


70 Cf. Beggild Johansson 2008, 363-364. Related antique ornaments are represented in the wooden, probably contemporary, reliquary cupboard in Sorens, executed (or renovated) at the instigation of Lage Urne and the prior, Henrik Tørnærens, the instator also restoring the church's late 13th and early 14th century heraldic frieze, while replacing in 1527 an elder triumphal crucifix by a modern one by Claus Berg.

71 See Birgitte Beggild Johansson & Hugo Johannsen, Kongens Høst, Copenhagen 1993 (Ny dansk kunstneritet, 25. 30.

72 Cf. Angerstein-Grandeau 2003, 42.


75 "Thi der som vi ville ante den Tid, som hand haftaar leffend udi; da skulle vi i sandhed forfær sax merskelige fastand(f)er vare alde, baade i det ævangelige oc Verdilige Regiment; som sy tilforn i nogen Mandis mønde haftaar begifte sig", cf. Anders Svanæs Vedei, Er Paraklase, som zoede udi (...), udgifte Johan Frisoos forgaffelmade (...) Copenhagen 1751; quoted in Otto Norn, Herselagergård og Jacob Bunch, Copenhagen 1861 (Meddeleler fra Forninglen til gamle Bygninger Bevægning 8, 4), 96.

76 During a recent restoration an unidentified narrative scene with figures in contemporary (Italianate) dress was revealed upon the reverse of the table (Fig. 126).


79 Vedin 1571.


Seventeen years ago, when I published my collaborative book, Reframing the Renaissance, there existed an urgent need for integrated accounts that allow the disparate voices who have contributed to European conceptions of art to be heard - not parallel accounts that represent the same events from mutually exclusive points of view, but integrated attempts to define the issues that produce mutually exclusive narratives in the first place. We still need such accounts.

During the same period that European images and artists were exported on a global scale, works of art and other artifacts entered European collections from other parts of the world, in both cases providing a rich setting for the development of new cultural formations in which artistic production played an important role. In the past decade, studies of early modern patronage and collecting practices have flourished. Yet impressive though this new body of literature is, we still need strategies for studying the contributions of fluctuating sixteenth-century senses of 'art' to later ideas about cultural identity and aesthetic sensibility. We need investigative strategies that undercut anachronistic categories that interfere with our ability to see the complexity of artistic interactions during the early modern period. We need to take up epistemological issues at a sufficiently deep level to address the urgent question of the conditions and practices that enabled the construction of Eurocentric cultural attitudes at the same time that Europeans widened their worldviews. To do this, part of the challenge is to understand how newly emerging nations in the nineteenth century imagined themselves as anti-to as, for example, Benedict Anderson asked in his groundbreaking study of nationalism entitled Imagined Communities (1983) - why awareness of a radically changed form of consciousness in the nineteenth century led to the construction of a 'nationalist memory' reaching back in time. The challenge is to utilize what feminist art historian Joan Kelly called a "double vision" - to look both 'inside' and 'outside' the frameworks traditionally associated with the Renaissance. This conference has given concrete specificity to the various kinds of collective identity available in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries. It is not the case that national identity did not exist before the nineteenth century, but rather that it took different forms. Fluid and dynamic royal alliances, complex religious affiliations, and the civic sphere are three such overlapping forms of "nationality" that conference participants have stressed. It is not enough to speak in generalities, but it is important to keep the big picture in mind even when undertaking detailed case studies. The challenge of articulating what (and where) the
"Renaissance Problem" has gone today might, in the context of the present volume, begin by examining the language in which this conference is framed. According to the conference program, the first target of our gathering has been "to re-evaluate Danish Renaissance art in its European context, in light of recent research and methodological discourses." I cannot present myself as an authority on Danish art history, nor do I want my voice to be heard as that of the expert from abroad telling you what to do. I am myself still struggling to understand why "reframing" and "Danish" are conjured in the conference title and its agenda—given that reframing, "the Renaissance" demands attention to cultural exchange, ethnic difference, heterogeneous societies— as well as looking self-critically at the role of scholars who write national histories of art. In short, the rhetoric of imperialism played an important role in establishing national histories of art. Our opening keynote speaker Professor Kaufmann, who recently published Toward a Geography of Art (2004), a groundbreaking study of the writings of German and east central European writers from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries, has made us far more aware than ever before just how enmeshed racial theory is in the foundations of the discipline of art history.

