

FOREWORD

Dear reader, in your hands you are holding the 10th issue of the *Baltic Journal of Art History*. If ten years had transpired since the publication of the journal started, we could mark the passage of two lustrums in the classical manner. However, the *Baltic Journal of Art History* has moved at a faster pace – it has appeared ten times in the six years since the autumn of 2009. Nevertheless, there is sufficient grounds for looking back at the path that has been travelled.

In the first, autumn 2009, issue of the *Baltic Journal of Art History*, Juhan Maiste, the germinator of the idea to publish the journal and its soul, wrote the following: “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 ...”¹ In the same issue, he also acknowledged that Baltic art is a mosaic, in which each fragment has its own meaning and story, the telling and interpretation of which is one of the main tasks of the new publication.

It is not by chance that the task was undertaken here, in the city of Tartu, in the Department of Art History at the University of Tartu’s Institute of History and Archaeology; and in the ninth year of the new millennium, 18 years after the Baltic states regained their independence, and five years after a closer union with Europe was established. This task was undertaken in the unanimity of space and time. Here, art and art history was not a narrow professional phenomenon, but a much broader set of ideas that radiated from the past to the present, the balanced development of historical memory in a specific ideological, social and communicative space. This was a time and place, a kind of Arcadia, where the force lines of the guardian spirit of the place *genius loci* and the spirit of the time *genius temporis* were luckily focused in the same direction.

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Translated by Juta Ristsoo.

1 Juhan Maiste, “Foreword”, *Baltic Journal of Art History*, 1 (2009), 5.

The idea of a common cultural space is one of the foundations for establishing the *Baltic Journal of Art History*. The Baltic provinces have comprised a common cultural space since the 13th century at the latest, and throughout the 19th century, the city of Tartu bore the spirit of the intellectual capital of the region. And the city of Tartu acquired this spirit from the University of Tartu. Without the spirit of the university, Tartu would not be what is today. In the 19th century, the university had an international reputation. It had extensive cultural interests and international cultural ties. Accordingly, the *Baltic Journal of Art History* is also linguistically open; articles are published in German, English, French and Italian depending on the art history-related profile. The circles that cling to a single language, no matter how many speakers it has, cannot be highly intellectual. At the same time, an attempt has been made, with varying success, to provide summaries of the articles in Estonian, in order to preserve the position and function of the literary, artistic and scientific language developed caringly by our grandparents and great-grandparents. (Despite the unity of the Baltic cultural and artistic space, the neighbouring nations do not share a common language that could be used for summaries, or any great desire to become acquainted with each others' languages.)

The university has shaped the spiritual content of Tartu and also its appearance, its architecture and art. For many historical and natural reasons, in Tartu, as well as in the entire Baltic cultural space, architecture dominates among the fine arts. Therefore a great deal of space in the *Baltic Journal of Art History* is devoted to raising people's awareness and increasing their appreciation of the architectural legacy. For Baltic art historians, prophet Habakkuk's harsh message about the stones crying in the walls has been transformed by Baltic art historians into an expression of stones speaking in confidence with the researchers stroking them.

Another principal factor impacting the establishment of the journal was the spirit of the time, i.e. the spirit prevailing at the time, the guardian genius of an era. One of its expressions in this case was tradition, a moral obligation. In the period from 1937 to 1940, the Art History Cabinet at the University of Tartu published eight volumes of high-quality publications, which have permanent humanitarian value. When the times and conditions changed, it became inevitable that those at the university directing the research of art history were obliged to continue a good and necessary endeavour.

Especially significant is the implantation of aesthetic values – beauty, art, and specifically art history – in academic education generally and also the education of the nation’s heart. In the society of the Baltic cultural space, which has ensued the recent upheavals, humane values have yet to shift into place. The approach to education by those financing it, the young people acquiring it as well as the leaders, organiser and reorganisers in the fields of education and science, is all too often extremely narrow-minded, hyper-pragmatic, closed to new ideas and focused only on achieving momentary material gain. What is lacking is a pure cognition – learning something out of curiosity and joy in order to educate one’s mind and soul. Beauty and aesthetic perception play an extremely important role in raising the general spiritual level of society and developing its sense of justice. In the philosophical fields of aesthetics and ethics, value judgements occupy an extremely important position. Artistic creation cannot be born and the users cannot accept it without objectively existing facts generating subjective feelings and value judgements. In the philosophy of morality, these are still related to the existence of moral norms and their objective value. Aesthetics and ethics go steadily hand in hand.

Thus, we can shout together with the 10th issue of the *Baltic Journal of Art History* that our regional art, the art the Baltic cultural space and its history are part of Estonia’s national culture, just like art history – researching it and teaching it – is part of our national university. Let them all endure for a really long time, even as *sub specie aeternitatis*.

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