LOOKING FOR THE PROFESSOR AND DEFINING ESTONIAN ACADEMIC ART HISTORY

Key words: Estonian art historiography, academic art history, nation-building, Tor Helge Kjellin, Josef Strzygowski, Johnny Roosval, Adolph Goldschmidt, Heinrich Wölfflin.

This article revises a passage in the narrative of the history of Estonian academic art history hoping that by introducing archival materials that has not been used or considered in earlier writings it is possible to deconstruct the narrative. Neglecting of the archival material was caused by practical but also discursive reasons due to censorship in Soviet times when the first articles on this topic were published. Based upon archival research I propose an alternative conceptual viewpoint and suggest that the election process of the Professor of Art History at the University of Tartu during the years 1919–1921 is a way to define Estonian academic art history. The word “define” is used here in a broad sense. By defining, a certain set of objects, ideas and tenets are encircled and at the same time the others are left outside. However, the “inhabitants” of the immediate borderland keep transgressing and liquefying the solid core of a definition and open up a dialogue. I conceive the ideas and visions of the founders of the Estonian National University as the solid core of the definition. By introducing the candidates and their background I aspire to open up the context and show the possible alternatives and the ways they could have opened. Finally I ask how these possible choices and the final choice made in the election could have affected the understanding of Estonian academic art history and Estonian art. The whole process shows the symptoms of changing vision, values and habits of the community.

The university and the institutions of art history, established in it, were the important locus for (re)generation of art historical knowledge, as Donald Preziosi has described it. It is generally believed that these institutions were established in the 19th century, mostly by German scholars. The academic art history was considered a national activity throughout Europe in conjunction with the protection of heritage and art museums. On the other hand, the discipline is essentially international, especially if we consider how much the map of Europe has changed (e.g. in the last century). After the First World War, in the newly established states in Europe, art and its history were valuable means for the nation-building process and essential for the construction of national discourse. Art history had been taught at the the Czarist University of Tartu in the 19th century up until 1918. But a specialized chair for Art History was only founded in 1919. In the 1920s, the person, holding the chair of Art History at the University of Tartu, acquired an important role in shaping the perception of this discipline for the whole Estonian society.

The interest for the questions of art historiography has been increasing in Estonia since the 1970s. Sten Karling, a professor in Tartu in 1933–1941, published an article for the international community in 1988 where he gave an overview of art historical research in Estonia from the end of the 19th century until the 1980s. The knowledge of Estonian art historiography has been shaped by publications written on the jubilees of the “first” Estonian art historians.
Voldemar Vaga (1899–1999), Sten Karling (1906–1987), Armin Tuulse (1910–1977) and Villem Raam (1910–1996). Estonian art historian Krista Kodres has been especially productive and published several articles. She has also written an analysis of the theoretical influences on the research of Sten Karling. The 1920s have not received similar attention since the 1980s. Currently three graduate students at the Estonian Academy of Arts and the Institute of History of Tallinn University are writing their doctoral theses on Estonian art historiography of the 19th-20th century under Krista Kodres’s and Kersti Markus’s supervision respectively.

The starting point for this article is a passage from a 1980 article of the Estonian art historian Mart Eller: “a year after Estonia declared independence on the 24th February 1918 it was decided that a National University should be established on the foundations of the former Czarist University of Tartu that was liquidated in July 1918. The plan for the chairs of the university also included a chair for “aesthetics and general art history.” At this time no suitable professor could be found in Estonia, so he had to be looked for abroad. As a result two years later an election was held. M. Eller mentions Gerstenberg, Knapp, Waldhaus, Josef Strzygowski and W. Worringer as candidates from German universities and a professor from Sweden Tor Helge Kjellin. M. Eller concludes that J. Strzygowski has won the election, but did not come to Estonia, leaving the opportunity for the runner up in the election. H. Kjellin started to lecture in January 1922 as a professor of “art history”. I wanted to develop further from this short list by asking simple questions. Who were these other candidates besides the already known J. Strzygowski, W. Worringer and H. Kjellin? Why J. Strzygowski chose not to come to Estonia? Lars Berggren, who has written about J. Strzygowski’s connection with Åbo Akademi in Turku, Finland, encouraged me to find out more about the elections and to my surprise I could find some other famous names among the involved: Erwin Panofsky, Heinrich Wöflin and Adolph Goldschmidt. M. Eller discussed the reasons why a suitable professor for art history could not be found in Estonia. Art history had been taught at the university before 1919, yet M. Eller as well as another Estonian art historian, Juta Keeverlik, have both made a distinction between art history and academic art history (Kunstwissenschaft). To be exact, it was classical archaeology that was taught at the Czarist University of Tartu in the 19th century up until 1918. What is the difference between art history at the beginning and at the end of the 19th century? How did this change happen? One of the best studies on these issues regarding art historians Wilhelm Vöge and Adolph Goldschmidt is written by Kathryn Brush.