It has often been asked over the past four days—and I want to ask it again—to what does the word "Danish" refer in the phrase "Danish Renaissance"? I do not have to tell this audience that the Denmark of the Renaissance period was not identical to the modern nation-state that was created after the fall of Absolutism in 1848, in the size of its population, extent of its geographical territory, range of its ethnicity, type of government, cultural production, or any of the other categories conventionally used to describe national collective identity. A virtual tour of Denmark's official website emphasizes that there have been a number of different Danmarks in Danish history, even though the official historians tell the story as if some underprivileged essentiality existed throughout.1 For example: the earliest Denmark identified by the website came into existence around 1200, when "Danes were [first] able to read the history of the heroic deeds of their forefathers" in Archbishop Anders Sune's Latin poem Henrikssøn and in Saxo Grammaticus's Gesta Danorum, which gave "the country a clearer conception of its national identity." Of course, not many in the country were literate, and the literature itself would have been the primary agent for creating a feeling of national identity for those few who did have access to Grammaticus's chronicle or Sune's poem. Perhaps printed editions of these works in the sixteenth century created a sense of national identity retrospectively. The thirteenth century was a time, still according to Denmark's official website, when the king's wish to be seen as "the nation's lawyer" was at odds with the clergy, who created a separate clerical legal system, gained economic independence by acquiring land, introducing tithes, and creating links with European centers of learning.

By the early fourteenth century, the official website tells me, "Denmark had emerged as a 'divided nation made up of a number of estates of the realm' in which only nobles and church leaders had any say. The clergy offered protection to the peasants against the payment of taxes issued by the national assemblies, consisting of nobility, and in return for this protection the peasants provided the means for building so many fortified castles that by 1330 nearly every parish had one. The so-called 'divided nation' in this situation is, strictly speaking, the division of a unity that can be imagined as such only from the modern perspective of what Denmark later became. This is history written in the future anterior tense."

To continue with my foreigner's understanding of the Danish Renaissance. Until 1658-60, when the realm was reduced to about a third of its former size after the end of the Second Swedish War, "Denmark" designated a much larger ethnically diverse kingdom. The monarchy of Denmark during the Renaissance period included Scania, Halland, Blekinge, Gotland, Osel, Norway with its extensive North Atlantic possessions and part of the duchy of Schleswig-Holstein. Moreover, the system of government until 1660 consisted of a king elected by the castle attendants and the council (the king's oldest son), and the power was divided between the Crown and the Council of the Realm ("Rigsråd"). Made up of only a dozen members of the high nobility. So whose Renaissance are we talking about when we say "Danish Renaissance"? Certainly not the ancestors of the citizens of the modern nation state. The future anterior tense is only a fiction. It is, I think, difficult to argue that the Danish Renaissance refers to the underprivileged class the few who lived on 60,000 farms and accounted for approximately 75% of the total population. Or rather, included them only in the sense that "the burden of taxation fell solely on those groups who were least able to meet the demands."

Of course, these circumstances could describe many other feudal states in Europe and elsewhere in the world. Only the privileged participated in the Italian Renaissance. And only after the end of the "Renaissance," when Danes were being instructed at state Lutheran schools "in the new creed and turned into loyal subjets," did "a feeling of Danish national identity" begin to emerge—and only then among the "leading strata of society." In the 1740s, still according to the official government website, during a time of economic boom based on overseas trade, "young, well educated sons of the middle class began to identify themselves with their nation, its language, and its history, both in intellectual and emotional terms." It is important to add that this new form of bourgeois class-consciousness was partly a reaction against the presence of foreign aristocracy and native aristocracy who adopted foreign culture. (The 1776 Law of Indigenous Rights made it illegal for foreigners to hold a government post). During the same period, the website tells me, conflicts emerged between Danish, Norwegian, and German members of the population. So even when it did emerge, the "Danish" national identity was largely limited to one sector of the middle class. Until the late eighteenth century, the predominantly rural population had no way to participate in the state that governed them, tying them to work on the farms where they were born, thus providing landowners with cheap labor. Abolition of adscription (serfdom) in the eighteenth century is an important agricultural reform of the State Council, marking a new consciousness of basic human rights that complements the 1792 royal decree banning Danes from taking part in the slave trade. Let me quickly add that these reforms took place 80 years before slavery was abolished in the US. The modern idea of a nation-state in which the entire population enjoys citizenship and treats foreigners with the same regard for social justice, really begins in the late eighteenth century. The intellectual responsibility of historians today is tied to ethical responsibilities: there still exists an urgent need to formulate integrated accounts which allow the disparate voices that have contributed to Danish, Italian, European, and so on, accounts of national identity to be heard—not mono-cultural accounts that speak in one voice for all, nor parallel accounts that represent the same events from mutually exclusive points of view. As national histories conventionally do. The Jewish Museum in the old Royal Library designed by Daniel Libeskind is a model of representational strategies: Christian IV admitted Jews, a point of historical importance—and the installation stresses Denmark's history as a safe haven but without glossing over the history of anti-semitism.

