

PUBLIC LECTURES
in the first seminar on
Periodization in the History of Art and its Conundrums.
How to tackle them in East-Central Europe
6 – 14 May, 2019

Tuesday, May 7, 5 pm



Bojana PEJIĆ, independent art historian, art critic and curator based in Berlin, Guest lecturer at the Bauhaus University in Weimar

On the Subject of Elephants. Navigating across the 'post-elephant' condition

The talk is a satirical illustrated guide which is going to delve into our contemporary moment, which cultural theorists habitually define as post-political, post-ideological, and post-utopian condition. As art historians, we willy-nilly wrestle with those canonical terms each of which is phrased with the prefix 'after': postmodern, postcolonial, post-socialist, post-Soviet, and even post-feminist. In our age of 'unfolding geographies', we, post-socialists and post-colonials, are trying to demonstrate that the meanings of these terms are not universal, but rather contextual and site-specific. For example, in post-Soviet Latvia or Estonia, 'post-colonialism' acquired a specific meaning which radically differs from the meaning of 'post-colonialism' as understood in Algerian, Mexican or Indian art histories. When we are 'doing art history' (DaCosta Kaufmann) focusing on 'our' national art productions, what are we supposed to do? We may try to deconstruct the Western 'universalizing machine' (the Center, the Canon) and we may opt for a contextual methodology, practicing the 'horizontal model' of art history, as proposed by Piotr Piotrowski. Yet, when we are doing 'our' art history, knowing that it is written in 'minor languages' and located in peripheral geographies, are we reproducing national stereotypes embedded in the national canons, or rather deconstructing them? How are we to do art history in the post-canon age all the way knowing the 'globalization of art history' appears to be a new canon?

Wednesday, May 8, 5 pm



Saloni MATHUR, Professor of Art History at the University of California, Los Angeles

A Fragile Inheritance: Radical Practice in Contemporary Indian Art

This lecture will investigate the idea of 'inheritance' as a mechanism of transmission and reception across generations in relation to twentieth and twenty-first century histories of art. It will explore, in particular, how contemporary artists in India have challenged

naturalistic frameworks for inheritance based in the ‘arboreal’ logic of roots and the family tree. By adopting anachronistic timelines and strange temporalities, I show how specific art practices in the postcolonial context have framed the problems of reproduction, legacy, and the mechanisms of transference in a new light.

Thursday, May 9, 5 pm



Krista KODRES, Professor at the Institute of Art History and Visual Culture, Tallinn

Periodization as an Attempt at World-Making

In the Soviet Marxist-Leninist art history discourse periodization was the outcome of the so-called historical materialism. There was a general world art history that consisted of Archaic, Slavery, Feudal, and Capitalist (and Communist) periods. Each of the periods had its distinct character that was determined by specific class relationships. As was the case, monopoly of interpretation of history presented itself as transcendental grandstand view, looking at history from above.

In my talk I argue that, in principle, periodization belongs to the interpretation of the world, but can at the same time be viewed as a performance, and as a world-making practice (Wolfgang Iser). Curiously enough, the latter was exactly the intent of Soviet ideologues while periodizing art history. Secondly, I am going to ask about the practice of periodization of art history in the Soviet Marxist-Leninist discourse. I argue that when looking at periodization as interpretation the reasons of the failure of the Socialist art history discourse become obvious. As already noticed by Siegfried Kracauer in 1966: The shaped times of the diverse areas tend to overshadow the presupposed uniform flow of time. Because interpretation is genre-bound, it actually does not truthfully “match” with the ideological periodization imposed by the political regime.

Friday, May 10, 5 pm



Patrick D. FLORES, Professor of Art Studies at the Department of Art Studies at the University of the Philippines, and Curator of the Vargas Museum in Manila

Time of Making: Towards a Sense of Procedure

This is a conversation on the anxiety about “periodization,” a demand from art history that the “contemporary” tends to complicate. A key category in this situation is the “time of making” that speaks to ecologies and agencies of production, alternating between the expectations to be timely and the necessity to be counter-time. One possible way to open up this discussion is to

revisit the exhibition form as a moment in which persons encounter things in space. In this regard, the said form implicates both the methods of art history and the interests of curatorial work in the context of the “national” and the “international.” It finally reflects on specific projects that try to mingle art history and contemporary curation in proposing a framework to respond to the persistence of art in the present.

Monday, May 13, 5 pm



Edit ANDRÁS, independent scholar, living and working in Budapest as a senior member of the Institute of Art History of HAS Research Centre in the Humanities, and in Long Island, NY

Whose time is it anyway? The future is behind us, the past is ahead of us

This presentation aims to elaborate on space and time and on how they are articulated in various theories and what is out there for our region.

The starting point is the “institution of the politics of time”, voiced by Rolando Vázquez, one of the advocates of decolonial option, a theory originating in Latin America. He argues that chronology and imposition of modern time are at the heart of the modern/colonial systems of oppression, and therefore, resistance against “hegemonic globalization” should question the universality of modern time.

The notion of universality also seems problematic from East, Central and Southern Europe, as the imposition of modern time relegated the periphery of Europe into a secondary position, a sort of semi-other, in-between position. As for coloniality, though the Eastern European region has not been colonized in the strict meaning of the word, it has been under Soviet dominance for almost half a century. After the collapse of the Soviet satellite system, the crucial question was which past to return to and which past was should be erased. Consequently, is there something for us if the decolonial option and the slogan “returning to the past” is extended to the post-socialist condition? Or it isn’t even an option? Whose time is it anyway? Are we heading the future or marching back to the past?

These are the questions that will be scrutinized along with analysis of art works from both end of the spectrum; official, state commissioned art and critical contemporary art, from the region and beyond.

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