



Issue No. 5/2016

European Revivals Conference 2015: Return to Nature – Artists' Colonies and Nature in Art, Architecture and Design around 1900

23–25 September 2015 // Krakow and Zakopane, Poland

The conference organised by the Tatra Museum takes as its leading theme the return to nature, which manifested itself in visual arts, architecture and design, literature and music, philosophy and lifestyles around 1900. Rooted in the ideas of the 19th-century thinkers and writers such as John Ruskin, it informed the Arts and Crafts and Back-to-the-Land Movements and parallel ideas comprehended as national revivals in central and northern Europe, all of which tapped into Romantic philosophy and imagination.

The return to nature took place both in art and in life, triggering the rise of the colonies of artists who, like the poet Godfrey Blount, believed that *country life is the only happy, healthy and human one*. In search of simple life and physical and spiritual regeneration painters, writers and composers settled down in the areas of natural beauty, such as the countryside around Lake Tuusula in Finland, the seaside village of Skagen in Denmark or the village of Zakopane in the Polish Tatras.

In the arts, this turn to nature translated itself, among others, into the representations of the natural world and order, not infrequently endowed with symbolic and metaphysical qualities. Nature was carefully studied by artists and the representations of life, growth, germination and cycles of seasons made their way into painting and sculpture. In design and applied arts nature was stylised and increasingly abstracted into decorative forms and patterns. Some plants and trees, such as the rowan tree or chestnut rose to prominence and the motif of the tree of life stood out as a powerful symbol.

The three major topics that the conference seeks to address include philosophical and theoretical ideas that underpinned the return to nature c. 1900; the rise of artist's communities in the countryside in search of alternative ways of living; natural inspiration in arts, architecture and interior design of the time.

The European Revivals Conference 2105 was supported by the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, Warsaw.

2015 Conference Programme

Wednesday 23 September, House of the Medical Society in Krakow

Welcome and opening of the conference by **Anna Wende-Surmiak**, Director of the Tatra Museum. Welcome by Professor **Aleksander Skotnicki**, Vice President of the Medical Society in Kraków. Introduction by **Edyta Barucka**, Conference Convener.

Morning Session: Artists' Colonies in Focus

Moderated by **Riitta Ojanperä**, Director of Collections Management, Finnish National Gallery, Helsinki.

Plenary lecture by **Anna-Maria von Bonsdorff**, Chief Curator, Ateneum Museum, Finnish National Gallery, Helsinki: *On the Shores of the Lake – Tuusula Artists Community*

Marina Dmitrieva: *The Rustic Hut: Rediscovering the Wood – Abramtsevo, Tuusula, Zakopane*

Anna-Maria Wiljanen: *From Centre to Periphery and Back? – In Search of a Good and Simple Life*

Afternoon Session I: The Call of the Countryside and Nature as a Model for Art

Moderated by **Vibeke Waallann Hansen**, Curator, National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo

Janne Leithe: *Frida Hansen (1855–1931) – Gardens without Fences*

Anna Feliks: *Naturalistic Outdoor Furniture in Poland – History, Fashion, Objects*

Afternoon Session II: The Call of the Countryside and Nature as a Model for Art

Moderated by **Frances Fowle**, Senior Curator, Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh

Julia Dudkiewicz: *Kelmscott Manor, William Morris (1834–1896) and News from Nowhere. Constructing the Vision of Vanished Rural England and the Making of a Morris Memorial*

Edyta Barucka: *In Celebration of Nature. Trees and Leaves as Decorative and Symbolic Motifs in Design c. 1900*

Thursday 24 September, Tatra Museum, Zakopane and Surroundings

Study Trip. Viewing the collections of the Tatra Museum and visiting privately-owned artists' houses. Introduction by **Teresa Jabłońska**, former Director of the Tatra Museum and Curator of Collections.

Friday 25 September, House of the Medical Society in Krakow

Morning Session: Artists' Colonies: Ideas, Myths and Strategies

Moderated by **Vibeke Waallann Hansen**, Curator, National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo.

Plenary lecture by **Frances Fowle**, Senior Curator, Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh: *Armand Guillaumin and the Artists' Colony at Crozant*

Riitta Ojanperä: *Wilderness and Violence. Untouched Nature instead of Nice and Beautiful Countryside as a source of Finnish Cultural and Artistic Identity*

Afternoon Session: Artists' Colonies: Ideas, Myths and Strategies

Moderated by **Edyta Barucka**, Independent Scholar, Warsaw

Katarzyna Chrudzimska-Uhera: *Artists' Colonies as a Response to the Experience of Modernity. The Case of Zakopane*

Krzysztof Z. Cieszkowski: *'Back to Nature' as an Artistic Choice and Strategy*