in Paris and the Technische Universität in Berlin, for a thesis on the transnational dimensions of historical genre painting in France, Germany and Italy in the early 19th century. Before that, she worked as assistant at the Fondation Custodia in Paris and at the Galerie Nicolaas Teeuwisse in Berlin. She held research fellowships at the Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte in Paris and the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds, and participated as curatorial assistant in the preparation of the exhibition *L’Invention du passé. Histoires de cœur et d’épée en Europe 1802-1850*, curated by Stephen Bann and Stéphane Paccoud at the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Lyon in 2014. Much of her work focusses on (interdisciplinary) cultural and artistic transfers in relation to the representation of the past and the emergence of national consciousness.

## Beyond the Tropes of Modernity: The Revival of Michelangelo in Late Nineteenth-Century Art

Sara Vitacca | Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne

ABSTRACT | When writing about Michelangelo's reception in contemporary art, Paul Joannides sums it up as follows : "Michelangelo was not to be a widespread influence in the nineteenth and twentieth century art [...] but the most ambitious works of Théodore Géricault, Eugène Delacroix, Jean-François Millet, Auguste Rodin, Pablo Picasso and even Henri Matisse could not have been achieved without his example ." If one can't deny the importance of Michelangelo to these artists, Joannides' words also reveal how the artist's reception has been used to build a solid genealogy for modern art history, by focusing mainly on the relationship between the Renaissance master and leading figures of original, independent and modern art, such as Delacroix, Carpeaux, or Rodin.

The problem of michelangelism is, however, more complex. Painters such as the néo-traditionnistes Émile Bernard, Armand Point, Louis Anquetin, or, in Italy, Adolfo de Carolis and Aristide Sartorio, deliberately turned their back to modernity, choosing Michelangelo as the role model of a creation rooted in the noble tradition of Renaissance masters. The aim of this paper, then, is to shed a new light upon these forgotten followers of Michelangelo from the late nineteenth century, in order to refine the complex history of the artist's reception beyond the modernist trope.

BIO | Sara Vitacca received a PhD from Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne in 2018, with a dissertation on the reception of Michelangelo in late Nineteenth-Century art, soon to be published by *Les Presses du réel*. She specializes on the reception of the Renaissance in contemporary art, on the construction of artistic myths and on historiography of art. In 2019-2020, she held a postdoctoral fellowship at the French Academy in Rome - Villa Medici, where she studied the male nude in public and political art in Italy at the beginning of the 20th Century. She taught contemporary art history at the Ecole Normale Supérieure de Lyon, the Université Catholique d'Angers, the Institut National du Patrimoine and she is currently lecturer at the Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. She curated the exhibition *Bacchanales Modernes! Le nu, l'ivresse et la danse dans l'art français du XIXe siècle*, presented at the musée des Beaux-Arts in Bordeaux and at the Palais Fesch in Ajaccio in 2016. She also edited the proceedings of the international conference that opened the exhibition.



**Session 2: Art Historical Narratives and the Formation of the Canon** (Chairs: Rachel Esner (University of Amsterdam | ESNA) and Maite van Dijk (Museum More, Gorssel | ESNA))

**Rethinking Tradition: Drawing as a Preparatory Tool, from David to Delacroix**

Tamar Mayer | Tel-Aviv University

ABSTRACT | Neoclassicism celebrated the return to the past: “the only way for us to become great (...) is to imitate the ancients” (Johann Joachim Winckelmann), while ensuing Romanticism emphasized newness and originality. Overcoming the burden of tradition was, according to art historian Norman Bryson, the organizing principle of artistic advancement in this period, achieved by turning tradition into desire. Yet historians like Rosen and Zerner, who wrote about Romanticism and its aftermath, proposed a different narrative: Realism is a normal development of Romanticism, both a reaction against it and a direct outgrowth of it.

