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# Introduction

LUIGI RUSSO

A research project entitled *Beyond Art (Al di là dell'arte)* and funded by the Italian University (Prin 2009, scientific coordinator Luigi Russo) is currently being developed by the study group *Morfologia*, working on the history of concepts and the present-day theoretical importance of the issue of form, analysing its broad-spectrum evolution, between aesthetics, biology, theory of perception, science of art and literary theory.

This volume collects the first results presented in two international seminars held in Palermo and Milan in 2012 and it offers a conceptual map of the main debated axis of the research.

First of all, the turning point between the Eighteenth Century debate and the modern science of life is discussed in order to show how, through Kant and the *Goethezeit* – see the contributions by Maddalena Mazzocut-Mis, *The Classification of Monsters. Isidore Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire and His Teratological Taxonomy*, Claudio Rozzoni, *Him, the Monster? The Ego Deformation in Rameau's Nephew*, Michele Bertolini, *Monsters and Social Deformations in Balzac's Work: Sarrasine's Case Study*, Pietro Conte, *Skin-deep. Wax Moulages between Science and Aesthetics*, Elena Canadelli, *Evolutionary Monsters: Regression and Hybridisation between Science and Imagination*, Serena Feloj, *Ethics of the Formlessness: Imagination, Sublime and Morality in Kantian Aesthetics* and Davide Di Maio, *Form, Gestalt and "Dominion": Echoes from the George-Kreis. Friedrich Wolters' Case. (Herrschaft und Dienst, Richtlinien, Gestalt)* –, the enquiries into aesthetics have been provided with a modern basis for the theoretical elaboration of the relationship between form and deformation, beauty and ethics, metamorphosis, evolution and development.

Moreover, within such an intricate intertwining of topics some important figures of the Twentieth century morphological debate have been reconsidered, from Warburg, to the science of art, and to the biological evaluation of the Gestalt, up to Adorno, as it is shown by Clío Nicasastro, *The Form of the Denkraum: Technique and Representation in the Kreuzlingen Lecture*, Luca Vargiu, *Frederik Adama van Scheltema and the West between Systole and Diastole*, Valeria Costanza D'Agata and Salvatore Tedesco, *Between Uexküll and Weizsäcker: the Criticism of Functionalism and the Configuration of the Biological Act*, Andrea Pinotti, *The Pontifical Gaze. Morphology and the History of the Images*, Miriam Franchella, *Deductive Reasoning and Totalitarianism: Hannah Arendt's Provocation of Logic* and MariaLuisa Bonometti, *Form and Fragment: the Unfeasibility of Sense in T.W. Adorno*.

The journey ends looking out onto some noteworthy contemporary perspectives, between the artistic debate and the rethinking of the methodological foundations of the morphological debate, as it is suggested by Emanuele Crescimanno, *Shared Responsibility: Author and Public in JR's experience*, Elisabetta Di Stefano, *Living Forms (of Art). Edoardo Kac's Transgenic Art between Ethics and Aesthetics*, and finally Salvatore Tedesco, *Constraints, Boundaries, Responsibility: some Remarks on Contemporary Morphological Lexicon, between Aesthetics and Theoretical Biology*.