The virtual national identity presented on the national website of Denmark appears unified, but masks an underlying set of contradictions and conflicts. Perhaps the foremost challenge that the "Renaissance Problem" presents today is the institutional one of reconfiguring our inherited understanding of historical structure. To live in history, and to wish to write it, is not a universal anthropological postulate, but is a certain way to conceive of and in the world, and it is a certain practice of subjectivity.

Connections between foundational critiques of disciplinarity as such and the concrete project of constructing a grand historical narrative, often obscure. It may be one thing to critically assess practices that conform to existing disciplinary expectations, but it is often quite another to question the configuration itself. Yet unless the subject position of the critic in the institution is brought into the equation for exactly this purpose, the past will always haunt the electrifying and the most significant epistemological and ethical issues will remain unarticulated and unaddressed. The specter
is invisible in the mirror, as Jacques Derrida puts it, and this condition can either haunt us in the manner of the ghost of Hamlet's father reminding us that "time is out of joint," or we can remember our past, learn from it in the present, and use the lessons to devise a better future. I

I suggest reframing the Renaissance problem to produce a methodological conundrum of long-standing and widespread concern in the humanities: that is, how to account for relationships between "ethnicity" and culture, between collective social identity and artistic production. One of the most demanding theoretical challenges posed by the study of cultural exchange is the self-reflexive one of paying attention to the history of the forms of thought that have been applied to the historical artifact, as well as to the history of the artifact itself. The methodology equal to this challenge, in keeping with an important trend in post-colonial studies worldwide, adopts a relativistic approach to the problem of reconstructing cultural continuity and accepts partial recovery of dispossessed cultural traditions as a valid form of interpretation.

The painstaking process of partial recovery involves identifying the continued presence and transformation of artistic conventions. As such, it implicates historians in the same continuum of cultural events it studies. As scholars supported by powerful institutions, we are not innocent bystanders to the history of cultural interaction. Yet previous generations of scholars were also sensitive to the problem of projecting their cultural values onto alien historical material. The difference between our current position and theirs is more tenuous than some contemporary cultural theorists might like to admit. Interpretative aims may not have changed, but epistemological ones have. One of our deepest-rooted forms of artistic historical thought is the assumption that an artwork has a radical unity that reconciles (harmonizes, synthesizes) any surface contradictions. This radical unity portentously stems from the conscious or unconscious intention of the author who is imagined to be intimately involved, and in turn accounts for the work's power to communicate to audiences. The conditions of production and use of art in heterogenous societies call into fundamental question the connections among artistic intention, unified meaning, and communicative power. There appears to be no way to resolve the meaning of the certain works of art into a single, stable reading, any more than there appears to be a resolution to the complex agencies involved in their production and use. Recently I participated in a discussion of the "Renaissance problem" part of a series organized by James Elkins at the University of Cork, Ireland, at which six invited speakers discussed the state of the field of Renaissance art history from theoretical points of view. Elkins and his co-organizer for this seminar Robert Williams urged us to consider a structural problem in the discipline of art history in which "the Renaissance is made to serve both as a starting point for the modern and as something against which modernism reactivates." What seems to be at stake is that "Modernism needs legitimation, yet it also seems to require repressing some aspects of how we got to where we are." Institutions in all fields, seminar participants Ethan Matt Kavaler offered, "tend to attract authority to themselves, and respect authority, and authority is a very conservative force. It is not only a problem of administrators, but of colleagues too, in judging and appreciating their fellow colleagues."

The kind of art historical practice I would like to see in Renaissance studies goes all over the world, and deals with all kinds of practices, representational systems, cultural conditions; not at the level of social history alone, but at deeper epistemological levels, studying what happens when new identities are formed, when new communication occurs, when representational practices that have never been in contact before are suddenly in collision and contention, when the readability of the art changes because of contact, when people's ability to live changes because of their altered material culture.

