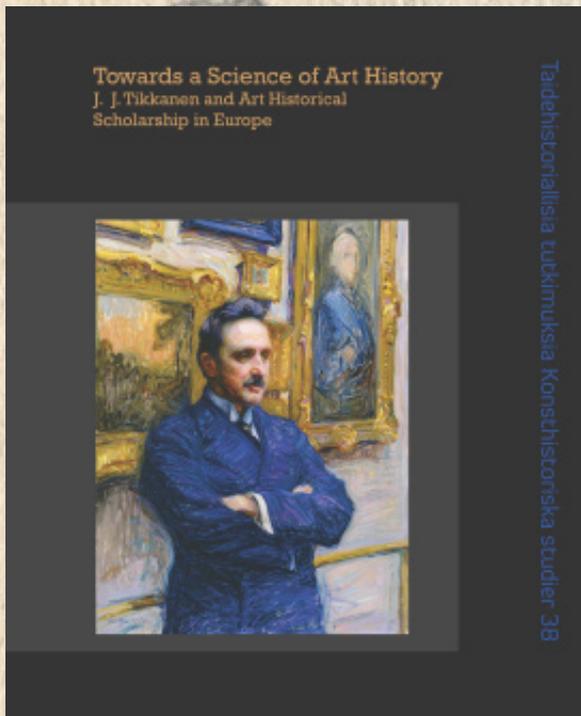


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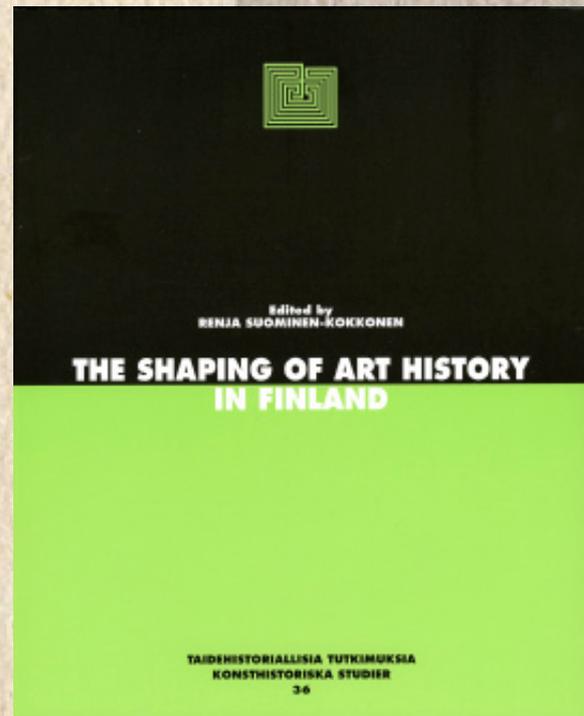
Towards a Science of Art History

*J. J. Tikkanen and Art Historical
Scholarship in Europe*



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STUDIES IN ART HISTORY

38

TOWARDS A SCIENCE OF ART HISTORY

J. J. TIKKANEN AND ART HISTORICAL SCHOLARSHIP IN EUROPE

THE ACTS OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE,
HELSINKI, DECEMBER 7.-8. 2007

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CONTENTS

Johanna Vakkari Preface	6
Johanna Vakkari Introduction: J. J. Tikkanen as an Art Historian	9

I The Role of the Arts in Finland in J. J. Tikkanen's Time

Susanna Pettersson Johan Jakob Tikkanen and the Finnish Art Society: Tracing the Roots of Museum Professionalism in the Finland of the 1890s	23
Riitta Konttinen Differing Views – The Finnish Art World at the End of the 19 th Century.....	35
Anna-Maria von Bonsdorff Reflections on the Past and the Future – Finnish Art at the Turn of the 20 th Century	45

II National and International Art History

Mai Britt Guleng Lorentz Dietrichson and the Making of Norwegian Art History	59
Marianne Marcussen The Danish Art Historian Julius Lange, His Attitude to Trends in Art History in Europe and his Collaboration with Scandinavian Colleagues.....	71
Minna Törmä Tour Around the World of Art. An Art Historical Excursion to Berlin in 1919 ...	85
Gianni Carlo Sciolla J. J. Tikkanen and the Origin of “Kunstwissenschaft” in Italy.....	95
Georg Vasold Riegl, Strzygowski and the Development of Art	103

