Pippi as a Bullfighter. Illustrations as Mediatized Spectacles

Pippi Longstocking has encouraged countless girls to believe in themselves, both in Sweden and abroad. She has become something of a role model in gender equality. Drawing from intermedial concepts of the mediatized spectacle, this presentation is underlined with visual examples from Bulgarian, Dutch, English, French, German, and Russian editions showing Pippi as a bullfighter. Pippi is an interesting object of study, as she demonstrates the instructional character of children’s books. As a spectacle, Pippi uses the transcendental power of the comic, but not to violate propriety, but rather to set it aside as irrelevant. The point is not that Pippi is ridiculed as a savage without common sense. Instead, the conventions appear as comical under the sway of Pippi’s wild progress, when she draws a full-size horse on the floor in the school hall, eats the whole cake as she attends a party, walks the tight-rope, throws herself on the horse’s back behind a circus girl or rides a bull. This interpretation of spectacle is central, as it reveals a movement in what at first seemed to be a locked position. The unforeseen potential of humour is that it shows the absurdity of attempting to accommodate everyday rules at the expense of basic human needs. Bullfighting as a spectacle is constructed through repetitive performance. It is a physical contest that involves a bull a fighter and a set of rules and cultural expectations. Drawing from the intermedial concepts of illustrations as ongoing processes, as performances I claim that they are not stable identities. Instead they could be seen as stylized repetition of acts, also including bodily gestures, movements, and enactments.
About the speaker:

In her dissertation *Pippi between Worlds and Word* (2020), **Lisa Källström** describes the gaze as a form of techne discussing illustrations, sketches and cover images of Pippi Longstocking from German, French and Swedish Editions. Pippi is an interesting object of study because she has become something of a role model in gender equality. The concept of techne – as in the gaze as techne – stems from rhetorical theory. Techne is both art and craft, which modern languages tend to separate. On one hand, techne indicates something technical, strictly rule based, drill-based, and almost mechanical. On the other hand, it indicates something creative and expressive, for which there hardly exist any clear rules, and where skilful and mindful discretion is decisive. Techne gives us the possibility to stress the dynamic encounter of pictures and gaze as a creative act. To notice, to have a closer look, to shift perspective, and to question one's view is something people do; it is not simply a matter of receiving sensory data but of constructing meaning based on what we think we know about the world. Talking about what we see is a way to become aware of what we take for granted.