

**Tahiti 7: National Conference of Art History in Finland**  
**Mobilities: Artists, Art Works and a Concept in Change**  
**Åbo Akademi University, Finland**  
**20 October 2017**

### **Recurrent Topoi of Landscape Painting**

**Hilja Roivainen**

How to recognize the pictorial idea of a utopia within a landscape painting? Familiar geographical topoi of the natural world are often made unfamiliar on the surface of painting. I suggest that there are three noticeable signifiers of a utopian landscape painting: (1.) topoi of pastoral, picturesque, sublime, arcadia or paradise landscape types (2.) clichéd yet metaphorical landscape elements marking these topoi and (3.) a colour mode.

In my paper, I will discuss a few examples of recent and past landscape paintings. I examine common landscape painting types, such as, pastoral, arcadia and paradise and their specific utopian topoi. With reference to the paintings, I interpret philosopher Ernst Bloch's utopian landscape metaphors in order to create a definition of a utopian landscape painting. Bloch applies to his utopian philosophy (*The Principle of Hope*, 1986; *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, 1959) several linguistic metaphors that refer to landscape elements. For example, the metaphor of blue sky as crystal light, mountains, dawning and the forest. Bloch (1986, 917) discuss the "...mountain-, ocean- or sky-object of...specific astonishment" that also express nostalgia, a utopian movement forwards, or an anticipation of the future. These metaphorical and ideological functions of landscape objects persist since the modern history of landscape painting (see i.e. Williams 2016 and Cosgrove 1998).

Key words: Utopian Landscape Painting, Ernst Bloch, Landscape Iconography

#### **Bio**

Hilja Roivainen, MA is a Ph.D. Art History Candidate in the School of History, Culture and Art Studies at University of Turku, working on a thesis with the preliminary title *Utopian Landscape in 21st Century Nordic Painting*. She received B.A. and M.A. degrees in Fine Art from University of East London, UK (2010 & 2011). Prior to joining University of Turku she was a Ph.D. Art History and Theory Candidate at University of Essex, England (2011–2012). Her research interests in the visual arts are in the areas of contemporary art, the iconography of landscape, and the intersection between the intellectual history of utopia and the history of landscape painting.

Hilja Roivainen  
PhD Art History Candidate, University of Turku  
hmeroi@utu.fi  
[www.hiljar.wordpress.com](http://www.hiljar.wordpress.com)