**PROTO-PARADIGMATIC, BALTIc GERMAN OR PRE-REPUBLICAN ART HISTORY?**

Donald Preziosi says fluently that “the institutional space cleared for itself by academic art history [at the end of the 19th century] both in Europe and America was no tabula rasa, but an already densely textured philosophical, epistemological and ideological landscape.” The same can be said about Estonia where art history became an academic discipline at the University of Tartu in 1922. The practice of art history in the 19th century in Estonia lacked epistemological coherence. The fact that art history in Estonia in the 19th century was Baltic German clearly correlates with their dominance in the society and culture as a whole. As Baltic Germans were an ethnic minority a change had to happen after Estonians declared their independence and constituted a Republic in 1918. The conflicting ideologies of the Baltic German minority and Estonian nation-builders were following after a common philosophical pattern. Both sides recognized the importance of art historical knowledge as a tool of ideological power.

The university is an essential locus for the generation, distribution and recycling of knowledge and ideologies. In Estonia the University of Tartu had already been established in 1632 by the Swedish king Gustav II Adolf, which initiated the expansion of the Swedish Empire and the Golden Age of Sweden. It functioned until 1710 and attempts to re-open the university during the 18th century under Russian rule could not be realized. In 1802 the University of Tartu was re-established following the edict of Russian Czar Alexander I (1777–1825). The next year the chair for “eloquence, classical
philology, aesthetics and the history of literature and art" was occupied by Johann Karl Simon Morgenstern (1770–1852).25 The title of the chair indicates an interdisciplinary approach to the history of art and reflects the wide range of interests of professor Morgenstern. Generally in the 19th century the history of art was taught in Tartu as classical archaeology, a discipline established by the famous German art historian and archaeologist Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768).

Parallel to the re-establishment of the University of Tartu in the whole of Europe the growth of national tendencies and the ascendance of the bourgeoisie proceeded.26 These circumstances prepared the ground for a modern discipline – art history (or academic art history) – which was laid in German-speaking universities starting from the 1860s–70s.27 In 1860 the first chair for art history with Anton Springer as the professor was founded at the University of Bonn. In 1873 the first international congress of art history in Vienna stated, that art history should become an integral part of university education and specialized chairs should be founded. It was followed by setting up chairs for art history in universities in Europe and the United States.28 This development has been observed as the emergence of modern art history, as professionalization of art history and as a part of its institutionalization.29 The term academic art history has been used for distinguishing art history pursued in universities and art historical discourse in other institutions (e.g. museums).30

Another consequence of a national self-identification in Western Europe was an increasing interest in the material remains of culture, which enabled to construct a discourse about national heritage and national art history.31 A symptom of the reaction to the Russian chauvinist nationalism was that the Baltic Germans started to carry out research on their history and heritage in the Baltic Provinces.32 The “awakening” of Estonian and Latvian nationalism has been noticed in the second half of the 19th century also. These three communities – Estonians, Latvians and Baltic Germans – were the main forces for the belligerent and mental struggles following the First World War, Russian Revolutions and the resulting Wars of Independence.33

When the Baltic German architect and art historian Wilhelm Neumann (1849–1919) stated in 1888, that a more varied art historical education was desired, this was associated with the need for specialists who could research and restore local art heritage.34 This local art heritage included only the Baltic German heritage, which dated back to the beginning of the 13th century – “the dawn of the era of German colonization in the Baltics”. Two years later, in 1890, Vladimir Malmberg (1860–1921) became professor of classical philology and archaeology at the University of Tartu and started lecturing on general art history.35 On the other hand his election as professor marks the era of Russification at the university.36 Unlike the former professors was Russian by nationality and not a Baltic German. He had studied in Berlin University in 1886.37 But although he was the first professor in Tartu who specialized on art history, at the time of election he had actually not yet defended his dissertation. In need to replace Baltic German professors with Russians the qualification norms required to hold a chair in a discipline were lowered, so that weaker candidates, even without a
doctoral degree, could be elected. This was also the case with V. Malmberg, who defended his doctoral dissertation at the University of St. Petersburg in 1904.38

However this was hardly the outcome that W. Neumann could have envisioned. He was the leading Baltic German art historian, who started to publish articles on art history in 1886. He was also in the close connections with other German art historians. His research interests spanned from the Middle Ages to contemporary art, from architecture to applied and figurative art executed by Baltic Germans and situated in the territory of former Old Livonia that covers modern Estonia and Northern Latvia. There was no place for Estonian artists in his discourse on Baltic art history. His agenda could have been fulfilled in the context of the Baltic German Landesuniversität zu Dorpat, which was opened on the foundations of the Czarist University of Tartu in September 1918. With Karl Dehio as rector, the board of 33 German professors also included the art historian Wilhelm Worringer (1881–1965).39 The German university could not function fully and was handed over to the Estonian Provisional Government in December of 1918. The Baltic Germans failed to maintain a status quo.

As I have briefly tried to demonstrate the political and ideological state of affairs in Estonia in the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century was quite complex. As a historian of the Soviet era M. Eller could not discuss national conflict in a straightforward way and a national standpoint is presented implicitly. Why could not a suitable professor be found from Estonia (or the Baltics)? Because there were none! There were none, because there were no native (i.e. Estonian) art historians suitable for this post. On the other hand, M. Eller argues that there were no candidates with sufficient education. At the University of Tartu “the history of art as a whole, as a separate discipline – and, what is especially important, art in Estonia – had been left out of the university curricula and the sphere of interest of the professor [of classical archaeology]”40 therefore no local specialists in art history could have been educated before the establishment of the chair of “aesthetics and general art history” in 1919.

