The Department of Psychological Sciences
Invites You to the Winer Memorial Special Lecture:

CONTEXTUALITY IN CONTEXT:
Cultural Psychology of Ornamental Designs

Given by:
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Aalborg University, Denmark

Date: Monday, February 13
Time: 12:15pm
Location: LWSN 1142

ABSTRACT: Human beings seemingly act irrationally—for at least 100,000 years they have been decorating themselves and their environments with various drawings of highly repetitive kind (ornaments). These decorations cannot be claimed to possess any functional value, other than performing the role of “decorations” for the “beauty” of objects they cover. Yet the notion of “beauty” has been the center of attention of occidental aesthetic philosophy only since the 18th century AD—while ornamenting practices have proceeded for over millennia. The specific patterns of images used in ornaments trigger perceptual and affective tensions in the viewers—especially on borders of objects.

In the new interdisciplinary science of cultural psychology—linking psychology with history, semiotics, and sociology—ornamenting practices constitute a crucial phenomenon for making sense of contextuality of all psychological functions. Within the scheme of co-genetic logic (David Herbst) ornamentation is often encountered on the borders of figures as these relate with the ground. Every object X is discernible through its context (non-X) that is inherently its systemic component. Ornaments as field-like contexts support, highlight, and at times mask the object to which they belong. In my presentation I will outline a theoretical account of affective semiosis that leads to locating the central relevance of context in the catalytic functions of possible modifications of the objects.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER: Jaan Valsiner is Niels Bohr Professor of Cultural Psychology at Aalborg University, Denmark. He is the founding editor (1995) of the Sage journal, Culture & Psychology. And of The Oxford Handbook of Culture and Psychology (2012). He is also the Editor-in-Chief of Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Sciences (Springer, from 2007) and the Springer Briefs series Theoretical Advances in Psychology. In 1995 he was awarded the Alexander von Humboldt Prize in Germany for his interdisciplinary work on human development, and Senior Fulbright Lecturing Award in Brazil 1995-1997. He is the winner of the Hans-Kilian-Award of 2017 for his interdisciplinary work uniting social sciences. He has been a visiting professor in Brazil, Japan, Australia, Estonia, Germany, Italy, United Kingdom, Norway, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.