



Unbekannter Künstler, *Szene aus dem Nilmosaik von Palestrina*, um 80 v. Chr., 102x95,3 cm, Antikensammlung; Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Inv. Nr. Mos. 3 (Wikimedia Commons).

# ARS UND NATURA IM ERSTEN NACHCHRISTLICHEN JAHRHUNDERT

**Workshop am 14.-15. Juli 2022**  
**Keplerstraße 17, 72074 Tübingen,**  
**Raum 34**

Der Workshop untersucht die Beziehung zwischen Kunst und Natur in der Literatur der späten Republik und der frühen römischen Kaiserzeit. Mit Beiträgen von: **Eva Noller, Jan Stellmann, Linda Forstmann, Sara Fascione, Chiara Ballestrazzi, Laila Dell'Anno.**

Anmeldung bei Stefania Cecere (TP B1: *Ars et natura: Plinius' kunstreflexive Mikronarrative im Kontext der Naturalis Historia*, SFB 1391):  
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## Abstracts

Eva Noller (Basel)

### ***Natura artifex. Nature and/as art in Pliny's *Natural History****

In Pliny's *Natural History*, art/*ars* represents an essential component of nature/*natura*. This can be observed particularly well in the books about metals, stones etc., in which, in addition to the diverse natural materials, Pliny also discusses how man uses these materials for the production of art (or more broadly: of cultural products). Pliny also describes nature itself as *natura artifex*. He thus not only personifies nature, but also locates it in the realm of *ars*. Based on this observation, this paper aims to show that nature is often described by Pliny through categories that are bound to an aesthetic discourse: Some productions of nature are given the status of works of art (and a corresponding aesthetic value) in Pliny's representation, or nature itself is described as an artist whose productions arouse admiration in the observer.

Through this connection of nature and art, on the one hand, the assumption that Pliny in many cases does not draw a clear line between nature and art can be reinforced, and the two concepts can be further contoured. On the other hand, this representation of nature as art can show how Pliny relates to existing aesthetic discourses (especially the discourse of the sublime) and rhetorical discourses (prefigured by Cicero and Quintilian) on the linguistic level. This makes it clear that the *Natural History* should not be viewed as an isolated collection of facts, but that it participates in contemporary discourses on different levels.



Jan Stellmann (Tübingen)

**Natur/lehren. Ästhetik der Naturdidaktik in transkultureller Perspektive**  
**[Teaching Nature – Nature’s Teaching. Aesthetics and Didactics of**  
**Nature in Transcultural Perspective]**

The paper examines the subtle aesthetic strategies of Konrad von Megenberg’s ‘Buch der Natur’, a Middle High German didactic and encyclopaedic text on nature. At first glance, Konrad’s text seems to be a literal translation of the ‘Liber de naturis rerum’ by Thomas of Cantimpré (recension III, ‘Thomas III’). But Konrad also rearranges the material of his template, includes material from other sources (e.g., from recently translated Arabic texts on natural philosophy and medicine by Avicenna and Rhazes), and adds allegorical interpretations of animals, plants, and other natural ‘things’ (focussing on moralisation and Mariology). At these points where Konrad leaves his template, the ‘aesthetics’ of his teaching of nature, and of the teachings of nature, can be discovered. (The paper will present the Middle High German part of an interdisciplinary project that I am developing together with Regula Forster.)

Linda Forstmann (Freiburg)

**Poetologische Naturbeschreibungen in Horaz’ Oden**

Metaphorical language from the field of nature has been a common way of self-expression within the arts ever since. Unsurprisingly, therefore, descriptions of nature in Horace’s *Odes* also fulfil much more than just a decorative function: They are his preferred means of revealing his attitudes towards ways of writing and his literary work in general. My contribution will focus on these metapoetic descriptions of nature in the *Odes*.



By examining three prominent examples – namely the descriptions of wintry *Mons Soracte* (c. 1. 9), of several manifestations of bad weather (c. 2. 9), and of the *fons Bandusiae* (c. 3. 13) – I aim to answer the following questions: In which contexts does Horace use metapoetic descriptions of nature, and what characterises their literary quality? To what extent do they meet respectively transcend their respective generic conventions? And: To what extent are they influenced by the Augustan present? My aim is to show how Horace's metapoetic descriptions of nature are at the same time both conventional and innovative. In order to capture their literary complexity, I propose the term 'opacity'.

