

## Call for applications

The 9th *Spring-Academy* organized by the *International Consortium of Art History*, will take place from the 16th to the 20th of May 2011 in Frankfurt-on-Main and focus on the theme of the artist. The School offers the possibility for doctoral and post-doctoral students from diverse perspectives and specializations to share their research, their approaches and their experiences in a forum working alongside established scholars. Programs of the previous *Spring-Academies* temps can be accessed on the site [www.proartibus.net](http://www.proartibus.net). Participation in a *Spring-Academy* is a necessary prerequisite for obtaining the additional diploma in the international aspect of history of art. Both doctoral and post-doctoral candidates are encouraged to propose specific papers related to their subject of research in whatever period or field of art history they are concentrating, regardless of the format they wish to choose.

## Presentation of the subject

When approaching the issue of the artist in the history of art, the discipline, art history, needs to re-examine its archaic desire to discover the intentions of the subject behind the works. Since the very birth of the discipline, the personality of the artist has been an object of great interest, explained by the relationship between the creative subject – as the originating individual and the place of creation – and the artistic interpretation. Furthermore, artistic subjectivity and its conceptualization have played an important role in the historical process of valorizing the autonomous and supreme subject, beginning in the contemporary period. As “prototype subjects” artists have become models of modernity, as Heinz Knobloch and Nathalie Heinich have demonstrated.

This intricate web of relationships makes the renewal of interest in the figure of the artist so fruitful. During the 1960s, several authors such as Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault and Susan Sontag, announced the “death of the author” and the end of interpretive practices which look for the source of meaning in the artist’s intentions. At that juncture, art history found itself obliged to give up its status as the paradigmatic science of the subject. It thus found itself in a position of studying the contingent character of historical conceptualizations of the artist, without becoming too easily attached to the idea of the creative genius. Art history had previously favored concepts that stressed the creative potential of exceptional individuals and was rooted in paradigms of autonomy, originality and authenticity. These paradigms were privileged at the expense of the opposing ideological concepts of (for example) the technician or skilled engineer, based on an ideal model from Antiquity or the Middle Ages or – alternatively – concepts of creation through unconscious or instinctive powers. It would seem that now is the time to reconstruct, in a more systematic fashion, the image of the artist through its historical transformations, within the sphere of Western post-colonial culture as well as through global notions of the authorship of visual artifacts, and to interpret them in a comparative perspective.

One of the numerous clichés, that of the medieval artist who effaced himself before his work and, as a modest craftsman, renounced any claim to glory, is a product of reductive thinking. Recent studies have revealed the existence of numerous artists’ traces and inscriptions. These signatures, used to claim the authorship of a work or an opus, clearly refute such stereotypes. It is equally inappropriate to envisage a homogenous image of the artist throughout the Antiquity and the Middle Ages without having retraced the history of divergent notions of artistic authorship in different periods, within different artistic genres and across many regions.

Certainly, we can find early testimonies of artists revealing their self-consciousness as creative subjects, but it is only in the Renaissance that the emphatic concept of the artist developed. Consequently the material aspects of the work are de-emphasized and recognition of the artistic act as creation belonging to the world of ideas is promoted. “Disegno” and “concetto” respectively, as well as “invenzione”, become the criteria of this new artistic creativity that privileges, on the whole, a more spiritual notion of creation. The artist is thus elevated to the status of a scientific researcher, inventor and philosopher. To the “ennobling” aimed at by the artists themselves in their works is added the retrospective creation of legends by means of a new literary genre: the artist’s biography. This would reach its first peak with Vasari in the middle of the 16th century and would serve as a model for art history in its beginnings. On the socio-historic level this process manifests itself in the fact that artists became closer to the life and culture of the courts as some of them are actually ennobled. Simultaneously, we observe increasing ambitions surrounding the training of artists, which includes philological and literary erudition, knowledge of optics and physics, and even anatomical expertise. Consequently, artistic formation becomes institutionalized in academies which spring up everywhere in Europe.

Education plays a crucial role in the growing independence of art, with its apogee occurring during the 19th and 20th centuries. This development is followed by changes in social status of the artist who, as he is increasingly emancipated from close ties with his patron, becomes difficult to classify in sociological terms, shifting as he does between the roles of prince and that of pauper. New phenomena come to light: the “unknown artist”, the autodidact, the “outsider”.

From the 19th century onwards, the artist is no longer defined by his education, his temperament or his particular ability to create an original work and, as a consequence, the notion of what constitutes an artist is broadened. The boundaries between artist and non-artist similarly dissolve. All those who produce images without necessarily having the intention to create, such as the mentally ill, the “primitives” or even children are labeled artists.

