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## **Culturing Nature: Artistic Strategies in the 19th and 20th Centuries**

### **Abstract**

The problem of this research is the transfer of experience through artworks.

*Culturing of nature* in this work is understood as a creative strategy, when elements of nature in art practices (in some cases, communicational practices) become “mediators”, agents for dissemination of the experience.

Although the origins of experiential art are often associated with modernist expression (e.g., Dada), the dissertation argues that the perceiver’s experience was shaped earlier invoking nature. Although most religious art also sought to create experiences, but relied on textual sources and strove for the perceiver’s predictable response. However Romanticists “turned to nature” as a resource with little canonization in their texts, seeking a multifaceted, varied or undefined experience of the perceiver.

**Scope and limitations:** the research focuses on the interaction of *trees* and *place* in the perception of a landscape, emphasizing art objects made of *tree or trees* (but not wood) and consciously leaves out all other elements of nature and art. Examples are in two case studies from different periods – strategies of culturing nature in the 19th century is revealed through discussing a famous and ambivalent Lithuanian cultural object, a protomuseum, established in the trunk of a centenarian oak tree in 1812 (“Trunk, Mask and Monument: *Baublys* in the Garden of Dionizas Poška”); strategies of culturing nature in the 20th century are observed through a creative project of the artist Giuseppe Penone (“Exposed *trees* in a creative project of Giuseppe Penone – case study of ‘experiential’ art”). Both case studies show the dynamic from visual to *participatory* landscape and cover the context of today in a problematic field of my research.

### **Research questions:**

What strategies of culturing nature can be seen as catalysts of the senses and experiences in the art of 19th and 20th centuries?

How does nature, in this case, through the element of a *tree*, mediate highlighting the content of the experience in the art practices of modern Western culture?

### **Methodology:**

As culturing of nature encompasses a wide range of problems, the shifts in the discourse of history, changes of the concept of memory and phenomenon of time are important in this work. Therefore this research establishes links between the related theoretical approaches of historians, art critics, and philosophers of the period (e.g., Alexander von Humboldt, John Ruskin, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, Erwin Panofsky, Aby

Warburg, Mikhail Bakhtin) and contemporary philosophers of history, culture and art (e.g., Mieke Bal, Hans Belting, Simon Schama, David Cozens Hoy, Aleida and Jan Assmann). Methodology is constructed applying theoretical approaches of Belting, Bal and Bakhtin: inquiring how the continuity of culture and its change (as it continues to evolve) could be perceived, and what are the ways of producing and distributing meaning. The metaphor of a "mask" is invoked to disclose the concept of culturing nature. Nature becomes culture in the observed art practices by turning a human being to a witness of nature's *activity*. The mask unfolds and reveals the performative potential of the objects discussed in this work.