Even if W. Neumann had not died in 1919 he would not have been suitable, because he was a Baltic German. But what does the lack of native specialists exactly mean?

VISIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

As I have mentioned before, it was J. Strzygowski who got the most votes in the election for the professor of art history in 1921. On the other hand M. Eller mentions, that the Faculty of Philosophy (where the chair of art history was established “mostly tried to avoid inviting professors from Germany and orientated towards Finnish and Swedish universities. In several specialties the Finnish turned out to be the best-suited since they were familiar with Estonian material and quite a few of them could lecture in Estonian.”41 Why did the board still elect a German-speaking J. Strzygowski from Vienna? M. Eller suggests, that “apparently his election was influenced by the fact that at this time he was already internationally renowned for his research on early Christian art.”42 These arguments are obviously contradictory. While Strzygowski was a (German-speaking) Austrian born in Poland, he was not familiar with Estonian material in his research and says nothing of not being able to speak Estonian. It seems quite obvious, that his election had nothing to do with straightforward nationalism, but rather was showing a progressive desire to give the best possible education for the future Estonian intellectual elite.43 Otherwise the Estonian, Mr. Konstantin Mikfeld, who proposed his candidacy in 1919 with his Popular lectures on art history must have been the first and prominent preference.44

In May 1919 the question of language was an important subject during the establishment commission of the Estonian national university of Tartu.45 It was decided that the official language of the university would be Estonian. The question of language of studies was thoroughly debated, but finally it was resolved that it would also be Estonian. Yet it was clear that it would have been impossible to find specialists for all the foreseen chairs from Estonia. Therefore German and Russian were chosen as auxiliary languages to be used during the first years until Estonian
graduates would become suitable to hold the chairs. At the same time it was agreed, that scientists and professors would be invited from Germany, Russia, Finland and elsewhere. The local Baltic Germans were not rejected, but they had to prove their loyalty to the Estonian government. Nationalism was pragmatically combined with common sense. On the other hand, the usage of foreign help was seen as temporary. What the commission could not have foreseen was that the availability and the willingness of scholars with sufficient academic qualifications were scarce at least in the preferred countries.

POSSIBILITIES, PROBABILITIES AND COINCIDENCES

The institutionalization of art history started in Germany, where it acquired such rigidity and status that it became a standard for other Western countries. It was the Germanic nature of the discourse of Kunstwissenschaft, which caused problems in accepting and adjusting to certain traits of the German model. The emergence of art history as an academic discipline was parallel to the establishment of a German state and its expansion later. The tools of the discipline could be adopted and applied to different ideologies and locations either consciously or unconsciously. It is clear, that art history had already accumulated a tradition during the time the Estonian university-builders have foreseen a need for art history education. In this regard perhaps it is not so surprising, that the Faculty of Philosophy appealed to the most noted contemporary scholars in Europe. I suggest that when the counsellors suggested some of their best students as candidates they did not act without an agenda. The realization of the ideas and ideologies was equally influenced by practical matters and conditions.

As the Estonian War of Independence was still being fought, contact with the foreign professors had to be established through Estonian intermediaries abroad. Useful contacts were further enhanced when the newly elected foreign professors arrived in Tartu. This happened gradually, when the war in Estonia had ended and the Estonian Republic gained international recognition. The elected foreign professors were especially concerned about financial and practical considerations as they usually migrated with families and their private libraries. Some German professors who had been elected in 1919 and 1920 did not come to Tartu due to the difficulties with transport. The university was poorly supplied with relevant instruments, equipment and literature for study and teaching. The means for staying in contact with homeland and the scholarly community could have appeared poor and influenced the choices of the elect. The university government provided at least some solution in June 1920, when it decided that costs would be compensated for the transport, an extra 60% of the salary would be paid to foreign professors and extra money for their families. It was just after this decision was made that the Faculty of Philosophy was confident enough to send out letters to the foreign professors to nominate candidates for the post.

In July letters were sent to Adolph Goldschmidt in Berlin, Heinrich Wölfflin in Munich, Osvald Sirén in Stockholm, Ewert Wrangel in Lund and Johan J. Tikkanen in Helsinki. They were informed that the lecturing workload of the professor would be six hours a week. It was anticipated that a specialized institute was founded by the chair of art history. As an extra task the professor was to hold the post of Research Fellow at Tartu Art Museum. The Faculty of Philosophy hoped to arrange the election in August 1920, so that the chair could start functioning in the autumn and the first lectures be given in January 1921. The process was to last much longer. In the summer of 1920 the Faculty of Philosophy received answers from J. J. Tikkanen, A. Goldschmidt, H. Wölfflin and possibly from E. Wrangel.