The *Spring-Academy* aims to examine the extent and the diversity of the notions of the figure of the artist and the historical models in which they are inscribed. All aspects of gender studies are explicitly included in this project.

### **1. The Myth of the artist**

Mythical notions of the artist have many aspects, extending from the idea of the artist as creator, saint, savior or messiah, to his classification as inventor or scientist, original or universal genius, and beyond as an obsessive, a madman or a priest-like shaman. An artist may appear as a tragic character, dying because of his art or his surroundings, as a martyr or a sick person. Myths of Pygmalion, Prometheus, Hephaestus, or Orpheus are part of this image as well as anecdotes about artists from Antiquity or more modern periods. Modernity itself invents the image of the unknown artist: we could even say, the fictive or pretend artist.

### **2. Notions of artistic production**

There is a tension between different concepts of artistic production. On the one hand, artistic work is seen as a translation of a conscious realization of ideas that emanate from the artist him or herself or from other individuals – the patron or an intermediary delegated by the latter. On the other hand is the emphasis on creative inspiration, that is, more or less unconscious aspects of artistic production. During the Middle Ages, in the sphere of the Eastern Church, artists' work could be described as religious service. A perfect copy may be more highly esteemed than the idea of originality. Contrasting notions of creativity have different religious and cultural foundations: on the one hand the production of images is described as a creative act by means of translation of the idea of divine creation. The artist acquires the status of a being close to the divine. Conversely, in revolutionary societies, the artist could be the precursor of a new world in which everyone is an artist. Other concepts concentrate on virtuosity as the focal point of artistic work and within Romanticism we even find the notion of the “artist without hands”.

### **3. The topoi of the inborn gift of art**

According to Ernst Kris's and Otto Kurz's famous work on the “Legend of the artist”, we must question the topoi developed for the description of the inborn gift of art. The natural talent of a Giotto, the perfectly straight line, or round circle, the grapes of Zeuxis, Rembrandt's servant ... are all periphrases describing artistic faculties. Since, from the Romantic period onwards, the work of art has become a priceless talent, genius appears to be an inborn gift (*donné* in French), received by the artist as an act of grace from a higher authority. Friedrich Wilhelm Schlegel conceived the artistic opus as an incomprehensible witness of interior eschatology. Discovery, vocation, liberation of the self and other tropes used to describe artistic initiation will be studied in this section.

### **4. Becoming an artist, the training**

Training plays a decisive role in the life of an artist. It is possible to follow the transformation of the notion of apprenticeship over time. Apprenticeship in the workshop would progressively be replaced by education in art academies. This evolution is accompanied by a shift in the range of skills and fields of knowledge required. One of the determining aspects of earlier training involved the acquisition of knowledge which cannot be found in the workshops of the master craftsmen or the academy rooms. Subsequently, an excursion or a long journey, especially to Rome, often completed the training and the professionalization of artists. Conversely, the contemporary period witnessed a surge of doubts about the role of training in the genesis of an artist and the notion of the artist as an autodidact was further developed. This section aims both to raise questions relating to modes of artistic education and their limitations, and also to the role attributed to training in the biographic historiography of artists.

### **5. The artist after his death**

Stories of the circumstances of the artist's death follow rules which are different from the form of admiration enjoyed by an artist during his lifetime. This posthumous cult contrasts greatly with the veneration of non-artists, as do particular aspects of artists' graves. It is often the case that the artist himself takes a great interest in his posthumous image and tries to influence it. The life of the artist after his death includes, among other aspects, its instrumentalization: for example, the life of Albrecht Dürer or Caspar David Friedrich was instrumentalized by the Nazis. Similarly, the reception and the interpretation of artists' lives after their deaths is evident in the production of other artists, students or followers who succeed their master.

### **6. The artist in the work and the artist as work**

The figure of the artist often appears as a subject in works of art – depicted by his or her own hand or by someone else. Furthermore, his presence in the work is also revealed through the signature and its placement. Portraits of

ancient or contemporary artists enjoyed great popularity in the 19th and the 20th centuries. Artists also appear in group portraits. Honorific or fraternal paintings allow us to establish lines of contact between artists. The self-portrait is a reflection on the self, the work and social position of the artist. We catch glimpses of artistic work in scenes of workshops and academy rooms. During the 20th century we can see a blurring of the boundaries between the work and its author. Orlan, Gilbert and George, Eva and Adele are living works of art, the author embodying the work.

