Image Matter: Art and Materiality (Manchester, 6 Nov 15)

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Image Matter: Art and Materiality
AAH New Voices Conference
MIRIAD, Manchester Metropolitan University
6 November 2015

Keynote: Professor Carol Mavor (University of Manchester)

How do art historians interpret matter? And how about artists, makers, theorists and critics? Much recent art historical and visual culture literature has argued for the reinstatement of the bodily and the material in art and its encounter, rejecting the pre-eminence of a disembodied eye in favour of a wider range of somatic responses: touching, hearing, tasting, smelling. Similarly, the material physicality of the art object in its myriad forms—surface, texture, weight, spatial extension, sound etc—has recaptured our attention.

New Voices 2015 will explore approaches to materiality and the material in light of developing discourses that implicate art history, as well as visual and material culture studies. Even if there has been a 'material turn', James Elkins (2008) argues that art history remains fearful of the material: 'art history, visual studies, Bildwissenschaft, and art theory take an interest in materiality provided that the examples of materiality remain at an abstract or general level …'. If the sensorium of seeing, tasting, feeling and hearing exceeds the rationality of disciplinary categories and the systematisation of knowledge, how can writing about and through art accommodate affective objects? How have artists negotiated the conflict of a spectatorship, which disregards hapticity, surface and substance? How do traditions of connoisseurship engage with contemporary theories of materiality?

As a 'somaesthetic' approach of beholding (re)gains currency the primacy of sight decreases (for example, in the re evaluation of medieval artefacts that were touched, kissed and smelled). Alternatively, vision may at least be understood as opening haptic and experiential exchanges between object and maker, object and viewer. But perhaps the questionable pre-eminence of visuality also evidences an increased derogation of manual labour in lieu of what is perceived as more cerebral, more elevated from the yucky material of bodily production. New Voices 2015 takes place within the intellectual and creative space of the art school, the messy realm of art production. It therefore asks how (the) material and its associated places of production and 'consumption'—from the studio to the gallery—can be integrated in the discourses of art history and its objects.

New Voices welcomes contributions from all periods and contexts which address the relationship between visual and material studies and practices. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

• Haptic encounters with artworks (incl. performative, virtual, conceptual works)
• Historiographic reflections on attitudes towards material(ity)
• Explorations on the relationships between visuality and materiality
• Historiographic and methodological approaches to the material of art (and its making)
• Social, technological, historical and cultural contextualisations of the material turn
• Art and materiality in a digital age

Abstracts of no more than 300 words for 20-minute papers should be submitted along with a 100--word biographical note to ImageMatterAAH@gmail.com by 1 August 2015. Although the conference is open to all, speakers are required to be AAH members. Convenors: Liz Mitchell, Rosalinda Quintieri, Tilo Reifenstein and Charlotte Stokes.

New Voices are annual, one-day conferences of new doctoral scholarship that take place at different universities throughout the UK.

Reference:

CFP: Image Matter: Art and Materiality (Manchester, 6 Nov 15). In: ArtHist.net, May 18, 2015 (accessed Nov 26, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/10333>.