If these kinds of questions came to be of overriding importance in the field, if they were encouraged at the institutional level, we could have an entirely different kind of art history. It would look genuinely different. We would not just be establishing the canon of old masters in Europe. We would be looking at colonial and what several speakers at this conference have called regional productions. We would be looking at print culture, the importance of which several conference papers have stressed. We would be looking at things made by artists without training and we would see the production of artists without applying either labels like "provincial." And we wouldn't necessarily be spending our time on taxonomies of that material. We would be examining the interesting processes that occur, maybe in terms of the Renaissance definition of art as work, as process. Yet such a re-construction of art history de-stabilizes the discipline, leading to tremendous anxiety about the loss of disciplinarity. In addition to anxiety about the potential loss of disciplinarity, there is anxiety associated with a certain form of nationalism. In a country that has no tradition of art history, the conviction that art historical research and teaching should remain central to the larger discipline of art history drives research. Elkins gave the specific example of Ireland - our host country which had sponsored his roundtables and the ensuing publications by the way - as taking the position that the western European tradition and Irish art history are the proper focus regardless of student demographics. The Renaissance problem today presents the pertinent challenge of deeply rethinking our identities. What a wonderful challenge it would be, to rethink the world in terms that privilege interaction and the unknown over national culture and pride in the familiar! As Stephen Campbell put it at our roundtable in Cork, this would also mean taking a stand against the essentialism of identity politics in university education, where students are expected to identify with certain specializations as being more 'about themselves.'

One only needs to look at studies such as Stephen Campbell and Stephen Milner's edited volume on cultural interactions in the Italian Renaissance City (2004), to see that exchanges taking place in Ferrara, across the street from Florence as it were, can be quite radical if they are looked at in the right way. The implications of their argument are fully analyzed. This kind of approach can certainly be developed for the study of the Danish Renaissance. Many of the papers presented at this conference have stressed the theme of artistic exchange. Let me name only a few that struck me as especially rich in their theoretical implications. On the first day Marjot Uffen reported about plural Renaissance in a paper dealing with the use of Goltzius's prints in two altarpieces of the 1590s (p. 117). She called attention to the performative aspects of meaning and argued for subtle forms of domestication of print sources by local elites. Kristoffer Neville looked at Dutch interest in Dutch culture as a mediated form of interest in Italian Renaissance art - the implications being that the taste of Danish Monarchs Frederik II and Christian IV was not provincial at all, but their access to the latest, most stylish art was limited by circumstance (p. 335). Krista Kodeis carefully considered regional complexities, terminology, and models of cultural transmission to explain the local look of Estonian art (p. 127).

However, it is also important to emphasize that intra- and extra-European studies have lagged far behind. By continuing to work within the nationalistic, sub-disciplinary formations we have inherited from the heyday of nation-state formation, we reproduce the same hegemonic schemes. The irony is that in today's world of weakened nation-states, the study of national culture is worth less and less - and in the US, the UK, and elsewhere, that is ultimately why art history departments are not held in higher prestige at our universities. This situation extends to all of the humanities. What is our responsibility to society as intellectuals? This question deserves to be driving our research agendas. The pre-modern period, with its often unstable large dynastic formations and competing religious institutions, is becoming much more interesting to look at in the present era of the decline of the nation state and the rise of transnational corporate capitalism. The current and coming kinds of loyalties and identity formations have analogs in that period. George Kubler, Carlo Ginsburg, Enrico Castelnuovo and Jan Bialostocki, and more recently Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, John O'Hara, and I believe, my colleagues and I have called for recognition of the political dimension of artistic geography in a framework of
historical critique. Their central argument is that provincial artistic cultures need not be seen as passively reflecting the influences trickling from the center, but as resisting or critiquing or transforming the art of urban centers.

While these observations allow us to see the local manifestations of classicizing Italianate and other "styles" in a different, more positive light than older, diffusionist theories of stylistic transmission, a major problem is inherent in the center/periphery model of art history itself. The problem is that the structure unavoidably reiterates the historical relations of power that its critical reemployment attempts to dismantle. Words like "provincial," "late," "periphery," have meaning only within a system of values based on an evolutionary theory of progress and normative standards. More objective is the consideration of the differing circumstances of regional reception such as Kauffmann's analysis of the varying expressions of "dynamism" that often "blur any sense of place" by stressing the supra-individual characters of ruling families manifested in groupings of tombs, coats of arms, and other forms of artistic expression.22 These forms of art identified particular families and places with precedents in the Roman Empire. In such circumstances, Kauffmann writes, the expression of national or ethnic identity "seems much less clear—what for example, did it mean to be German, rather than non-German, when an individual's parity first was a ruler first, then perhaps to a dynasty?"

