

# ABSTRACTS

From Paris to Vitebsk: Marc Chagall and Anatoly Lunacharsky on Proletarian Art

**Isabel Wünsche**

Early Soviet cultural politics were shaped by the networks that Russian artists and intellectuals had formed in Paris before the First World War. In fall 1918, Anatoly Lunacharsky, head of the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment (Narkompros), appointed Marc Chagall, who had spent the years 1910–1914 in Paris, Commissar of the Arts for the Vitebsk region. Lunacharsky, a revolutionary Marxist and art critic, had been in exile in the West before the October Revolution. This essay explores the relationship between these two figures and the formative influences that their time in Paris and engagement with Western art had on cultural politics in the early years of the Soviet state, particularly Lunacharsky's concept of proletarian art and Chagall's activities at the People's Art School in the provincial town of Vitebsk, which became a site of creative activity and an influential center of the Russian avant-garde.

Builders and Destroyers of the Finnish Bridge: Kinship, Cultural Morphologies and 'European-ness' in the Context of the Estonian Art Exhibition of 1929–1930

**Timo Huusko**

This article deals with the reception of the Estonian art exhibition at Helsinki Kunsthalle in 1929. My aim is to explore how Estonian art and Estonian identity were reflected in the Finnish context. My primary source materials are art criticism and press debates in Finnish newspapers and journals.

The article is located at the intersection of nationalism studies and post-First World War cultural history. In Finland there was a sense of ethnic affinity with Estonians in the 1920s. In art criticism and news reportage this ethnic affinity was sometimes accompanied by a feeling of superiority. The idea of 'Estonian-ness,' in these cases, was treated in a patronizing way, creating—to use Edward Said's terms—a "false image". Among art critics this patronizing attitude was expressed, for example, in saying that, as a younger nation, the people of Estonia were lacking tradition. Artists were told to delve deeper into their country's essence.

In my article I also deal with Oswald Spengler's cultural morphology. To be of young age meant vitality, something lost in the decaying cultures of "older" European nations. In this context Estonia was seen as a young nation. For the Finnish *Tulenkantajat* ("Torch-Bearer's") journal in 1929–30

the idea of the vital young nation was extremely important, and the writers in it did not patronize, but looked admiringly on Estonians and the machine culture in their art, and on how widely-read their writers were.

Becoming a Sculptor in Finland:  
Kristine Mei's Memoirs and a Naked  
Hero

**Kai Stahl**

In this article, I closely examine the handwritten memoirs of the Estonian sculptor, calligrapher, illustrator, translator and storyteller Kristine Mei (1895–1969). In these autobiographical writings, she reminisced about her studies at the Finnish Art Society's Drawing School during the years 1913–1916. Her memoirs depict how closely knit a community the sculpture class at the art school was. Mei's photographs from the period are a further important source for the article. When she also wrote down who was in the photographs, it makes it possible to give a name to more or less unknown persons, including Mei herself, in addition to the well-known Finnish sculptor Albin Kaasinen, for instance. The photographs also reveal some of Mei's unknown works, which differ from her later statuettes. Comparing with visually and thematically similar artworks by other artists, I also demonstrate how Kristine Mei, as a young female novice sculptor, created a new interpretation of the Estonian mythical hero Kalevipoeg. However, this sculpture has remained unknown. With this case study I display what challenges a female artist might face as a sculptor in the era of modernism.

Spirit in the Form? Tyko Sallinen's  
Artworks as Representations of  
Spirituality and Ideology

**Eeva Hallikainen**

This article discusses two large paintings completed in 1936 by the Finnish artist Tyko Sallinen (1879–1955). One of the paintings was a commission for the Women's Hospital in Helsinki. The other was an order resulting from a competition for the Finnish Lyceum. Both paintings present the secular themes of young people gathered by the campfire in seaside landscapes. The article demonstrates the following possibilities: to read the paintings as expressions of the spiritual worldview of the artist; to understand them in relation to the course of the artist's life; and to interpret them in the context of religious, spiritual, and ideological trends of the interwar period in Finland. The article applies the suggestions made in recent biographical research about the possibilities to explore relations between an artist, an artwork, and a researcher. Sallinen seems not to have left behind any diaries, letters, or notes where he would have cleared up the history of his painted works, or his thoughts on them. For the analysis of the paintings, interviews with the artist, and newspaper articles dealing with the paintings have been utilized. This period of Sallinen's artistic activity has not been studied much in academic research. Art historian Johanna Ruohonen's doctoral thesis on public painting in Finland, for example, dealt with Sallinen's paintings as part of postwar history and national problematics. As a study of Sallinen's art in the 1930s, therefore, the current article contributes to research on a little-examined period in his work.

Tree Mountain: Agnes Denes'  
Futurity and Earth Time  
**Riikka Stewen**

In 1982, Tree Mountain was an idea, or a proposal, for a monumental work of art by Agnes Denes, consisting of 10,000 trees to be planted in an area 1.5 miles long and 0.5 miles wide. The trees were planned to have 10,000 human custodians appointed for them. Like most of Denes' utopian plans the concept remained unrealized until the small community of Pinsiö in Southern Finland commissioned Tree Mountain. The work would serve to rehabilitate a disused gravel pit as was required by the law. Between 1992 and 1996 an artificial mountain was built and 11,000 fir trees were planted on it in a spiralling fractal pattern as Denes had indicated in her original concept.