III Viewing, Experiencing and Interpreting Art

Altti Kuusamo The Idea of Art as a Form Behind Tactile Values: the Recuperation of Art in Art History c. 100 years ago	119
Dan Karlholm Learning by Looking (with Words): Wölfflin's Legacy.....	129
Alessandro Scafì Warburg and Böcklin: Myths in Word and Image	137
Anna Kortelainen Stendhal's Syndrome: A Paradox for “the Happy Few”	149
Colourplates	164

PREFACE

Towards a Science of Art History – J. J. Tikkanen and Art Historical Scholarship in Europe, an international conference on the history of art-historical research, was organized at the Ateneum Art Museum in Helsinki in December 2007 by the Society of Art History, the Department of Art History of the University of Helsinki and the Ateneum Art Museum of the Finnish National Gallery. Through support from the Rector of the University of Helsinki, the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland and the Italian Cultural Institute in Finland it was possible to invite several eminent scholars from many European countries to the conference.

It is characteristic of history that only some events have evolved into written history and only some interpretations of the things that took place have become accepted as facts, while other interpretations were forgotten or became "outmoded". It is in this way that many historical events and perspectives of interpretation disappear, before possibly being rediscovered at some later stage. Continuous research-historical reassessment is of primary importance and it is made particularly meaningful by research methods and theories that are being renewed and are diversifying all the time. They make it possible to approach history through new questions each time. The concept of art history, its relationship with political and cultural history and other disciplines, including the history of aesthetics, philosophy, archaeology and psychology, and visual culture in general, has expanded considerably over the past decades. This may be the

most important reason for the extensive international interest in the history of the discipline that has emerged recently. Because art history is a relatively young academic field, recent years have seen commemorations of many of its pioneers in different parts of Europe, and of the founding of their professorships. The original impetus for the Helsinki conference was the anniversary of J. J. Tikkanen, Finland's first professor of art history. The conference began on the 7th of December 2007, the 150th anniversary of Tikkanen's birth.

The conference publication is in three thematic sections. The first is on the Finnish art world during Tikkanen's period. Despite the country's peripheral geographic location, changes in Finland corresponded to those taking place elsewhere in Europe. Art was becoming international and art criticism was gaining a foothold in newspapers and scholarly journals. The Finnish National Gallery was opened to the public in 1888 and exhibition activities expanded.

The second theme addresses the national and international aspects of art-historical research. The late 19th and early 20th century was a period of political instability in many European countries, where emphasis on nationalism was also expressed through a growing number of publications on the art and the art history of the nation. On the other hand, there was the goal of an integrated (and international) historical view of the evolution of Western art from its roots to the present day. The issue of national and international is also closely related to the question of the canons of art his-

tory. What was chosen for presentations of art history, and what was excluded? What periods were regarded as sufficiently valuable subjects of research and what was the art in question?

The last section of the publication is devoted to the visual observation, experience and interpretation of art.

When art history became an academic discipline in the 19th century, scholars faced an immense amount of work. Firstly, a distinct profile had to be found for art history, distinguishing it from aesthetics, cultural history and other disciplines exploring subjects close to it. What were the problems specific to art history and what theoretical and methodological starting points should the new discipline have utilized? A further problem was scholarly terminology, which was in many respects inadequate and undefined. Paradoxically, and despite the requirements of theoretical and methodological independence, models for the new and more scientific art history were sought in the natural sciences, as in the work of Charles Darwin. This was one reason why formalism became a new paradigm also in art

history in the late 19th century. The most common perspective in writing on art and artists had traditionally been biographical. The new discipline, however, required general studies on the history of art, and in this connection biographical works were of only limited use. The question of style and its relationship with different periods became one of the main issues to be considered. Scientific precision was sought through precise observations and their classification. Also in Tikkanen's studies the problems of form and style appeared from the very beginning. Like many of his contemporaries, such as Wölfflin, Riegl and Warburg, he was visually oriented and approached his themes largely on the basis of visual observation.

I extend my warmest thanks to all the scholars who participated in the conference and to those who have kindly contributed this volume.

Helsinki, 21.4.2009

Johanna Vakkari

Chair, Society of Art History in Finland

J. J. Tikkanen's sketch from 1887 showing a detail of an ivory casket, in South Kensington Museum. ©Department of Art History of the University of Helsinki.