This talk also traces a varied evolution of art in the first half of the 19th century, focusing on preparatory drawings rather than only on finished paintings. It highlights the ways that artists both built upon and transformed their predecessors’ approaches to drawing. Beginning with David’s highly diverse and intricate body of drawings, I uncover new functions of his graphic process that have remained unknown until now. If David is thought to have formed an additive, systematic preparatory process to intensify the utility of drawing, I show how, at the heart of his neoclassicism, drawing already ‘refuses’ to fully submit itself to painting. Instead of portraying artists, in this period, as either rejecting or embracing tradition, my project unravels the inherent tensions and complexities within that which defines tradition in the first place. This talk undermines the conception of artistic innovation that results from antagonistic relations between succeeding movements. Instead, it stresses the shared anxieties, pressures and unforeseen consequences of drawings—from David to Delacroix. Thus, the ‘box’ these artists ‘think’ within becomes a maze for grappling with the limits of a medium, telling a different story of 19th century French art.

BIO | Tamar Mayer is an art historian, an assistant professor at Tel-Aviv University, the head curator of the Genia Schreiber Art Gallery and director of the university’s curatorial studies program. Tamar is a specialist of 19th century French art. Her dissertation, from the department of Art History and the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago (2017) is on the drawings of Jacques-Louis David. Before becoming an academic, Tamar studied in the New-York Studio School for Drawing, Painting, and Sculpture, and has extensive training as a studio artist. In 2017-2018 Tamar was a visiting post-doctoral fellow at Harvard University’s department of History of Art and Architecture, pursuing a project on artists’ sketchbooks. Tamar is the recipient of a Chester-Dale Fellowship in the Department of Drawings and Prints at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (2015-2016). Formerly, she won the Rhoades

Foundation's Curatorial Internship in the Department of Prints and Drawings at the Art Institute of Chicago (2013-14). Her essays have been published in the *Journal of Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* (2017) and in *Master Drawings* (2018).

### **Between a Rock and a Hard Place: The use of tradition in Dutch criticism 1800-1850**

Jenny Reynaerts | Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

**ABSTRACT** | Together with the organisation of commercial art exhibitions from 1808, a new phenomenon entered the Dutch art world: the art critic. He (because they were all male) had to fend for his position in a polite art climate which was at first not keen on judgements and rivalry. Budding critics therefore used traditional academic hierarchy and art history to underline their knowledgeable status, even though this actually offered no pertinent representation of the art market at all.

Their second ploy was art history, especially the reminiscence of the so-called Dutch Golden Age of painting. Here, the art critic joined hands with the art historian, also a nascent discipline. Together they framed 19th century painting as a heritage of 17th century art. It has been assumed in art historical literature that these valuations represented the taste of the time, and thus of the artists themselves as well. However, looking from the artist's point of view, this position cannot be maintained. In fact, in looking for appreciation and fame, Dutch painters of the period were caught between the critic's wish to keep to the articulated normative system and the Dutch art historical canon. Tradition, it seems, served many causes, but not necessarily always that of the artist.

**BIO** | Dr. Jenny Reynaerts is Senior Curator Paintings at the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam and one of ESNA's founding members. In 2019 she published *Mirror of reality. 19th Century Painting in the Netherlands* (Mercatorfonds/Rijksmuseum/Yale UP), the first overview of the subject in almost 75 years. The book resulted in two accompanying exhibitions: *Mirror of the Soul. Toorop to Mondrian* (Singer Museum, Laren 2020) and *Wanderlust. Dutch artists abroad 1800-1900* (Dordrechts Museum 2022).

At the Rijksmuseum Reynaerts is in charge of the 19th century galleries and of the programme which focuses on a better representation of female history. She has published widely on 19<sup>th</sup> century Dutch painting. Recent exhibitions and publications include *Matthijs Maris* (Rijksmuseum 2016), *Breitner: Girl in Kimono* (Rijksmuseum 2015), 'Tree Lovers. Development and Meaning of the Sous-Bois Genre', in *Van Gogh. Into the Undergrowth* (Cincinnati Art Museum 2016), 'Close encounters with the earth' in *Vincent van Gogh: The Man and the Earth* (Milan 2014), 'On the Edge. Van Gogh's Early Ideas on City and Countryside' in *Van Gogh. Timeless Country - Modern City* (Milan 2010). In 2011-2012 she curated *Rembrandt and Degas. Two Young Artists* (Rijksmuseum, Clark Art Institute and The Metropolitan Museum of Art).