In the article, I focus on the discrepancy between the concept-plan and the contingent quality of the living material world where it was realized. The plan exists in an atemporal, ahistorical dimension where human rationality believes itself to be omnipotent, whereas the ontological reality revealed by the agency of the fir trees is completely different. As they grow on the artificial mountain built on the remains of an esker dating from the last ice age, the fir trees become witnesses to geological time and its sedimentations. In Scandinavia, the history of fir trees predates human habitation: they bring testimony from the time before the ice age. I propose to look at Tree Mountain as a palimpsest of geological sedimentations and of earthly temporalities, where human action counts for much less than that of the fir trees and the living material world they both reveal and inhabit.

The Dialogical Gaze: Presence  
and Performativity in Edvard  
Westermarck's (1862–1939)  
Anthropological Photographs from  
Expeditions in Morocco 1898–1913  
**Marie-Sofie Lundström**

Edvard Westermarck (1862–1939) was a sociologist, social anthropologist, and moral philosopher who, during anthropological expeditions in Morocco (1898–1913), photographed the local population as part of his research method, participant observation. His images are simple and direct. The article discusses a selection of his anthropological photographs depicting people, with the aim of analysing how presence and performativity are expressed in the images. The analysis focuses on the photographed; the subject's presence and the function of the gaze are determined, as well as how we as viewers perceive the images. A third question concerns whether binary tensions are embedded in the images. The theoretical discussion revolves around the gaze as an agent that "acts" and creates a connection between the depicted and the viewer.

The result is that Westermarck's photographs express a new way for anthropology to view humans. The direct and dialogical gaze spans the alienating void between the depicted and the photographer, in contrast to earlier anthropological photographs. A contributing aspect is Westermarck's anti-colonialist stance. His images are an important step in how visual material, namely photographs, slowly became acknowledged as worthy documentary tools during anthropological field expeditions. Alongside photography's increasingly central role in documentation, a certain degree of affect became embedded in at least Westermarck's images. In this sense, they are predecessors to the "revolutionary" photographs of Bronisław Malinowski, the key figure of modern anthropology.

Hagar and the Angel in Italian Painting in the 17th Century: Eye Contact with Hagar and the Touch of the Angel. Part I: The "Unexpected" Appearance of the Subject in the Italian Painting

**Altti Kuusamo**

The story of Hagar and the angel appeared commonly as a subject at the beginning of the 17th century in Italian and Dutch painting. The subject is from the Old Testament: Hagar and Ishmael were banished by Abraham to the desert, to the point that they were starving, and the angel of the lord appeared and showed Hagar a well of water close to them in the desert (Genesis 21:17). Paintings of the subject concentrate on this last moment.

Despite the growing interest in the subject in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, not much research has been made on this pictorial theme. In fact, there is a sort of lacuna in the scholarship. We have knowledge of this subject mainly via monographs of each artist in question. My interest in this theme is connected to psychohistory: can we interpret the historical rise of the subject by directing attention to signs of the newly-improved position of children in the upper classes?; down to the fact that illegitimate children had been taken care of in the semi-religious conservatoires. Is the theme of Hagar and the angel – with its interesting psychological accents – showing signs of the changed situation?

"Work" of Art: Value, agency and embodied entanglement

**Katve-Kaisa Kontturi**

This article studies varied meanings and methodological doings of the concept of "work" of art across the realms of artistic research, art history, and social scientific studies of art. The specific concept of "work" of art, translated here as "taiteen työ", is a relatively recent addition to the Finnish vocabulary concerning the arts. It started to appear first in academic research a decade ago, and later, at the turn of the 2020s, mostly in texts addressing artistic work from visual arts to contemporary dance and curation. As it is understood here, conceptually "work" of art differs from artwork, which is taken to mean a passive object of interpretation or evaluation. In comparison, "work" of art refers to art as lively, material process that has agential qualities.

In this article, I map the emergence of "work" of art mainly in literature written in the English language where the concept first appeared in the early 2000s, and more specifically in connection to the new materialist and posthuman ideas of agency of matter. In so doing, I search for and elaborate on the conceptual potential that "work" of art could have in academic research, art writing and even cultural politics, in Finland and/or the Finnish language. I will work through three thematic clusters that spread across artistic research, art history and social scientific studies of art: 1) art as process 2) more-than-human agency and 3) bodily entanglements between art and/or artist/viewer-participants. Alongside this, I will refer to several examples relating to Finnish art and media to discuss how the concept of "work" of art could enrich the understanding of art-making as a complex material-discursive process that is never disconnected from social structures or the laws of physics, yet is not completely dependent on them either.

Suburban naturecultures: in-between  
human and other-than-human  
nature?

**Kirsi Saarikangas**

This article explores architecture and built environments as co-creations of humans and non-humans. It examines the suburban environments of the 1950s–1970s Helsinki region as naturecultures. By using three suburbs as examples – Tapiola from the 1950s, Pihlajamäki from the 1960s and Matinkylä from the 1970s – it provides much needed novel perspectives on the relations between architecture and nature. It points out the agency of nature in the emergence of suburban space. It demonstrates that suburbs and their characteristic features arise in the collaboration of built and natural environments, and both within and beyond the designers' control. The environment as designed and built was just a strip of hybrid suburban environments and lived suburbanity. Suburbs took shape in countless combinations of modern buildings, more or less developed green areas, playgrounds, parking lots, forests, abandoned houses, old fields and wastelands in-between and on the fringes of habitation. Suburban environments therefore only appeared in the various processes of intra-action and in-betweenness of humans and non-humans, in complex entanglements of artificial and natural processes.