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

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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.