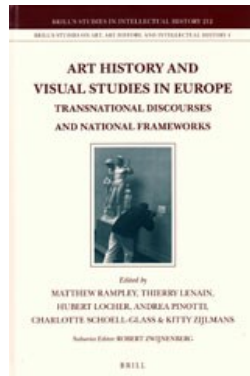


# Art History in Europe: Transnational Discourses and National Frameworks

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**Professor Matthew Rampley** (</staff/profiles/historyofart/rampley-matthew.aspx>)'s new book *Art History in Europe: Transnational Discourses and National Frameworks*, published by Brill



It is often assumed that the way art history is practiced is the same everywhere. *Art History and Visual Studies in Europe*, edited by Matthew Rampley and colleagues in Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Belgium, shows this assumption to be in need of correction. Funded by a research grant from the European Science Foundation, Rampley and his collaborators set out to examine how national contexts affect what art historians do.

Surprising differences came to light. In many countries central government still have direct involvement in how art history is taught and the kinds of topics that are researched. The writing of national art histories is still considered to be the most important task for art historians in many states, whereas in others, including Britain and Germany, it is merely one subject amongst many.

The project paid particular regard to art history in central and eastern Europe. Following the collapse of the Soviet Bloc in 1989, intellectual life across the whole region was liberated but also thrown into turmoil. The doctrines of orthodox Communist teaching were discarded, and art historians were faced with the formidable task of reinterpreting their own history in a new light. The re-creation of states such as Estonia or Lithuania, which had disappeared from the political map for 50 years, presented even more challenging demands, namely, writing the history of art for the first time, an enterprise that was deemed central to the creation of a sense of national identity. As with Rampley's parallel research into heritage and monuments in eastern Europe, the visual arts and their history turn out to have a continuing political significance that makes them into the subjects of often highly charged debates, even up to the present day.