

**Kadriorg Art Museum's 5th Annual Spring Conference,
13–14 May 2011**

Title of presentation

Samson and Delilah. The story of an Italian painting

Abstract

Samson and Delilah, a 17th-century painting from the Neapolitan School, arrived at the Art Museum of Estonia in 1955 from the Estonian Embassy in Moscow. The painting was in such bad condition that the museum did not even register it as part of its collection. Due to its poor physical state, the work of art was neglected for decades by art historians. Extensive scientific research and conservation of the painting was begun only half a century later, in 2008, together with Italian specialists. In addition to the work carried out on the painting, an objective of the project was to give wider audiences an overview of the possibilities of conservation and technical art history, which resulted in an exhibition that covers the story of the study and conservation of the painting.

The presentation is focused on the technical study of *Samson and Delilah*, and on the scientific discussion that led to the assumed date and attribution of the painting. In addition, the presentation contains an analysis of the opportunities and necessity for spreading such information among the broader public, i.e. providing “public access”.

Author Biography

Hilkka Hiiop is responsible for contemporary art conservation at the Estonian Art Museum/Kumu. She is also a lecturer and the coordinator of artefact conservation at the Estonian Academy of Art.

She trained as an art historian at Tartu University and got her MA degree in contemporary art conservation from the Estonian Academy of Arts. Presently, she is doing her PhD research on the conservation management of contemporary art. Her additional professional experience includes an internship at the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin, practice in a conservation studio in Amsterdam, and a course on the conservation of contemporary art at the Istituto Centrale per il Restauro, in Rome. From 2004 to 2010, she worked part time as a conservator of mural paintings in Rome.