Art history was quite a new field of study in Finland. Johan Jacob Tikkanen (1857–1930) had just become the first professor of art history in Finland in April 1920. Only eight Finnish graduates had defended their doctoral theses in art history between 1878–1920. Most of them were already employed in Finland or abroad. J. J. Tikkanen suggested the 33-year-old Onni Okkonen (1886–1962) as candidate for the chair in Tartu. Okkonen had written a dissertation on renaissance art. However, in 1920 Okkonen was occupied both at the University of Helsinki and the Technical University of Helsinki. There was little
chance he would have had the opportunity to come to Tartu although "as a Finn it would have been easy for him to study the Estonian language quickly."\(^{57}\)

The renowned German art historian Adolph Goldschmidt (1863–1944) had a much wider choice for possible candidates. During his professorship in Berlin he supervised nearly a hundred doctoral dissertations.\(^{58}\) He proposed his students Kurt Gerstenberg (1886–1968) and Erwin Panofsky (1892–1968).\(^{59}\) The 34 year old K. Gerstenberg had studied in Berlin and defended his dissertation on German Special Gothic under of H. Wölfflin.\(^{60}\) Later he worked as H. Wölfflin's assistant in Munich. He had habilitated in Halle University with his study on Claude Lorraine\(^{61}\) and was currently working there as a lecturer in 1919. A. Goldschmidt was very fascinated of his talented post-doctoral student E. Panofsky. He had defended his dissertation on Dürer's oeuvre in Freiburg\(^{62}\) and habilitated in Hamburg with work on Michelangelo in 1920. E. Panofsky was also a member of the famous Aby Warburg circle in Hamburg, which gathered famous library in Warburg's. A. Goldschmidt surmised that it would be easier for the unmarried K. Gerstenberg to immigrate to Estonia as E. Panofsky was already married and had two children.

The Swiss art historian Heinrich Wölfflin (1864–1945) also had a lot of students. He presented three candidates: the already mentioned Kurt Gerstenberg, Fritz Knapp (1874?–1938?)\(^{63}\) and Martin Wackernagel (1881–1962).\(^{64}\) The 46-year-old Fritz Knapp had studied in Basle, Switzerland under of Jacob Burckhardt (1818–97) and defended his dissertation on the Italian Renaissance under of H. Wölfflin. After working in the Royal National Gallery in Berlin he moved to Greifswald where he founded the Institute of Art History.\(^{65}\) From 1907 he was the art history professor in Würzburg. Martin Wackernagel had defended his dissertation in Berlin in 1905. In 1920 he was an associate professor in Leipzig and his main interest was Renaissance art patronage.\(^{66}\)

Ewert Wrangel (1863–1940) was the professor of aesthetics, literature and art history and mainly a literary scholar. I have not found his letter in the archives, but it is obvious that he suggested his student Tor Helge Kjellin (1885–1984). Kjellin had studied in Uppsala University under Johnny Roosval and then in Lund University, where he defended his dissertation on the 19th century Swedish painter Uno Troili. He had taken part in research work at churches in Gotland, Skåne, Uppland and Warmland and contributed to the famous Sveriges kyrkor series that was first published in 1912. In 1920 he was an associate professor of art history and theory in Lund. His research field was medieval church art, especially medieval funerary painting.\(^{67}\)

The next step in the procedure after receiving these letters was to contact the candidates. The Faculty of Philosophy seems to have been in a hurry. In the summer of 1920 the Baltic German classical archaeologist Oskar Waldhauer (1883–1935) was visiting Tartu and he was invited to occupy the post.\(^{68}\) O. Waldhauer has studied classical archaeology with Adolf Furtwängler in Munich and defended his thesis in 1903. After that he worked at the Antique Department of the Hermitage in St. Petersburg. In 1918 he became the head of this department replacing the Baltic German Eugen Pridik.\(^{69}\) O. Waldhauer has stated several conditions: first he wanted to remain a classical archaeologist although the chair was assigned for aesthetics and art history. O. Waldhauer demanded from the university to make efforts for regaining the collections of the University Art Museum, which still were in Voronezh. First and foremost he saw the tradition of the teaching and studying of classical archaeology as essential. These conditions could not be fulfilled. The field of classical archaeology was already covered by another chair. There were also great difficulties with getting back the collections from Voronezh where the collections were evacuated during the war and where they remain to this day.\(^{70}\) The negotiations with O. Waldhauer were discontinued. It is not quite clear, if his Baltic German origin had any influence on this decision. It is more probable, that his lack of expertise in general art history and contemporary art was an obstacle. The correspondence with O. Waldhauer sheds light upon the general ideas of the board of the Faculty and their expectations from a professor of art history. It also brings to light the difficulties of pursuing such a discipline in Tartu in the 1920s.
Although the academic education in art history at that time was comprehensive enough to enable a scholar to pursue research on different material from various epochs the research interests of the candidates show a general inclination towards Renaissance and Baroque art. A scholar definitely needs collections to work with, be it either works of art or architecture themselves or reproductions – graphic or photographic. The University of Tartu had lost most of its precious collections due to the evacuation in 1915–17. The collections of the University Art Museum and the collections of 16th–19th century graphic art at the university library were retrieved during the next few years. In the city of Tartu the society of Estonian avant-garde artists Pallas also owned some good collections of paintings, graphics and photographs. There were also the art collections of the Baltic Germans. The collection of Reinhold von Liphart at Raadi mansion, which was mainly accumulated by the famous art collector Karl Eduard von Liphart, was the most valuable, it contained 15th and 16th century Italian paintings and works from famous 17th century Dutch painters such as Frans Hals, A. van Dyck and others. However, R. von Liphart had started to export his collection after the 1905 Russian Revolution and continued to do so until most of his collection was taken out of Estonia at the beginning of the 1920s. The government hesitated and took no action to prevent it. This was a great loss, especially if we consider how much effort and money the American Ivy League universities spent on accumulating good collections of European art during the very same period.