## Cardsharp: William Hood Stewart's Album of Cartes de Visite and the Rise of Spanish Painting

Daniel Ralston | Columbia University

**ABSTRACT** | Soon after moving to Paris from Philadelphia in 1865, William Hood Stewart became an ardent patron and canny promoter of a group of Spanish expatriate artists. The collection he amassed, rich in the art of the famed painter Mariano Fortuny y Marsal and his circle, was considered among the finest private galleries in the French capital by the mid-1870s, a destination for artists and amateurs, especially Americans. Although Stewart did not collect the masters of the Spanish baroque, he styled himself as a rigorous student of the Spanish tradition and, in particular, as a connoisseur of Velázquez. In this paper, I contend that Stewart's staunch advocacy of the Spanish school and Fortuny, an artist whom he positioned as Velázquez's modern successor, played an outsize and hitherto unacknowledged role in creating the vogue for Spanish painting that took hold of the United States in the closing decades of the nineteenth century.

I focus my argument on an album of artfully arranged cartes de visite, illustrated letters, and drawings in which Stewart documented his interactions with the artistic community and his warm relationships with the Spanish painters he most admired. I address the unexpected connections and inverted hierarchies inscribed in the design of this remarkable album to claim that Stewart and his collection were instrumental in shaping later nineteenth-century understandings of the Spanish tradition in both France and the United States.

**BIO** | Daniel Ralston, a doctoral candidate at Columbia University, specializes in the art of nineteenth-century Spain. His dissertation considers a group of prominent Spanish painters at work in Paris and Rome in the 1860s and 1870s, analyzing how they interacted with and subtly subverted the art and expectations of their French contemporaries, especially Édouard Manet. He has published in several catalogues and curated a focused exhibition at the Meadows Museum, *Sorolla in the Studio*, that explored the working methods of Joaquín Sorolla. Daniel has also contributed to collection research on later nineteenth-century Spanish paintings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Hispanic Society of America. He received his BA in art history and Spanish from the University of British Columbia. His work has been supported by, among others, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Doctoral Fellowship (2017–2018), the Meadows Curatorial Fellowship (2018–2019), and a research grant from the Casa de Velázquez (2021). This summer, he will take up the Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica Curatorial Fellowship in Spanish Paintings at the National Gallery in London.

**Session 3: Spirituality and Morality** (chairs: Jenny Reynaerts (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam) and Myrthe Krom (Teylers Museum, Haarlem))

**On the Verge of a Catastrophe: the Crisis of European Civilization and the Great Artistic Tradition. Athanasius Raczyński's (1788-1874) Dream about the Ethical Power of Paintings**

Michał Mencfel | Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

ABSTRACT | Shaken by the processes of democratisation and liberalisation, Europe is on the verge of a civilizational catastrophe – this idea was expressed numerous times in the diary, private correspondence and diplomatic notes of Athanasius Raczyński (1788-1874), a Polish and Prussian aristocrat and diplomat, who was also an eminent art connoisseur and collector. This belief was among of the most important ones shaping his manifold endeavours aimed first and foremost at saving the traditional social, political and ethical system with every possible effort.

In view of this, art played a significant role in Raczyński's vision. Seeing beauty as a source of virtue, he believed that art had great moral potential. It could be realised, however, only when art adhered to specific superhistorical rules, which he collectively called the style.

Raczyński claimed that in the nineteenth century art stood on the threshold of its next period of greatness, as it had happened twice in the course of history: in Greek antiquity and the Italian Renaissance. The change was expected to happen through the work of German artists: the Nazarenes and their successors. Their paintings were to reveal the real beauty, truth and style, guaranteed by religious inspirations and conscious references to the great artistic tradition. Raczyński soon became one of the main apologists of the Nazarenes and post-Nazarenes, highlighting the traditional values present in their work.

