

FOREWORD

Today, when launching a new series on the art of the Baltic area, we open an old book that has already been reread several times at still a new page. Our goal is to cast new light on art history and renew the research which was started already when Jacob Burckhardt and Heinrich Wölfflin shaped the framework of European art history and which has, through ebbs and flows, been continued since that time. History of Baltic art has been written in many languages. We could say that limits set to the research and writing are as wide as the Baltic cultural space which, at the first place, raises the question, how wide can these limits actually be? The first simple answer would be the whole world. When we still start to specify, we will arrive in Europe, more particularly, in North Europe and reach the cradle of our common culture – *Mare Balticum* (compared to *Mare Nostrum*) – which, due to various impulses, resounds in the Universe where the Milky Way has pointed sailors to their course and its stars, lighting up one by one in the sky like Monads, have helped to find the way from darkness into light.

When thinking about Baltic art today, we foremost think about the art of the three nations located on the southern coast of the Baltic Sea – Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia – that can, thanks to the common history, the years preceding and following the year of 1991, be linked together by common memory and its visual sign systems. History has given us shackles and a chain that make the light, falling from the cave ceiling, at the same time distant and attractive, and allow us to talk about the past as well as the future, making *utopia* (in Greek – a land that does not exist) both unattainable and real. In the visual sense, Baltic art is a mosaic, where each fragment has a story of its own as well as a meaning of its own. Telling of these stories, and what's more important, interpreting of them, are among the main objectives of the present publication. Searching for new paths is important as well, so that the crew, gathered below the sails, could find their way to the open seas and faraway coasts and back to their home port again.

The idea of this new publication was born under the roof of the University of Tartu. One of the reasons was the task of continuing the work that was disrupted at the Chair of Art History in 1944, and the need to move on. During the period of 1937–40, the Art History Cabinet, its Head Sten Karling and his student Armin Tuulse, both of whom were later professors

at Stockholm University, brought out eight issues of Proceedings (Tartu Ülikooli Kunstiajaloo Kabineti (Instituudi) väljaanded). The articles published in the Proceedings belong to the treasury of the art history writing both in Estonia and the Nordic countries.¹

All nations have their prophets. Wilhelm Neumann's soul in Latvia and Kazimieras Jasėnas' in Lithuania. In the post-WWII years, Baltic art history has stood for the light that, having been put on everywhere around the Baltic Sea – in Stockholm, Kiel, Helsinki – has let the idea of a common cultural space persist. We are grateful to all those who not only have made possible the step we take today – to start where no one has ever wanted to finish, but have already given us a direction. Having received the baton from Karling's students and the students of his students – Helmi Üprus, Villem Raam, Kaur Altkoa and others, let us recall for a moment, before we step on, the times when in Bad Homburg, at the Carl Martin Böckler Stiftung that was the "garden" for cultivating the research on Baltic art led by its Chairman, Professor Lars Olof Larsson, studying Baltic art history was something very natural, but at the same time, almost prohibited.

Taking the initiative today, we start with something smaller and move on, step by step, reaching out for still newer and farther topics. At the very beginning, we shall first talk about Tartu, wishing to invite along all those who have taken Baltic art into their hearts, who worry and rejoice over it and who are prepared to write about it in the following issues of our journal. We are grateful to all who have so far been supporting us, most of all to the Institute of History and Archaeology of the University of Tartu for the essential question whether we should start from a new page, and even more for the question whether we should start to "think bigger." We are also grateful to the members of the editorial board who have encouraged us to search for our routes at the sea and for possible harbours.

Quo vadis, Baltic art history? Shining light on what has been written and what is yet to be written, the series intends to open new paths which, according to the "publishers'" wish, will lead us first down to the depths of history – into the Minotaur's cave of a kind – and then back to the daylight again. Light and shadow are the instruments to form the Cosmos,

¹ E. g. Sten Karling, *Die Marienkapelle an der Olai kirche in Tallinn und ihr Bildwerk. Ein Beitrag zur Barbenderfrage*, Tartu Ülikooli kunstiajaloo kabineti väljaanded, 1 (Tartu, 1937); Armin Tuulse, *Zur Baugeschichte der Tallinner Burg*, Tartu Ülikooli kunstiajaloo kabineti väljaanded, 2 (Tartu, 1937); Sten Karling, *Jacob och Magnus Gabriel de la Gardie som Byggherrar i Estland*, Tartu Ülikooli kunstiajaloo kabineti väljaanded, 5 (Tartu, 1938); Armin Tuulse, *Die Kirche zu Karja und Wehrkirchen Saaremaas*, Tartu Ülikooli kunstiajaloo kabineti väljaanded, 8 (Tartu, 1940).

in which we try to find our modest place, to be tolerant and open. Art is a quest; its goal is to lead us to its origins, to the formation of an image and its interpretation in the verbal text. Besides presenting history as a proven narrative, we intend to offer opportunities for treating art history in a more philosophical sense either by following ideas derived from Aristotle's definitions of history as a method of poetical text² or in the way Umberto Eco pointed out in his honorary doctorate inauguration speech, regarding the "fictional protocols", at the University of Tartu in June 2009.³ Eco's question was whether Anna Karenina's death that is known to be a literary fact can, as a fictional image, overshadow other, perhaps more true to life facts. This means that "more real" is a question that could, hopefully, find searchers who would ask questions about memories and fantasies, realities and illusions in the future.

The more questions we can ask, the richer will art history become. Discovery is a phenomenological act. Communication is based on our mutual interest and wish to communicate. The present angle of light made it clear that the first issue of our journal will appear in the form that you have just opened. You start to read an old valuable book at a new page. This does not absolutely rule out further opportunities to write in a new or different way. Art history cannot be limited or restricted; its depths can offer us even new surprises, bringing fresh and delicious fragments of memory from the bottom of the ocean to its glimmering surface – facts, ideas and thoughts which have not yet been honed to perfection. We should be able to achieve the impossible and put these fragments together into a mosaic or into a string of pearls that has never been seen before...

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² Aristotle, *On Poetry and Style*, transl. by G. M. A. Grube (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 18.

³ Umberto Eco's video lecture can be watched at <<http://www.ut.ee/564132>> (2.9.2009).