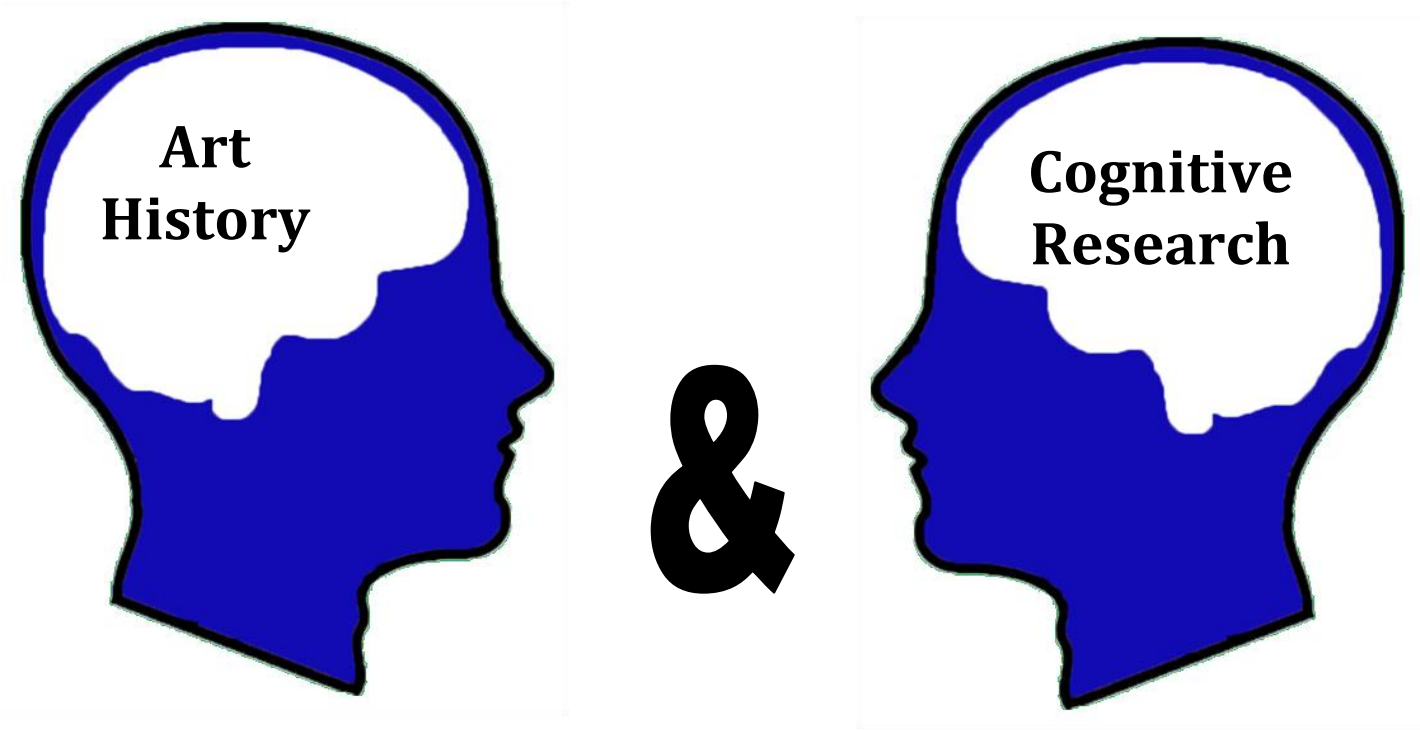
7th Vienna Aesthetics Symposium

June 12, 2014

Lecture Hall G, 2nd Floor (left wing of the building)

Liebiggasse 5, A-1010 Wien



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**Department of
Basic Psychological Research
and Research Methods**

Affective response to visual art work: bridging art theory/aesthetics and neuroscience

Assoc. Prof. PhDr. Ladislav Kesner, Ph.D.

**Department of Art History
Masaryk University (Czech Republic)**

The viewer´s emotional and empathetic response to works of visual art has traditionally occupied a central place in art history/theory and aesthetics. The talk will introduce the research project of a team of art historians, psychologists and neuroscientists from Department of Art History, Masaryk University Brno and National Institute of Mental Health in Prague focused on affective response to figural works of art. The ultimate aim of the project is to link subjective (first person), behavioral (eye-tracking) and neuronal (fMRI, electro cortical) data on the affective response. Conceptual and methodological problems of such integration will be discussed, as well as the application of emerging science of large-scale brain networks to a comprehensive model of affective response to art.

Eye movements in Empirical Aesthetics

Dr. Marcos Nadal, Mag. Michael Forster & Univ.-Prof. Dr. Helmut Leder

Department of Basic Psychological Research and Research Methods
University of Vienna (Austria)

People often assess their surroundings in terms of beauty, liking or preference. Yet, little is known about what makes this aesthetic way of looking at the world special. Complexity is believed to have an important role in the aesthetic appreciation of visual stimuli. Its influence is, however, not straightforward, with different factors contributing to the perception of complexity and to preference formation. We present an eye tracking experiment aimed to study whether people deploy specific exploratory strategies when they approach visual stimuli with an aesthetic attitude, and to compare them to those used when they are asked to appraise the complexity of the same stimuli. Our results suggest that people's exploration patterns, as measured by fixation count and duration, are determined by the interaction of bottom-up processes, related with the degree of realism of the stimuli, and processes determined by the task—in this case whether participants were judging beauty or complexity. Our results also clarify the effects of different complexity dimensions on beauty and complexity judgments, as well as the temporal unfolding of such effects. This experiment, thus, reveals how the study of eye movements uncovers the diverse determinants of visual exploration.

Eye-tracking in Art History: The Vienna Projects

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Raphael Rosenberg & Mag. Johanna Aufreiter

Department of Art History
University of Vienna (Austria)

For centuries in the literature about art numerous texts assume that paintings, sculptures and buildings guide the beholder's gaze in specific ways. Also questions about the function and mode of seeing still play a prominent role in actual art history. Until recently introspection and speculation were the common methods to explain the movement of the eye in the arts. However, the latest technological developments make it possible to measure eye movements with little effort and high precision.
Based on studies conducted at the Laboratory for Cognitive Research in Art History (Department of Art History, University of Vienna), we will compare art discourses on gaze movements and the actual paths of the eye. By presenting ongoing projects at this laboratory, we discuss how eye-tracking may help to find answers to old queries of art history.

Mapping the innocent Eye. Art History in the Age of Neurosciences

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Christoph Wagner

Department of Art History
University of Regensburg (Germany)

Over the last few years high expectations and hopes have been built up, even promises have been made by cognitive psychology and neurology: thus one might easily get the impression that the iconic turn has been replaced by a neurologic turn. Does that also mean that the perception of images has been transformed into an/shifted towards an encephalic apperception-process?