The belief that the development of German art was approaching its climax became the main driving force behind Raczyński's artistic activity since the 1830s. In his endeavours as a writer, collector and art patron he wanted to work for what he saw as a wonderful elevation of German art and therefore art in general. His monumental book *Histoire de l'art moderne en Allemagne / Geschichte der neueren deutschen Kunst* (1836-1841), written in an enthusiastic tone, "had no other purpose than to draw foreigners' attention to German artists". In Raczyński's public gallery in Berlin, the focus shifted gradually but surely from old masters to modern German painting, with special patronage bestowed upon Raczyński's favourite German artists, such as Wilhelm Kaulbach and Peter Cornelius. Raczyński wanted to play a part, even if a modest one, in an artistic and cultural process, which in his view had a great historical significance. After all, what was at stake was something more than just the revival of great art: the renaissance of art was a step on the road to the revival of civilisation.

The aim of the paper is to analyse various activities of Athanasius Raczyński in the field of art (as a writer, collector and art patron) within the broad context of his

political beliefs. The notion of tradition played a pivotal role both in his political theory and reflections on art.

BIO | Michał Mencfel is a Professor in Art History in the Department of Art Studies at Adam Mickiewicz University Poznan, Poland. His research interests include the history of collections and art and art theory of the 16th-19th century. His current research project explores the antiquarian practices and the poetics of memorabilia in Europe around 1800. His writings have appeared in a multitude of journals and collective works. His recent book is the biography of Athanasius Raczyński, published by Adam Mickiewicz University Press in 2016 (reissued 2017 and 2018), which received several awards in Poland. An English edition of the book is being prepared and will be published in 2021 by Brill. Michał Mencfel is also a co-editor of Raczyński's extensive Diary. He was a fellow at the Studienkolleg zu Berlin; the recipient of several scholarships, including the Dr. Gunther Findel-Stiftung scholarship at the Herzog-August-Bibliothek Wolfenbützel, the Forschungsstipendium der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, scholarships from the De Brzezie Lanckoroński Foundation in London and Rome; and visiting professor at Geisteswissenschaftliches Zentrum Geschichte und Kultur Ostmitteleuropas at Universität Leipzig.

### **Belgian Symbolism and the Italian Trecento and Quattrocento: The Use of the Category of Primitives**

Laura Fanti | Université Libre de Bruxelles

ABSTRACTS | Recent studies on Symbolist movement offer new perspectives on its historical context, aiming to place symbolist works in a concrete background. These studies, however, in their effort to offer a historical stage to symbolist production, are often lacking the real connections between artists and their artistic education or their visual sources. This is the case for a large number of Belgian artists who, when compared to their French colleagues, made an intense, sometimes hidden, use of iconographic sources.

Although the study of Flemish tradition has been recognized, Italian sources have been less well investigated: they have always been neglected in nationalistic readings of the past and of tradition, both by critics and intellectuals of the time and by contemporary historiography. This is particularly true for the so-called primitive Italian artists, a category that includes both late medieval and Quattrocento artists, such as Piero della Francesca, Botticelli or Mantegna. Many symbolists relied on these artists, but their reasons are not always clear. Did they use the Italian tradition to avoid Realistic and Naturalistic Painting (and Impressionism)? Did they intend to obtain a social and institutional acknowledgement? Briefly, were they (Charles Doudelet, Jean Delville, and Constant Montald, for instance) interested in aesthetic issues or was the use of Italian primitives a kind of political strategy for them?

I would like in this paper to offer some useful insights and reflections for a new paradigm in which it might be possible to avoid the chronological/evolutionistic

reading of art history, and in which the period eye of the artist would be staged together with a critical re-evaluation of the artistic past. To do so, I offer a double reinterpretation of symbolist art and the historiography of Italian Trecento and Quattrocento in the late 19th century.

