

Lecture Series: Whatever Happened to Institutional Critique? (Basel, Apr–May 16)

Kunsthistorisches Seminar der Universität Basel, Apr 13–May 25, 2016

David Misteli

Lecture Series 2016: Whatever Happened to Institutional Critique?

13. April | 11. Mai | 25. Mai

13. April | Dr. Elisabeth Fritz (Universität Jena)

„A tool to problematize aesthetic practice“ – Reproduktion
als institutionskritisches Verfahren bei Michael Asher

11. Mai | Dr. des. Katja Müller-Helle (FU Berlin)

„The Breaking of the Second Frame“ –
Figuren der Transgression seit 1960

25. Mai | Dr. Emily Eliza Scott (ETH Zürich)

From Institutional Critique to Institution Making –
Contemporary Art Beyond the Artworld

Ever since the 1960s artists have challenged the institutional mechanisms and ideologies that condition their own practices. They have examined and criticized the rhetoric and value judgments perpetuated by various agents of the art scene. Ever since, however, institutional critique itself has come under critical scrutiny as well. Benjamin Buchloh argued that – since such projects only revealed underlying networks and power structures without motivating or demanding change – they were swiftly appropriated by these very institutions, forfeiting their critical position in the process. Buchloh’s reproach seems to hold true until today. Art institutions have, it appears, incorporated, and thus largely annihilated, the rhetoric of institutional critique. A mere vocabulary of criticality, it is ready to be deployed whenever necessary as a marketable asset. Unsurprisingly, the concept of critique itself currently has to withstand fierce attacks, most recently from accelerationist philosophy.

In face of a globalized art world, the question of the place, form and medium of institutional critique has acquired new relevance. From a clearly defined “genre” of critical art the artistic scrutiny of networks and power structures has expanded to issues of global dimensions – ecology, economy, the virtual world. In this lecture series we aim to identify and retrieve modes and strategies of institutional critique that might reveal to be up to the test of our time, and to evaluate the current perspectives of the concept of critique itself.

Reference:

ANN: Lecture Series: Whatever Happened to Institutional Critique? (Basel, Apr-May 16). In: ArtHist.net, Apr

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5, 2016 (accessed May 28, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/12622>>.