### **7. Individual representation and self-stylizing**

Through self-promotion, the artist grounds himself in society, describes his ambitions and tries to control societal behavior towards himself. Self-promotion presupposes different ideas of representation and stylization. Artists present themselves as princes, bohemians, outsiders, entrepreneurs, stars, etc. They even adopt the role of anti-artist. Their own writings, such as autobiographies, letters, journals, theoretical essays and manifestos, provide different means of forming their image, as do printed or radio and television interviews and public appearances.

### **8. The disappearance of the artist as author**

The death of the author, so often evoked in the framework of cultural studies, has been taken up or even prepared by artists. The initial approach of the Fluxus movement has been taken up by on-line art, where the author is no longer visible: the works often come from artists who refuse to reveal their identity. Similarly, graffiti artists prefer anonymity, although recognition of their artistic signature means a lot to them. Conversely, collective works identify their authors, but without assigning particular contributions to individuals. All of these examples have as a starting point a conscious act, a strategy of a free artist, whereas in the mechanical and applied arts there are no artists associated with the work. Nevertheless, artifacts without an author, such as the veil of Veronica, have become very prestigious objects, especially in the Middle Ages.

### **9. Artist as a social being**

The relationship between artists and the society which surrounds them is contradictory. Their legal position, as well as their social status, are assigned to them by society. Their ties with the art market, essential for artists, and contact with clients and patrons provide a sort of anchoring in society. Nevertheless, from the beginnings of the modern period, the artist is placed outside the networks of production and of the economy. He presents himself as an outsider – or, if he is grounded in the society it is as a revolutionary, an avant-garde and moving it forward. The artists' profession changes through the centuries and varies from one society to another.

### **10. Transmission and mediation of the image of the artist**

Artists' lives represent the oldest form of transmission and mediation of the image of the artist. A history connects to that tradition through the development of the artists' monograph, a format that stands at the center of scientific publication. This concept is taken up by a type of exhibition which has become very popular: the monographic art exhibition. Art academies have been particularly implicated in mediating the image of the artist, even before museums took on this task. Furthermore, media such as art, literature, theater and film play their own important role in the transmission of artists' lives.

## **Procedures and proposals**

Students (doctoral and post-doctoral) wishing to participate in this encounter are asked to send a (single) paper proposal of 20 minutes maximum, and a brief CV listing languages used, to their respective national representatives (see the list at the end of this document) before 14th of February 2011. Proposals, with the candidate's name, email address and institutional affiliation, should not exceed 1800 characters or 300 words. They can be written in English, French, German or Italian, and should be submitted as a Word document. If possible, the title of the section (or sections) in which they wish to be included should be indicated. The proposals will be gathered, examined and selected by country. National representatives will send the list of the accepted proposals by email ([EDP2011@kunst.uni-frankfurt.de](mailto:EDP2011@kunst.uni-frankfurt.de)) on 1st of March 2011 to the organizing committee which, following consultation with the network's scientific committee, will establish the definitive program of the *Spring-Academy*. The announcement of the selected participants will be published in the beginning of March 2011 on the websites of the network [www.proartibus.net](http://www.proartibus.net) and of the INHA [www.inha.fr](http://www.inha.fr). (NB: In the two weeks following the acceptance of their candidacy, participants will have to submit a correct translation of their proposal in another official language of the network.) Since everyone can give talks in their own language, a knowledge of other languages is required. Participants with native romance languages need to have at least a passive knowledge of either English or German. Participants from Anglophone or Germanophone countries need to have at least a passive knowledge of either French or Italian.

Proposals for those wishing to participate as respondents

Students who have participated twice or more in earlier *Spring-Academies* are asked to offer their candidacy solely as

respondents. Furthermore, young scholars, post-doctoral and doctoral students whose research is well advanced can also participate in the *Spring-Academy* as respondents. The duties of the respondents involve leading the discussion at the end of each session by proposing a re-reading of the issues brought up by the participants. The respondents will summarize the session, ask new questions and pursue the debate along other lines, suggested to them by their own research. All candidates wishing to take part in the *Spring-Academy* as respondents are asked to send a copy of their CV and a brief statement of interest to their national representatives, underlining their specific qualifications for the chosen section before 14th of February 2011.

#### Call for papers (professors)

As with each session, the professors from the network can either propose a paper or preside over a session. Teachers wishing to intervene in the program are asked to make their intention known to the Organizing committee by email to this address: ([EDP2011@kunst-uni-frankfurt.de](mailto:EDP2011@kunst-uni-frankfurt.de)).

#### Organizing committee

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