BIO | Laura Fanti is an art historian and art critic living in Brussels. She is finalizing her doctoral research about the reception of Italian Art in Belgian Idealistic-Symbolism, at ULB. She has been teaching assistant of Modern Art History at Sapienza in Rome for five years and she has collaborated with several museums and art galleries in Italy, Belgium and France. Her main areas of research are 19th and 20th century Art History, Symbolism, Reception studies, cultural transfers between Belgium and Italy, between Belgium and France, History of Exhibitions, Artists' writings. Minor areas: 17th-century Flemish Art, Contamination between Art and Philosophy, Museology, Disgusting studies, Phenomenological studies. She is a member of the Research Centre "Mondes Modernes et Contemporains" at the Université libre de Bruxelles and Member of Europeana. She has written books and articles on Ferdinand Hodler, James Ensor, Henry de Groux, Paul Gauguin, Georges Le Brun, but also on Peter Paul Rubens and Jacques-Louis David. Her new book on Belgian and Netherlandish etchings in Italy at the beginning of the 20th century will be published in June 2021.

### **Ary Scheffer and the Dutch Réveil: The Success of Tradition in Renewing Religious Art**

Marieke Maathuis | Independent

ABSTRACT | The Dutch-French painter Ary Scheffer (1795-1858) was one of the most important painters of religious subjects of the nineteenth century. In an age that witnessed several religious revival movements, Scheffer renewed religious painting and created an aesthetic of strongly devotional images, in which traditional biblical narrative is consciously evoked, but rendered with minimum means. In order to create these highly emotional paintings, Scheffer focused on the psychological state of the protagonists, while eliminating narrative detail. In the Netherlands these paintings resonated specifically with adherents of the so-called Dutch Réveil: a Protestant revival movement that focused on piety and a personal experience of faith. An analysis of the paintings owned by adherents of the Dutch Réveil shows that in order to renew religious art and create this new aesthetic, Scheffer built on traditional forms of religious painting and incorporated strategies of old masters.

BIO | Marieke Maathuis studied Art History at Utrecht University and received her master's degree in Curating Art and Cultures from the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and the University of Amsterdam. She graduated cum laude on the topic of religious painting in the Netherlands in the nineteenth century.

## **Keynote lecture:**

### **Modernism's Peripheries**

Cordula Grewe | Indiana University

ABSTRACT | Calls to globalize 19th-century art history tend to articulate notions of alterity, heterochronia and the need for greater inclusivity against the foil of a hegemonic *European modernism*. Yet such projects all too often treat that modernism as a monolithic and unified phenomenon. How tenable is this notion (and its unchallenged dominance) once we shed our French-avantgarde blinders, rethink the Academy not just as an obstacle to, but a forum of innovation, and apply the insights and lessons of global art history to the study of European art itself? Hardly tenable at all. For one, the power and allure of Paris as an epicenter of 19th-century culture has tended, with the exception of a thriving exploration of the British Empire, to cast great swathes of European artistic activity into neglect. At the same time, where global art history readily recognizes the power of religion, 19th-century European art history has been resistant to the revisionist pressures from other fields in the humanities to acknowledge the persistence of religion in Western culture, thus instinctively affirming an Enlightenment narrative in which western modernity is exhaustively defined by the struggle and eventual triumph of secularism over religion and superstition. Inspired by Dipesh Chakrabarty's dictum to provincialize Europe, this paper explores what happens if we "glocalize" its 19th-century art, understand European peripheries and borderlands through the lens of a globalized art history, and develop an inclusive system of "multiple modernities" and "heterochronous chronologies," which—in turn—might allow us to theorize several layers of geographical, political, aesthetic, and spiritual distance and distancing.

