

### Perspectives

- A deeper awareness toward the workings of ornament suggests alternative ways of approaching the history of art and confronts questions of art and context.
- The rhetoric of vividness in lifelike, energetic ornament as a means for questioning perception and highlighting the complexities of vision.
- The importance of ornament in regard to gender fluidity and ambiguity, and to ideas of time, movement, and transformation.

### About Chris Askholt Hammeken

Chris Askholt Hammeken is an art historian. He has written his PhD dissertation at the Department of Art History, Aesthetics and Museology – School of Communication and Culture, Aarhus University with research stays in Rome and Vienna. Currently, he is part-time lecturer in Art History at Aarhus University and teaches Visual Arts and Danish at Gammel Hellerup Gymnasium. His research focus is on ornament and artificiality in sixteenth-century visual art, questions of style and creativity, as well as sexuality studies.

### Time and place for defence

16 December 2016 at 12.30

Aarhus University, Kasernen, building 1584, room 124, Langelandsgade 139, Aarhus C

### Contact

Chris Askholt Hammeken

Mail: [chammeken@gmail.com](mailto:chammeken@gmail.com)

Tel: +45 28195910

School of Communication and Culture  
Aarhus University,  
Langelandsgade 139  
Jens Chr. Skous Vej 2 og 4 (bygning 1485 og 1481)  
8000 Aarhus C



PhD dissertation by  
Chris Askholt Hammeken



AARHUS UNIVERSITET

# UNRULY ORNAMENT ON ARTIFICIAL MOMENTS IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY VISUAL ART

**Summary of the main points of the dissertation “Unruly Ornament” by Chris Askholt Hammeken, Department of Art History, Aesthetics and Museology – School of Communication and Culture, Aarhus University. The dissertation focuses on the profound ornamental attitude in sixteenth-century Mannerist art and questions the unruly artificiality at work as a way of grasping the world.**

## Between cosmos and cosmetics

The dissertation explores the centrality of ornament to early modern ideas of cosmic totality, which have altered with the sensitivity of modern aesthetics that confines ornament to peripheral and superficial adornment only. Arguing that ornament has been inscribed with a latent, sensuous capacity to destabilize social norms, these capabilities climax with sixteenth-century visual art informed by an encompassing ornamental attitude that relates to a context of changing conditions and worldviews.

## Defining style: Mannerist art

In order to navigate within the field of sixteenth-century ornament, the dissertation unfolds through a study of the possibilities in the concept of style as it has been defined in the di-

scipline of art history as well as an unravelling of the reception history of Mannerism. While style is positioned as bearer of meaning, the take on Mannerism is vocalized through an intermediate position that emphasizes both anxious unrest and playful sophistication as features that permeate movement, change and transformation throughout sixteenth-century ornateness in art.

## Artificiality unbound

Sixteenth-century ornament works within the age-old paradigm of images created in nature by chance. As evident in visual art of the time such as gardens, grottoes, and grotesques, the leitmotif is now used to activate the generative, dynamic, and animating aspects of artistic inventiveness within a poetic visuality of transformation that foregrounds metamorphic ornament in imaginative, dreamy figurations. The unruly and untamed artificiality is thereby composed of ornamental forms appearing in monstrous excess and lifelike energy.

## Ornament as intermezzo

A vocabulary of sixteenth-century ornament that articulates its indistinguishable relation to artifice is put forth in analyses and close readings of artworks, canonical as well as peripheral, contextualized with rhetoric and poetics. Ornament is defined as theatrical intermezzo: as a figural movement in space that creates temporal tension. At the same time, studies focused on Michelangelo, Bronzino, and Montaigne, respectively, interrupt the prosaic presentation in the structure of the dissertation with concentrated moments of discussion, as if intermezzi in action.

## Microcosmos and macrocosmos

Ornament in excess is finally considered campy insofar as it carries a potential to overrule argument and break with tradition in anticlassical manner. This anachronistic framing positions the contemplative space of embodied ornament at a time in which the microcosmos of the human body and the macrocosmos of the infinite universe are examined in tandem. Everything is in flux, and the hyperbolic character of ornament as central to cosmology accentuates transgressions of meandering forms and artificial hybrids.