The existence of art reproductions and photographs and a specialized library were important issues for the candidates in connection with the teaching of art history. For some candidates the lack and scarcity of collections was crucial for changing their minds, probably because they knew the amount of investment needed to build up the collections were beyond the financial capacity of the University. For others who were willing to bring their own collections with them it was to become a practical question of transportation and storage.
After rejecting O. Waldhauer’s candidature the Faculty in November 1920 made contact with the proposed candidates by sending letters to Dr. K. Gerstenberg, Dr. E. Panofsky, Prof. Fr. Knapp, Prof. M. Wackernagel and Dr. Helge Kjellin. The response from Fritz Knapp has not been preserved in the archive, but it seems that he had agreed to become a candidate.75 Erwin Panofsky declined politely.76 Martin Wackernagel seemed enthusiastic and wanted to find out more about “the political, economic and cultural conditions in Estonia” before he made his decision.77 He also asked about facilities for teaching art history. “Is there any [specialized] literature and, above all, are there any diapositives to show in lectures or finances that the Ministry could allocate for them in sufficient [my emphasis] quantities? Has there ever been a chair for art history in Tartu? Or does the does the teaching apparatus have to be built up from scratch have to be built up from scratch?”78 In response the Faculty tried to persuade that Tartu was a safe place for foreign (including German) scholars as the one's already arrived seemed to allude. However, the representative of the Faculty, Mr. Oldekop, answered in his letter: “in earlier times, when Löschcke and others were teaching here, art history was no more than an appendage (Anhängsel) of the chair of classical philology.”79 He stressed that the chair of art history would have to reckon with modern art and said that the means for that were available. However, M. Wackernagel must have been better informed about the capacity and finances it would require to build up the collections. During 1905-1910 he had worked with Arthur Haseloff, the secretary of the Royal Prussian History Institute in Rome (Königlich Preußischen Historischen Institut), on an expedition to South Italy, where they took over 3,200 photographs on glass plates and nitrocellulose.80 Later the ever-increasing need for funds was required for building up the collection of Estonian art and architectural heritage (mainly photographs) that H. Kjellin, launched stressful discussions with the university council in 1923 that might have brought about his departure in August 1924.81

The clash of enthusiasm and reality can be observed in a parallel concatenation of events that took place nearby, in Turku (Åbo), Finland. A chair of art history was founded at the Åbo Akademi in 1919 through the donation of Consul Victor Hoving.82 At this time Joseph Strzygowski has already made contact with several Scandinavian art historians and was planning to move his art history institute from Vienna to Sweden. For several reasons discussed by L. Berggren in his article, instead of Sweden, he started to make plans to build up the institute in the newly founded Åbo Akademi. The reality at the Akademi was less impressive than J. Strzygowski had expected and his plans were not fulfilled because of the lack of finances.

J. Strzygowski has been in Åbo almost a year, when he received information about the planned chair for art history in Tartu from Arne Michael Tallgren, his friend, and newly-elected professor of Estonian and Scandinavian Archaeology at the University of Tartu. Their correspondence was quite revealing the practical concerns which J. Strzygowski had concerning the possible tenure in Tartu. “I would be very glad to follow the invitation […] if I could be sure that those sums that they offer in Tartu would be sufficient to provide for the family. I have heard that the Estonian mark is worth less than the Finnish. You write that the foreigners will receive an extra £10 a month. But is it sufficient enough to buy books and photos and to travel? I fear the costs of moving and the presumable lack of lodging in Tartu. Has [the university] thought about the important problems of living conditions? I am sorry to put the material questions in first place, but alas currently this is the issue when you are encumbered with children.”85 The man who had made extensive and expensive travels to the East before the First World War became very careful about financial matters after it. After 1918 he turned his attention to northern art, partly, he claimed, because postwar poverty prevented him from extending his perceptual cognizance of oriental forms.86

In this light it is not surprising that when J. Strzygowski was informed of his election as professor a month later he announced his agreement to take the post.88 He wanted to visit Tartu on 1st September before making his final decision.89 However, the university council decided in June that “the chair of
art history has already been unfilled for a long time and in the coming semester it should start with a full programme. We regret, that it is not possible to have him [Strzygowski] here.90 On 20th June H. Kjellin was appointed professor of art history by the Minister of Education.91 In August H. Kjellin agreed to take the post. The fact that he promised to start lecturing only in January 1922 must have been a disappointment for the Faculty.92 It seems that the University Council was in a hurry just as they were when they contacted O. Waldhauer. Perhaps some pressure was exerted from the Ministry to make a decision about the chair otherwise it would have been abolished. This was to happen in 1926 – two years after H. Kjellin had left Tartu.93

OUTCOMES AND IMPLICATIONS

When the founders of the National University of Tartu have foreseen a chair for “aesthetics and general art history” they were first of all following the model of the university structure in Scandinavia. They were applying an ideologically acceptable choice. The fact that the Scandinavian model itself had been inspired by the German, did not have significance for them initially.

