

## **Robert Kudielka: *The Seven Capital Sins of Art History***

### **Proposal of a compact seminar in Autumn 2017**

A. Explanation of the title: "The Seven Deadly Sins" is a theological categorization of vices established in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. that also served as an iconography in picture-making (the most notable example being a painting attributed to Hieronymus Bosch in the Museo del Prado, Madrid). In modern times this title has been metaphorically adopted to denote specific aberrations in professional disciplines.

B. Thesis: *The Seven Capital Sins* I want to discuss are:

1. Disregarding the "twin birth" of Art History as an academic discipline and an expressly modern (mainly French) art in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century
2. The "colonial transfer" (Dieter Jähnig) of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Western concept of art both in time and space, historically and globally
3. The unreflected predominance of the category "development" in ordering and narrating the history of art
4. The habitual Western prepossession for the "picture" as the basic paradigm of all arts
5. The failure to appreciate the dissimilarity of the similar (see the "enmities" between seemingly similar artists such as Max Bill – Richard Paul Lohse, Francis Bacon –Lucien Freud et. al.)
6. The almost pathological aversion of academic Art History against the practical issue of 'range' in the arts
7. The discrepancy between the scholarly notion of "truth" and the creative "appropriation" of culturally heterogeneous artefacts

All these "sins" are obviously only the other side of indisputable "virtues". Elucidating this ambivalence will be the guiding line my argument.

C. Structure of the seminar: I imagine a three-day event, with a 90 min session each day, divided into a one-hour lecture and 30 min discussion. I shall present each point with only a few concise examples from the history of art. The first session will cover points 1 and 2, the third points 6 and 7 – these are the critical philosophical areas. The second session will be concerned with the methodology of Art History as scholarly discipline: points 3 – 5.

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I would be grateful if these three sessions could be accommodated in the later afternoon.