BIO | Dr. Cordula Grewe specializes in 18th- and 19th-century European art, with emphasis on visual piety, word-image relationships, and aesthetics. Her books include *Painting the Sacred in the Age of Romanticism* (Ashgate, 2009), *The Nazarenes: Romantic Avant-garde and the Art of the Concept* (Penn State UP, 2015), *Wilhelm Schadow (1788-1862): Werkverzeichnis der Gemälde mit den dazugehörigen Zeichnungen und Druckgraphiken* (Imhof Verlag, 2017), and *The Arabesque from Kant to Comics* (Routledge, July 2021). She has edited special issues on skyscraper architecture (2005) and German visual culture 1848-1919 (2007), an essay collection on museums of mankind (*Die Schau des Fremden*, 2006) and, in collaboration with John Ittmann, an award-winning catalogue on German Romantic Prints (Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2017). Her new projects now push into the 20th and 21st centuries pursuing *modern theo-aesthetics* (Ingres to the Leipzig School), the *body as medium* (Emma Hamilton to Nicki Minaj) and *art in the Third Reich and its legacy* ("*Nazi Cultures of Display: A Digital Reconstruction of the Great German Art Exhibition and the Degenerate Art Show*"). Grewe has received numerous fellowships, among them the Institute for Advanced Study, Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, Getty Research Institute and the Institute for Digital Art & Humanities (IU Bloomington).

**Session 4: (Un)traditional Educations** (chairs: Jan Dirk Baetens (Radboud University Nijmegen | ESNA) and Mayken Jonkman RKD | ESNA)

**Queering Tradition from Within: The Curious Case of Kristian Zahrtmann,  
Tutor to Two Hundred Modernists**

Rasmus Kjærboe | The Hirschsprung Collection

**ABSTRACT** | The Danish painter Kristian Zahrtmann (1846-1917) was a legend in his time. He tutored hundreds of Scandinavian modernists, he co-founded the first Danish avantgarde secession “Den Frie” (1891), and he was a major celebrity in the popular press. But Zahrtmann was also a staunch traditionalist in favour of the old masters and the embattled discipline of history painting.

Yet Zahrtmann sought to renew tradition from within. He painted royals from the past, literary figures and Bible personages in crass colour contrasts and intensely psychological ensembles. In his later years, Zahrtmann would openly queer his subjects by adding sexual tension and gender atypical themes to otherwise ‘straight’ stories. This talk explores a major Scandinavian painter who walked a fine line between tradition and renewal, and was richly rewarded by museums, collectors and the public in return, only to have his most challenging work forgotten and repressed after his death. A major focal point will be Zahrtmann’s queering of tradition from within – both in his art and his extended performative praxis of life and teaching – and how tradition can function as the *Aegis* for radical subversion. Thus, the talk situates *queering* and *tradition* as two functions on a spectrum: One cannot come into being without the other, and one cannot avoid eventually evoking the other.

The talk extends on major international research into Zahrtmann and the quest to rediscover forgotten queer art and artists from the past along with the exhibition *Kristian Zahrtmann: Queer, Art and Passion* touring Denmark in 2019–20.

**BIO** | Rasmus Kjærboe (\* 1979) holds a PhD from Aarhus University (2016) on *Collecting the Modern: Ordrupgaard and the Collection Museums of Modernist Art*. He is the Vice President of the Danish Association of Art Historians and the organizer of several international seminars and conferences, most recently *Stay Real* (2019) on House Museums, authenticity and conservation, and has been keynote and presented papers at a number of conferences. Kjærboe has published on Danish modernism, museum history and the analysis of art and has taught at universities in Denmark. Since 2020, he has been a curator at The Hirschsprung Collection.



## Towards professionalism: Spanish traineeship in academic Rome (1830-1873)

Elisabetta Maistri | Durham University

**ABSTRACT** | In 19th-century Spain, history paintings reached their apex as the administrative genre that contributed to the creation of the country's national visual imaginary in a century when Spain was "invented" and "discovered" by other European nations. Chronologically framed between 1830 when the Spanish traineeship in Rome was restored and 1873 when the Academia Española in the city was inaugurated, this paper presents Rome as the cosmopolitan centre providing Spanish pensionaries with the theoretical, theoretical, and practical skills and visual references they incorporated into the elaboration of a historical composition integral to their training. As per a long-standing tradition Rome was seen as the key to the problem in Spain: the place where emerging talents would have learnt the latest theories and practices to import to Spain to restore the fine arts from decadence. Indeed, from the Eternal City pensionados elaborated a national iconography which contributed to writing the history of the genre in Spain, but Spain did not exhaust all their inspirational sources. This presentation investigates the Roman training in the light of a pan-European circulation of themes and motifs, which is generally associated to the Roman colony of Spanish artists attending the study of Mariano Fortuny y Marsal and his commercial paintings.