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36

THE SHAPING OF ART HISTORY IN FINLAND

PREFACE

During the early 1980s, while working as a curator at the Department of Art History at the University of Helsinki I had the pleasure to assist Professor Sixten Ringbom collect material on J.J. Tikkanen for his book *Art History in Finland before 1920*, which came out in 1986. After twenty years Ringbom's study is still a valuable source on the early stages of art history in our country. During the 1990s the historiography of art history grew to be a possibility to gain new and critical insight into the intellectual and theoretical scholarship of the earliest generations of our discipline. Also in Finland younger researchers became more involved in studies along these lines towards the end of the 1990s. The Society of Art History and the art history departments at the universities of Helsinki, Turku and Jyväskylä and Åbo Akademi university took the initiative together to arrange the first major conference on the history of art historical research in Finland. Sponsored by the Academy of Finland and the National Museum of Finland, the conference "The History of Art Historical Research in Finland" invited the eminent scholar Professor Kathryn Brush from Canada as its keynote speaker in October 2005.

The conference committee decided to concentrate mainly on early professionals in the field and on their interpretations of art. Even though contemporary studies in the history of art research are well aware of the development of the pioneering figures, the actual content of their works and professional roles have only rarely been analysed. As art research in Finland is a young field with few researchers, the result has been the marked personification of the whole field, with different generations of researchers focusing on only a few influential figures. They operated simultaneously in many different roles, shaping views on what was good art both nationally and internationally. The study and analysis of their art discourse will also shape our understanding of how and why their "story" of art was told to Finns and international colleagues.

With the help of the Society of Art History it has been possible to prepare this book from the papers of the Conference. My wish is that it will open up discussion on the pioneering generations of our art history and permit readers to see historical developments in a new light, and to understand the wide range of issues that affected the formation of the discipline in Finland.

I extend my warmest thanks to all scholars who have kindly contributed this volume.

Lohjansaari, 6 May 2007

Renja Suominen-Kokkonen

CONTENTS

Preface	4
Contributors	7

I THE NATION, ART AND INSTITUTIONS

Susanna Pettersson: For the People's Best. Fredrik Cygnaeus and the course taken by art in Finland	11
Eeva Maija Viljo: Carl Gustaf Estlander and the Beginning of Studies of the Visual Arts at the University of Helsinki	25
Leena Valkeapää: Emil Nervander as a Pioneer of Finnish Art History and Antiquarian Interests in Finland during the Last Decades of the 19 th Century	40
Anna Ripatti: The Architect Jac. Ahrenberg and Studies on Turku Castle at the Turn of the 20 th Century	53

II ART HISTORY AT THE UNIVERSITIES

Johanna, Vakkari: J. J. Tikkanen and Teaching of Art History	69
Lars Berggren: Josef Strzygowski - en främmande fågel i Finland	84
Ossian Lindberg: Lars-Ivar Ringbom och teckningen som forskningsmetod	99
Renja Suominen-Kokkonen: Changing Ideals in Art History: Onni Okkonen and Lars Pettersson	110

III FINNISH AND INTERNATIONAL ART HISTORY

Kathryn Brush: Arthur Kingsley Porter and the Transatlantic Shaping of Art History, ca. 1910 - 1930	129
Hanne Selkokari: Eliel Aspelin as Researcher of Ancient Greek Sculpture - A Detour, or a Breakaway from C. G. Estlander?	143

Minna Törmä: The 1920s: Decade of Change in the Life of Osvald Sirén	157
Johanna M. Lindfors: Tancred Borenius - Our Man in England	169
Teppo Jokinen: Johannes Öhquist im Spannungsfeld von Kunst und Nation	181
IV THE WOMEN OF ART HISTORY	
Anna Kortelainen: "Looking for the Great Fire" - L. Onerva, the First Female Art Historian in Finland	197
Elina Räsänen: Reviewing Research on Medieval Wood Sculptures: The Encounter of Olga Alice Nygren and Carl Axel Nordman with the Crowned Saint Anne	214
V CHAIRS AND DISSERTATIONS	
Professors of Art History at Universities in Finland, compiled by Renja Suominen-Kokkonen	231
Dissertations in Art History at Finnish Universities from 1878 to 2006, compiled by Renja Suominen-Kokkonen	233

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