

GSA Distinguished Lecture 2022

Margaret E. Menninger

(Texas State University/GSA)

Normality as a Serious Matter and True Joy

Moderator: Paul Nolte (FU Berlin)

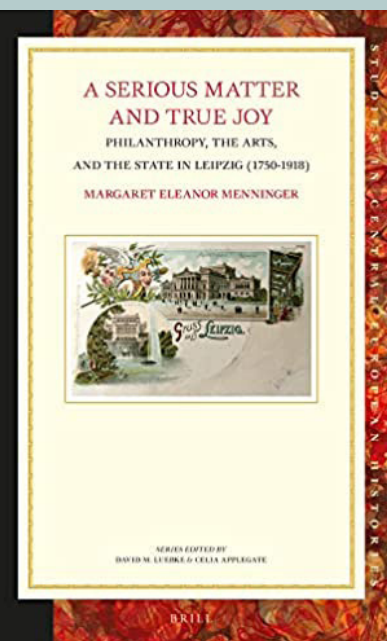


Photo by Mihai Surdu on Unsplash

MARGARET ELEANOR MENNINGER is the current Executive Director of the German Studies Association, a multi- and interdisciplinary association of over 2000 scholars in Austrian, German, Liechtensteiner, and Swiss history, literature, culture studies, political science, and economics. The GSA holds an annual conference and publishes *German Studies Review*. Menninger has been a member of the history department of Texas State University since 2000, where she is a former NEH Distinguished Teaching Professor in the Humanities. Her publications focus on matters of art culture and civil society and include *A Serious Matter and True Joy: Philanthropy, the Arts, and the State in Leipzig (1750–1918)* (Brill, 2022) and *The Total Work of Art: Foundations, Articulations, Inspirations*, edited by David Imhoof, Margaret E. Menninger, and Anthony J. Steinhoff (Berghahn 2016). Menninger received her A.B. with honors from Harvard-Radcliffe College in 1986 and her A.M. and Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1991 and 1998 respectively. Her research has been supported by the German Academic Exchange Service and the German Historical Institute in Washington, D.C.

PAUL NOLTE is Professor of Modern and Contemporary History at the Freie Universität Berlin. His research interests in recent years have centered on transformations of democracy, on public intellectuals, the historiography in the Federal Republic as well as transatlantic history. As chair of the Berlin Program's Academic Advisory Committee Professor Nolte advises fellows and regularly heads the research colloquium.

What can the nineteenth century have to say about what is normal in the twenty-first? What is normal in the first place; how will we know when we have returned there? Or, perhaps more aptly put, how does society arrive at consensus about what constitutes “normal?” Remember, normality, too, has a history. What we now perceive as normal has not always been so, as the histories of our now-familiar institutions of high culture can show. There was a time when the public museum did not exist, and it was by no means normal to visit a city and spend time in a building dedicated to art or archaeology. These institutions and their histories also remind us that we will know when normal has returned or been established because it will *feel right*; it will have an emotional component. Indeed, perhaps finding joy is the best first step back, and art culture is a time-tested pathway. As museums, concert houses, and other cultural nexus points reopen around the globe, we can understand how the arts establish the parameters for social normality.



Menninger's latest publication offers a novel approach to the history of high culture and new perspectives on the history of civil society in provincial Germany. It makes the concept of place a central means for understanding how art culture was defined, consumed, and, importantly, distributed over the course of the long nineteenth century. It shows how “temples of culture” come to be built where they were built. It further demonstrates who participated in their planning, funding, construction, and ultimate evolution into public institutions, highlighting under-examined links between the history of art culture and that of urban history and civil society.

Published by Brill, 2022, ISBN 978-90-04-50778-4

DATE & LOCATION

Wed, July 6, 2022, 4–6 PM, FU Berlin, Ehrenbergstr. 26/28, 14195 Berlin

LANGUAGE/S

The lecture will be held in English; the discussion in English and German

REGISTRATION

Please send an email to bprogram@zedat.fu-berlin.de by July 1

By attending, you consent to the possibility of appearing in publicity materials and recordings distributed through the GSA and FUB outlets.