**BIO** | Elisabetta is a doctoral candidate in Art history at the Zurbarán Centre for Spanish and Latin American Art at Durham University. She graduated from the Università degli Studi di Padova (BA, 2012) and from the Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia (MA, 2015, 2017). She also holds a *PgDip* in exhibition/collection management with a focus on artworks loans from IED Venezia (2016). Elisabetta's research investigates the presence of Spanish young artists studying in pre-unification Rome (c. 1830 – 1874), thanks to the support of an AHRC Northern Bridge Consortium scholarship. At the School of modern languages and cultures, she co-convenes the reading group organised by the student-led Decolonising MLAC research group. For this academic year she has been co-organising the first postgraduate symposium of the Zurbarán Centre. Elisabetta's main research lines entail: history of European art collecting and art auctions, artistic exchanges between the Iberian and the Italian peninsulas between the 17th and the 19th century; postcolonial narratives in museum management and European exhibiting practices.

**Session 5: Why Sculpture is not Boring** (chairs: Marjan Sterckx (Ghent University | ESNA) and Rachel Esner (University of Amsterdam | ESNA))

**Neo-Florentine Sculpture in Late Nineteenth-Century France: Perspectives from the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* (1861-1881)**

Federica Vermot | Université de Lausanne

ABSTRACT | The aim of this conference is to show how French sculpture briefly resumed the impasse in which it was stuck in the middle of the nineteenth century thanks to the reliance on fifteenth-century Florentine sculpture. Analyzing this phenomenon through the commentaries written by the critics of the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, which was the first journal to assess and promote neo-florentine sculptors in the 1860s and 70s, will allow to better grasp its evolution and failure, as well as the various issues that were at stake, such as originality and naturalism in sculpture. These sculptors' thrilling success paradoxically came from the fact that they escaped the mold of the French academic tradition by diving into that of another tradition, that was both chronologically and geographically distant. This revival provided French art with a new generation of successful sculptors and works that eventually lead to the unprecedented – and short-lived – triumph of sculpture at the *Exposition Universelle* of 1878.

BIO | Federica Vermot is a PhD candidate and lecturer in history of contemporary art at the University of Lausanne, where she is currently writing a thesis on the mechanical reproduction and diffusion of sculpture in nineteenth-century France and Italy, focusing on the Swiss sculptor Vincenzo Vela (1820-1891). Her master's thesis received a Faculty of Arts' award from the University of Lausanne and she was recently awarded a mobility fellowship from the Swiss National Science Foundation to become a research fellow at the Università degli Studi di Milano, the Université Paris-Nanterre and the Ecole du Louvre in 2021 and 2022.

## “Towards a New Classical Order”: Aristide Maillol, Maurice Denis and Greco-Latin Cultural ‘Nostalgia’ in France

Rachel Coombes | St. John’s College, University of Oxford

ABSTRACT | The French sculptor Aristide Maillol (1861-1944), who began his career making tapestries under the influence of Paul Gauguin, is perhaps best known for his influence on Interwar Classicism, popularly known as the *rappel à l’ordre*. But from c.1900 Maillol was already preoccupied with sculpting the female form according to his understanding of the principles of the Ancient Greek sculptural tradition. His admiration for High Classical sculptors such as Phidias led him to Greece in 1908, from where he returned with blocks of Pentelic marble for his own use. Maillol’s contemporaries recognised in the postures, gestures and modelling of his figures a monumentality comparable to the ‘noble simplicity and quiet grandeur’ (Winckelmann) of the Antique tradition, while also finding in them a ‘naivety’ (*gaucherie*) seen as distinctively modern in its indebtedness to Gauguin. The painter Maurice Denis (1870-1943), who was at this time advocating a rejuvenation of the visual arts through the reclamation of France’s Greco-Latin past, found himself drawn to the sculptor’s ‘instinctive’ reimagining of Ancient Greek art. This paper will consider the reciprocal influences of sculptor and painter and their shared cultural nostalgia in the context of pre-war aesthetic and political debates over France’s cultural heritage – debates which laid the foundation for the *rappel à l’ordre*. I shall discuss in detail Denis’s decorative series *The Story of Psyche* (1907-9) alongside Maillol’s set of four sculptures *The Four Seasons* (1910-11), which were both commissioned to decorate the music room of the Russian art collector Ivan Morosov.

