YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN US AT

THE HÄGERSTRÖM LECTURES

with

KENDALL WALTON

December 11-13th, 2017
Filosofiska Institutionen
Uppsala University

Venue: Humanistiska Teatern, Engelska Parken
Time: 14.00-16.00
ABSTRACTION AND ABOUTNESS IN THE ARTS

Abstraction in the arts — in the visual arts, music, poetry, etc. — comes in many flavors. So does (what I call) aboutness, depiction and other forms of representation being its most discussed varieties. A work of art is abstract in one sense if it is entirely non-representational and not otherwise about anything at all. More interesting kinds of abstraction consist of absences or limitations of one or another particular form of aboutness. Representations that are less specific count as being more abstract than more specific ones. Many works are about properties, having things to “say” about, e.g., love or betrayal or forgiveness or courage or struggle or sorrow. Some (some poetry?, music?) treat properties directly, abstractly, without representing instances. Works are often about the circumstances of their own creation, appearing to have come about in a certain manner or by such and such means or because of artists’ predilections or prejudices or purposes (whether or not they actually were created as they appear to have been). These “appearance properties” are analogous to representational properties in some respects but strikingly different in others. Limiting or eliminating them, when possible, makes for intriguing and rarely examined forms of abstraction.
KENDALL WALTON
Charles L. Stevenson Collegiate Professor of Philosophy, Emeritus, University of Michigan

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Much of Professor Walton’s work consists in exploring connections between theoretical questions about the arts and issues of philosophy of mind, metaphysics, and philosophy of language. His book *Mimesis as Make Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts*, develops a theory of make-believe and uses it to understand the nature and varieties of representation in the arts. He has written extensively on pictorial representation, fiction and the emotions, the ontological status of fictional entities, the aesthetics of music, metaphor, and aesthetic value. He has held fellowships from the NEH, the ACLS, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Stanford Humanities Center. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and past president of the American Society for Aesthetics.