

# Henry Bacon

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Henry Bacon started studying theatre research and musicology at the University of Helsinki in 1986. Before then, he had already studied at the Tampere University of Technology and actively participated in student organizations and, as fully bilingual, had also obtained a formal English certificate qualifying him to work as an English teacher. He obtained his Master of Arts degree in May 1990 and his licentiate degree in the autumn of the same year. He earned his PhD in 1994.

The University of Oulu became a significant place in Henry's career as he taught film studies there, first as Senior Assistant and then as Associate Professor in 1994–1998, and established the basic and intermediate study programme in Film Studies. In 1995 he had also been appointed Docent in Theatre Research at the University of Helsinki and practically all the modules related to the Film and Television Studies programme under the discipline were transferred under his management. The proximity of the Finnish Film Archive contributed significantly to the teaching provided at the University of Helsinki, and Henry's transfer from Oulu to become a researcher and Head of Projects at the Film Archive brought the two even closer. When

a five-year pool position (which was later made permanent) as Professor of Film and Television Studies was established at the University of Helsinki in 2004, Henry was appointed professor and held this post until his retirement in 2022. His merits were based on broad expertise, a knowledge of domestic and international networks, inspiring teaching and especially the merits of his own research. He was elected as a member of the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters in 2008.

Having known Henry and his work over several decades, I remember him as an independent researcher who maintained contacts not only by publishing books and articles, but also by actively taking part in discussions during congresses and visits. He would publish a book – in Finnish or in English – every couple of years while at the same time publishing articles and chapters for compilations at a steady pace. His publications demonstrate his wide interest in different art forms and the methodical and theoretical questions that tie them together. Henry studied broad topics, but also focused on interesting details and did not hesitate to draw his own conclusions and interpretations. He wrote for both his colleagues and for the wider audience.

Prior to his doctoral thesis, Henry Bacon had already published an extensive work on the life and films of Luchino Visconti entitled *Tiikerikissan aika* (“The time of The Leopard”, 1992). An expanded English-language edition of the work entitled *Luchino Visconti – Explorations of Beauty and Decay* was published in 1998 and is lauded by Visconti scholars. The doctoral thesis *Continuity and Transformations. The Influence of Literature and Cinema as a Process of Cultural Continuity and Renewal* (1994) continued exploring the same topic, but expanded to include theoretical discussion on the relation of film to other art forms, the significance of adaptation and the application and review of current research paradigms. *Oopperan historia* (“The history of opera”, 1995) provided an overview of operatic traditions and works starting from pre-history and ending with the post-WW2 era.

In the last decade, Henry Bacon examined the origins of our fascination with film violence in *The Fascination of Film Violence* (2015). He was the editor of *Finnish Cinema: A Transnational Enterprise*, which was the final publication of the

2012–2014 Academy project “A Transnational History of Finnish Cinema”, managed by him under the Institute for Art Research. One of his last publications was a book on Teuvo Tulio, *The Films of Teuvo Tulio: An Excessive Outsider* (2020), an artist of Latvian origin who made impressive expressive films. We will probably never get to see what his next work would have been, although the recently retired professor presumably had several new projects still on his table.

Among Henry Bacon’s many publications, one worth mentioning is the State Award-winning work *Seitsemäs taide. Elokuva ja muut taiteet* (“The seventh art. Film and other art forms”, 2005), which reflects the author’s mission to look at film as part of the broader field of the arts. Henry fulfilled all his obligations towards his specialty, also by serving for a decade on the board and as chair of the Film Association of Finland, but the book shows that his interests were not limited to his specialty alone. His sunny personality will remain in my memory as a patron of all the art forms he described.

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Photo: Helsinki University Museum