They wanted to create a national university, but they did not want an academia of national dilettantes. When they had an application of a mediocre Estonian lecturer at their disposal they did not hesitate to neglect it and turn to the best foreign professors of the discipline. The reality was that the discipline of art history had a German tradition and the best candidates for the professorship could only be found in Germany. Yet it is significant that they eventually chose J. Strzygowski as professor and it was seemingly only by accident that the professor who started working in Tartu – Tor Helge Kjellin – came from Sweden.

The explanation for electing J. Strzygowski as professor might be following. J. Strzygowski was an important though controversial figure of Western art historical discourse starting from the fin de siècle until the end of the Second World War. After the war he was generally excluded from the histories of art-historical thought, because of his sympathy to values of the Third Reich, but also because of his personal character.94 J. Strzygowski attacked mostly philological Classical humanist establishment by making great play of the Oriental origins of late-antique and medieval art, which he linked to Aryan and Nordic tendencies, as opposed to those of the Mediterranean.95 His insistence on the importance of the border-lands of the West like Nordic countries and the Orient also made him a preferable figure in the Baltic context. On the other hand J. Strzygowski was also the precursor of object-oriented research and writing of art history. This approach was very important when dealing with those objects of research accompanied by little or no relevant textual evidence. This was exactly the case with the early history of Nordic and Baltic countries. The object-oriented approach also meant a convergence of art history, archaeology, heritage protection and restoration from which the research of art history greatly profited. It is in this context that the close connection between Nordic archaeology and art history should be stressed. As I revealed in my article the information about the election was passed on to J. Strzygowski through the Finnish archaeologists. The two very influential figures in Swedish art history at the same period – Johnny Roosval and Sigurd Curman – were also in close contact with J. Strzygowski.

Helge Kjellin represents the first generation of Swedish art historians which was educated at the time when significant changes were happening in the study and teaching of art history. It was very much in accordance with the ideas of Strzygowsky when the researchers of Swedish art history started to build up their discourse on archaeological and architectural archaeological material. The idea of the Nordic countries as being “special” in the history of Europe was added to this. This was also the starting point for J. Roosval’s Nordic-Baltic arte-dominium. In the 19th century art history in Sweden has been closely connected with literary studies and became an independent discipline during H. Kjellin’s university studies.96 H. Kjellin took part in the Sveriges kyrkor project first as a student and then as a head of a research group. Later he attempted to launch a similar project with comparable ambitiousness on a smaller scale in Estonia.
Considering the changes in Sweden perhaps it is not so surprising that the name of the chair in Tartu was abbreviated from “aesthetics and general art history” to “art history” sometime between 1919 and 1922. M. Eller suggested that it happened before H. Kjellin became professor, but I would suggest it was after [my italics]. The changed name approves the above mentioned changes that were “imported” to Estonia by Kjellin. Whereas the art and architecture of the Middle Ages in Sweden was “national” it was “Baltic German” in Estonia. As Kjellin was not to abandon his preferred field of study it was precisely this reason, which promoted a discussion about the definition of Estonian art.

At the same time the strong divide between Baltic and Estonian art was also the reason why it was necessary to study the history of Estonian art as it was understood then – the art production of Estonian national artists. One of the reasons for starting the election process was a need to meet the strong interest of the students who wanted to have lectures on contemporary art. Indeed the art life at that time in Tartu as well as in the rest of Estonia was quite intense. Many Estonian artists had a direct contact with the latest developments in contemporary art, but they were also the generation who had actively contributed to the nation-building process. Many of them had also spent shorter or longer periods residing and working in Scandinavia. The Faculty of Philosophy wanted to satisfy these interests and I suppose they hoped that the elected professor would facilitate that.