Sara Fascione (Napoli)

### **Writing and depicting portraits in Pliny's Letters**

The theme of the close interconnection between nature, visual arts and literature often emerges in Pliny's letter collection. The motif deeply influences the epistolary concept underlying Pliny's work and its structure. The author conceives his collection as a portrait of the society of his time. For this reason, he shapes the epistolary corpus according to the same aesthetic principles which create perfection both in nature and in artworks.



Chiara Ballestrazzi (PhD SNS Pisa)

***Natura fecit. The Art of Nature in Pliny the Elder's Naturalis Historia***

The Leitmotiv of Pliny's *Natural History* is the dialectical relationship between Nature and human beings in their reciprocal roles of *artifices*. The positive model for this complicated interaction is the *certamen artis ac naturae* fought by the painter Pausias and the garland-maker Glycera, who personifies the art of Nature.

I will investigate the complex dynamics between the *nasci* of natural creativity and the *fieri* of human artistry by discussing the most significant expressions of natural art touched on by Pliny, starting with Protogenes' *Ialysus* and Apelles' *Aphrodite Anadyomene*, two artworks that embody the limits of human art and the superiority of natural art. The legendary *imperfectio* of Apelles' *Aphrodite* was perhaps due to the "real" foam from which the goddess was born, painted by the "hand" of Nature herself, exactly like the foam of the dog in Protogenes' *Ialysus*. Indeed, both Apelles and Protogenes were forced to *manum de tabula tollere*: thus, by replacing the human hand, the "hand of Nature" was able to complete their paintings, which therefore depicted the *verum* and the *nasci* of Nature.

The ambiguous competition between human and natural art is also suggested by some artificial "chance" images from Pompeii and other Greek and Roman towns and, afterwards, by the book-matched marble slabs that encrusted floors and walls of several Byzantine churches: the mineral world proves to be the crucial battlefield of the *certamen artis ac naturae*, and within the *Natural History* the major masterpiece of the art of Nature are precious stones.



According to Pliny, the ultimate expression of the ambiguity between natural art and human art were the gems *cochlides*, processed so invasively that they *fiunt verius quam nascuntur*, while some variegated stones were cut by artists with *calliditas* to obtain fake natural masterpieces analogous to Pyrrhus' agate with the effigy of Apollo and the Muses *non arte sed naturae sponte* previously described by Pliny: here, in my opinion, Pliny alludes to cameos, whose ancient name was (until now) unknown to us. The ambiguity between *nasci* and *fieri* reaches its climax: artists impose on these gems the very name of nature, "*physis*", to sell with them that *ipsius naturae admiratio* which coincides with the aim of the *Natural History*.

Laila Dell'Anno (Cambridge)

### **Metapoetic Interplay of *ars*, *natura*, and *techne* in Statius' *Silvae***

Although nature is inherent in the title of the collection, a *silva* in the sense of the dense fairytale forest of the Ovidian type is far removed from the Statian conception of nature. In the universe of the *Silvae*, nature is perceived exclusively from the perspective of civilization or rather the civilizer: either as part of a well-designed estate or indeed itself a product of human design. The fact that this contradicts the definition of the natural – which also in Pliny's *Natural History* differs from the artificial in that it does not require a process of creation but 'is born' (*nasci*) – is significant. What is striking in Statius is the focus on this very process, almost paradoxically attributed to nature, which accordingly appears as an *artifex*.

At the same time, a poetological interpretation of Statius' understanding of nature is, especially in a view of Quintilian's definition of silvan writing, definitely indicated. Here too, particularly in the paratexts, the modalities of creation are emphasized.



The fact that the final product is located somewhere between naturalness and artificiality emerges primarily from early scholarship on the *Silvae*, which sometimes denies the poems' *ars*, then in turn reprimands their excessive artificiality. However, considering again the binominal *ars – natura* in the *Silvae* we are not intent in making a judgment about the natural or artificial character of the poems, but rather seek to illustrate how Statius introduces and emphasizes *techne* as a creative process throughout the collection and thus undermines the fundamental contradiction between art and nature.