The Salesroom as Socio-Cultural Space (London, 14–16 Jul 2016)

London, Christie's, Jul 14–16, 2016
Deadline: Dec 7, 2015

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The commercial art gallery and auction house, arguably the most visible component of the modern art market, developed ostensibly as a means of facilitating fiscal transactions, bringing together sellers, buyers, and objects. But it is impossible, this session argues, to regard these spaces as purely transactional because they also functioned as spaces of social-cultural formation and exchange.

Indeed, some of the earliest visual representations of Western European salesrooms focus on the sociability of these spaces, which were sites of display for both objects and people. Such images register the gradual expansion of the art market to serve a broader range of social classes, but such processes were neither smooth nor uncontested.

Questions concerning the intended audience(s) of the salesroom are underscored by the history of the built environment of the commercial art gallery and auction house. The histories of locales and physical contexts, both exterior and interior, reveal the changing status of these spaces.

The formation of these spaces and the strategies of display deployed therein cannot be separated from the objects circulating through these spaces. What was the dynamic interaction between objects and spaces, as well as the dynamic interaction between objects and people facilitated by such spaces?

This structural triad of objects, people, and space was mediated and activated by speech acts and texts, such as catalogues. These materials compose the epistemological origins or building blocks of art history. Therefore, understanding the salesroom as a social-cultural space shapes our histories of not only the art market but also the discipline of art history.

This session seeks innovative papers that study the salesroom as a social-cultural space, establishing arguments on rigorously analyzed evidence and carefully considered methodological frameworks, eschewing an anecdotal approach.

The session is part of the symposium "Creating Markets, Collecting Art: Celebrating 250 years of Christie's." It is organized by Christie's, London. Paper proposals should be accompanied by a brief biography and no more than 250 words in length in total (paper abstract and biography). The abstracts for the session "The Salesroom as Socio-Cultural Space," should be sent to Anne Helmreich: a.helmreich@tcu.edu (or alhelmreich@gmail.com) and cc. conference2016@christies.edu.

Reference:

CFP: The Salesroom as Socio-Cultural Space (London, 14-16 Jul 2016). In: ArtHist.net, Nov 16, 2015 (accessed Nov 18, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/11528>.