In other cases, however, the positivist assumptions of scholars who do not admit open-ended or multiple readings of the visual monuments, have had the effect of erasing the possible active participation of the indigenous peoples and colonial subjects. Motifs, subjects, and stylistic features held meaning on both sides of the major cultural divide between Italian sources and their local conditions of reception in many settings. There is now an extensive body of scholarship that attempts to recognize the possibility of agency on the part of the colonized and the dispossessed unthethered from the category "Renaissance." 23

aligned with the dominant power. I suggest we think differently about the operations of power in all situations of cultural interaction. Power operates everywhere. If the term is retained at all we might consider "Renaissance" an open-ended system always under investigation. I am concerned with the ethical dimensions of what we produce as scholars: what do we pass on to future generations? What kinds of political implications are there to the knowledge we produce? Our work can seem a-political when we produce it, but at the same time it excludes other work from taking place, or relaques that work to the margins. Once we start thinking about objects from this broader perspective, we can see inherited paradigms structuring our contemporary practices in fresh ways.

To what extent is it our responsibility as scholars operating in today's social networks to feel responsibility for the effects of the knowledge we produce? What is the relationship of ideology to commerce within the frame of academic practices? Historians commonly argue that scholarly publications are not driven by profit motives in theory or fact. From the standpoint of the intellectual's ethical responsibilities to society, however, it matters not at all whether the profit is going directly into the pockets of publishers or scholars. Today, the entertainment industry and the mass media perpetuate the national and ethnic stereotypes on which the modern discipline of art history was founded in the nineteenth century. The common presence of dated ideas in popular culture may partly explain why art history the discipline and Renaissance art history the sub-discipline continue to rely on categories rooted in theories of cultural evolutionism, but it would be a serious short circuit of logic to blame the current situation solely on the culture industry. There is a pressing need on the part of academics to revise disciplinary practices at a more fundamental epistemological level than has commonly been the case in Renaissance studies.

In drawing this paper to a conclusion, I would briefly like to suggest on a more general level how current research is addressing "the Renaissance problem" differently today. "Provisional religious image" are currently being rethought and this, too, bears on the Renaissance problem.

I can think of no topic more urgent than the need to rethink the Enlightenment categories of art, science, and religion. Not to develop new taxonomies of objects corresponding to these words, but to recognize that these abstractions may be three versions of the same thing— attempts to come to terms with the relation of the material, quotidian world to the immaterial, the spiritual, the numenial.

But what does it mean to "do history," at this point in time? How we account for cultural transmission is part of the larger question of how we account for collective memory. And to account for our own position in relation to our subjects of study, we must ask, as Derrida said, about what is located in the envelope of the question. With awareness that the field we inherited and the stable epistemological assumptions on which it was built no longer serve contemporary purposes comes a destabilization of the field itself. The field of art history is now expanded, but also de-centered. There is no unified vision, no consensus on a research agenda, if there ever was. The discourse is thus more dialogic in its structure—indeed, an international conference on a focused topic like "Reframing the Danish Renaissance" fosters this kind of intellectual engagement.

Let me conclude with the question raised by the call for papers at the 2008 Congress of the International Committee of the History of Art: "To what extent do we need to rethink the discipline of the history of art in order to establish cross-cultural dimensions as fundamental to its scope, method, and vision?" This is the Renaissance Problem in our time.

Notes


2. When these "lower classes" directed their anger at the Council of the Realm ("Rigsdag"), which collapsed amid growing financial crisis in 1660, an absolutist government with a hereditary monarchy was established that created the foundation for a stable bureaucracy. For more information on the eighteenth century, see note 1.


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DO WE STILL NEED A RENAISSANCE?

Keith Memory

"...this time of African existence is neither linear time nor a simple sequence in which each moment ephemer, annuls, and replaces those that preceded it, to the point where a single age exists within society. This time is not a series but an interlocking of presents, pasts and futures that retain their depths of other presents, pasts, and futures, each bearing, altering, and maintaining the previous order." Wattle Mbembe, On the Pandemic, Berkeley, 2001.