BIO | Rachel Coombes is undertaking a PhD in History of Art at St John's College, Oxford, with funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council. Her research focuses on the painter Maurice Denis and his close association with musicians in early 20th-century France. The working title of her thesis is 'Composing the decorative: Maurice Denis, music and the search for French cultural identity'. Rachel has an undergraduate degree in Music from the University of Oxford, and an MA in History of Art from the University of Birmingham. Conference participation has taken her as far afield as Tasmania, for the latest *Association Reipertoire Internationale d’Iconographie Musicale*'s annual conference. Here she was presented with the Association's Award for the Encouragement of Young Scholars for her work on Denis.

## Emmanuel Fremiet: Terribly repulsive but wonderfully vigorous

Dick van Broekhuizen | Museum Beelden aan Zee, Scheveningen

ABSTRACT | In a way, one could consider Emmanuel Fremiet (1824-1910) as a very conservative artist: during his lifetime, he produced equestrian statues such as the Jeanne D'Arc monument in Paris, he portrayed Napoleon III's basset dogs and he produced decorative sculpture-lamps for Tiffany. He was multi-faceted, as he was highly esteemed as an Animalier, more connected (through his education) to the Natural History Museum (Jardin des Plantes) than to the Beaux-Arts schools and a meticulously critical observer of nature. Then again, Fremiet advertised himself as a commercial artist, once boasting his own bronze foundry, selling his smaller-size sculpture in a shop, but also licensing other bronze factories in Paris to sell his sculpture. He always sought official recognition (Legion d'Honneur 1860), but one could argue, his art was sometimes quirky, sometimes very traditional, of very high quality, but also 'of his own time' and 'reactionary'.

For my PhD-research, I am focusing on Fremiet's Gorilla-sculpture, especially two instances of these: the *Gorille enlevant une négresse* (1859) and the *Gorille enlevant une femme* (1887). A critic looking at the 1887 piece remarked, he found it "terribly repulsive but wonderfully vigorous". Looking into Fremiet and his sculptures, it caught my attention that his renown was especially large during his lifetime, but his fame faded fast in the twentieth century. Looking deeper, even the sculpture history of France (both in the motherland and in the Anglo-Saxon world) itself seems to have averted its eyes from the nineteenth century. This paper seeks to understand why Fremiet, once a famous French Animalier, slipped away into oblivion. The answer can be found in a critique of the artist's biography, a new definition of a nineteenth-century artist and the political and social function of his sculpture.

BIO | Dick van Broekhuizen (The Hague 1973) is a curator for Modern Sculpture in museum Beelden aan Zee in Scheveningen (The Hague The Netherlands). Educated as an art historian (Leiden University 1992-1997) and as an art history teacher (Leiden University 1997-1998 postdoc), he started out as a teacher in several art history courses. In 1999, Dick worked with RKD (Modern Art and Nineteenth-century departments), until 2002. In 2002 he was appointed research curator in the newly founded Sculptuur Instituut, a research institute and library for modern sculpture in museum Beelden aan Zee in The Hague. Later on, he became Head of Collections, looking after both the sculpture collection and the library. Dick has also coordinated several publications and exhibitions in the museum, most notably (for now) the exhibition *From Barye to Bugatti. Les Animaliers* (2010).

Since 2015, Dick has researched Fremiet's Gorillas in a part-time external PhD trajectory at Leiden University, supervised by prof.dr. Kitty Zijlmans and prof.dr. Jan Teeuwisse.