When H. Kjellin came to Tartu in January 1922 he held a lecture on the art connections of Estonian medieval art with Scandinavia. He started to collect materials on the same subject and founded the Institute of Art History for this purpose. His choice on concentrating on medieval church art (= Baltic Art) might have been one of the reasons for developing the confrontation with the University Council. The relations between him and the Council were tense from the very beginning.97

I suggest that the activities of H. Kjellin helped to bring about a change in the definition of Estonian art. The creation of the research collection for the study of medieval architecture and art was only the first step to promote a new discourse on Estonian art. It was his Die Kirche zu Karja98 and Die Hallenkirchen Estlands und Gotland99 published in Sweden in 1928 that was met with a sharp critical reaction in Estonia, especially from the Baltic German art historian O. Freymuth. The debate was a part of a more general dispute between German and Scandinavian art historians in the 1920s–30s.100 H. Kjellin was an acolyte of Johnny Roosval – the inventor of the notion of the Nordic-Baltic art region that according to him had existed in the Baltic Sea area in the Middle Ages. In Roosval’s system the island of Gotland was crucial. It is not surprising that it was the art connections between Gotland and Saaremaa that H. Kjellin was most keen to prove disregarding all other artistic influences. Where the Baltic German art historians saw influences from the German motherland, he detected a total dominance of the “masters” from Gotland. The focus was drawn from one extreme to the other and Estonian art historians were forced to redefine Estonian art to embrace Baltic art. In 1932, in his History of Estonian Art Alfred Waga proposed a territorial definition suggesting that Estonian art should include “everything born throughout time in the field of art in our homeland.”101 It was to remain a cry in the wilderness and would only be applied after the Second World War.

Notes
1 The term “academic art history” refers to the origins of art history as Kunstwissenschaft and has been used by Anglo-American scholars (see also footnote 28).
6 The first to write about art historians at the University


13 Eller, Mart. Tartu Ülikooli osast eesti kunstiteadusest 1920-1930-nail aastail 1 [The Role of the University of Tartu in Estonian Art History in the 1920–1930s, Part I]. In: Kunstiteadus. Kunstikriitika, 1983, Nr. 5, p. 60–75 (typically to the times the article was written in 1980, but got published only 3 years later).

14 M. Eller mentions that the name of the chair was shortened to ”art history” the same year, but I suggest that the change was made by H. Kjellin in 1922.

15 This was presumably a misreading and/or misprint of ”Waldhauer”.

16 Eller, op. cit., 1983, p. 64.


18 The involvement of these art historians with Estonian academic art history has not been mentioned before by earlier researchers on this topic.


23 In fact the history of Swedish rule in Estonia became an important topic after Estonia declared independence in 1918. It was relevant in the rhetoric of communication between Estonia and Sweden in the 1920s and 1930s when close economic and cultural relations were developed. It was also in this connection that the Swedish professor candidates were willing to come to Tartu as there was a common history to be researched. So it is not surprising that when S. Karling became professor in 1933, his first article was about the history of the buildings of the Swedish Academia Gustaviana (Karling, Sten. Tartu universitets byggnadshistoria under den svenska tiden [The Building History of the University Of Tartu During The Swedish Times]. In: Sv-Sjedonika, 1934/I, s. 29–67).


26 In fact it was the Russian czar Paul I that first launched the idea to establish a university in the Baltic Provinces so that the Baltic German educated youth would not be contaminated by the ideas of French revolution. (Hiio, Piirimäe, op. cit., p. 110).


31 Born, Janatková, Labuda, op. cit., 2004, s. 11.


33 The territory inhabited by Estonians was not united until 1917. Before this the area of current South Estonia together with Northern Latvia formed the Livonian province.


41 Ibid.

42 Ibid. p. 64.


44 *Väljaläinud kirjade raamat [The Books of Outgoing Mail]*. Estonian Historical Archives (EHA). F. 2100, ap. 5, b. 959, l. 3.

45 The “nationality” of the university meant most importantly that the lectures and study should be carried out in Estonian language.


47 E. g. in France the German art history writing was generally neglected until the 1930s when Henri Focillon made use of the methodology of German scholars. (http://www.dictionaryofarthistorians.org/focillonh.htm [visited 27 01 2011]).


49 Pöld, op. cit., 1929, p. 50. See also: *Väljaläinud kirjade raamat [The Books of Outgoing Mail]*. EHA. F. 2100, ap. 5, b. 959, l. 11.


51 Evert Henrik Gabriel Wrangel (1863–1940) was a Swedish professor of literature and art history. His scholarly contribution can be classified under theory and history of aesthetics and literature and cultural history.

52 *Väljaläinud kirjade raamat [The Books of Outgoing Mail]*. EHA. F. 2100, ap. 5, b. 959, l. 11.

53 This probably meant the duty to arrange the department of art history at the Estonian National Museum.


55 Kirjavahetus öppejõujad kandideerijatega [Correspondence with the Candidates for Academic Posts]. *EHA*. F. 2100, ap. 5, b. 257, l. 40.


57 Kirjavahetus öppejõujad kandideerijatega [Correspondence with the Candidates for Academic Posts]. *EHA*. F. 2100, ap. 5, b. 257, l. 40.


59 Kirjavahetus öppejõujad kandideerijatega [Correspondence with the Candidates for Academic Posts]. *EHA*. F. 2100, ap. 5, b. 257, l. 42.


62 His 1914 dissertation *Dürers Kunsttheorie vornehmlich in ihrem Verhältnis zur Kunsttheorie der Italiener* was published the following year in Berlin as *Die Theoretische Kunstlehre Albrecht Dürers*.

63 I was not able to clarify the exact dates of birth and death.

64 Kirjavahetus öppejõujad kandideerijatega [Correspondence with the Candidates for Academic Posts]. *EHA*. F. 2100, ap. 5, b. 257, l. 44.


66 His most renowned work *Der Lebensraum des Künstlers in der Florentinischen Renaissance* (Leipzig: E. A. Seeman, 1938) was also translated into English in 1981 (The

Kjellin, Helge. EHA. F. 2100, ap. 2, b. 353, l. 2-22.

Kjiravahetus õppejõuks kandideerijatega [Correspondence with the Candidates for Academic Posts]. EHA. F. 2100, ap. 5, b. 257, l. 53.

Eugen Pridik was brother of Heinrich Alexander Pridik who was the professor of classical archaeology at the University of Tartu.


Keevallik, Juta. op. cit., 1993, p. 42-44.


A letter has been sent on the 16th of December where Fr. Knapp was asked to send his curriculum vitae and publications. (Väljaläinud kirjade raamat [The Books of Outgoing Mail], EHA. F. 2100, ap. 5, b. 959, l. 17.)

Kjiravahetus õppejõuks kandideerijatega [Correspondence with the Candidates for Academic Posts]. EHA. F. 2100, ap. 5, b. 257, l. 64.

Kjiravahetus õppejõuks kandideerijatega [Correspondence with the Candidates for Academic Posts]. EHA. F. 2100, ap. 5, b. 257, l. 63.

“Jedoch müsste ich auch wissen wie es mit dem Lehrmitteln für Kunstgeschichte dort steht, ob einige Bestände in Kunstgeschichtliche Literatur und vor allem ob Lichtbilder-Diapositive für die Vorführung von Bildern ins Vorlesungen vorhanden sind oder Mittel zur Anschaffung von solchen mir in ausreichende Maner von Ministerium zugerechnet werden könnte. Hat überhaupt eine Kunstgeschichtliche Professur schon bisher in Dorpat bestanden? Oder müsste ein Lehrmittellapparat völlig neu angelegt werden?” (Kjiravahetus õppejõuks kandideerijatega [Correspondence with the Candidates for Academic Posts], EHA. F. 2100, ap. 5, b. 257, l. 63.)

“In alter Zeit, als Löschcke u. andere hier lehrten, war Kunstgeschichte in Dorpat nicht mehr wie ein Anhängsel der Katheders für klassische Philologie.” (Kjiravahetus õppejõuks kandideerijatega [Correspondence with the Candidates for Academic Posts], EHA. F. 2100, ap. 5, b. 257, l. 66).

http://www.ub.uni-kiel.de/ausstellungen/haseloff/index.html [visited 27 01 2011].

Kangor, op. cit., 2009.


Letter from J. Strzygowski to A. M. Tallgren on 16th April 1921 from Åbo. (Kjiravahetus õppejõuks kandideerijatega [Correspondence with the Candidates for Academic Posts], EHA. F. 2100, ap. 5, b. 257, l. 1)

A. M. Tallgren was elected professor in May 1920 (Väljaläinud kirjade raamat [The Books of Outgoing Mail], EHA. F. 2100, ap. 5, b. 959, l. 10).


Marchand, op. cit., p. 126.

The election was held on 28th April 1921. J. Strzygowski received 16, H. Kjellin 14, Fr. Knapp 12, K. Gerstenberg 5 and O. Waldhauer 1 vote in the first round. In the second J. Strzygowski got 15, H. Kjellin 11 and Knapp 6 votes. (Kjellin, Helge. EHA. F. 2100, ap. 2, b. 353, l. 23.)

Kjiravahetus õppejõuks kandideerijatega [Correspondence with the Candidates for Academic Posts], EHA. F. 2100, ap. 5, b. 257, l. 91.

Strzygowski, Jos. EHA. F. 2100, ap. 2, b. 1142, l. 4.

Ibid, l. 4. Yet J. Strzygowski visited Tartu in March 1925, when he held public lectures at the University of Tartu. (Die kunstgeschichtlichen Schüler an der Universität zu Dorpat. Riksbarkiet in Stockholm, Sweden. Helge Kjellins baltiska samling. Vol. 2.: Uppgifter om studerande i konsthistoria [Information on the Art History Students]).

Kjellin, Tor Helge. EHA. F. 2100, ap. 2, b. 35, l. 9.

Kjellin, Helge. EHA. F. 2100, ap. 2, b. 353, l. 29.

Eller, op. cit., 1983, p. 65

Marchand, op. cit., p. 121.


Kangor, op. cit., 2009, p. 158.


Waga, Alfred. Eesti kunsti ajalugu I. Keskaeg [History of Estonian Art I. Middle Ages]. Tartu: Eesti Kirjanduse Selts, 1932, p. 5. See also Kodres, Our own Estonian art history..., op. cit., 2010.
DĖSTYTOJŲ PAIEŠKA IR ESTŲ AKADEMINĖS MENO ISTORIJOS APIBRĖŽTYS

Reikšminiai žodžiai: Estijos meno istoriografija, akademinė meno istorija, tautiškumo formavimas,
Tor Helge Kjellin, Josef Strzygowski, Johnny Roosval, Adolph Goldschmidt, Heinrich Wölfflin.

Santrauka