

Provincialism and Transnationalism of American Art (St Andrews, 27–28 Oct 17)

School of Art History, University of St Andrews, Oct 27–28, 2017

Deadline: Mar 6, 2017

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In and Out of American Art: Between Provincialism and Transnationalism, 1940-1980

is a two-day conference at the University of St Andrews on the 27th and 28th October 2017 which aims to build on recent research into transnational artistic exchange. It will investigate how artists and art professionals moved through the worlds of American art from the 1940s to the 1980s, and how they negotiated the pervasive reputation of American art, both within the US and internationally.

This four-decade period is bracketed at one end by the 1942 exhibition 'Artists in Exile' at the Pierre Matisse Gallery in New York – an event that could be taken as emblematic of the internationalizing dynamic that, paradoxically, led to the US being perceived as the 'centre' of the art world. At the other end of this timeframe, during the 1970s, critics such as Terry Smith addressed the issue of the metropolitan-provincial binary head on, while the artist Donald Judd provocatively asserted that he considered art to be 'a peripheral activity, almost outside the society of the United States.' Responses to what Smith termed 'the provincialism problem' varied significantly during the intervening decades. During the 1960s the Argentine critic and gallery director Jorge Romero Brest made no less than nine trips to the US during the 1960s, in order to drive out 'all vestiges of provincialism I might have.' But others resisted the prevailing influence of American art – such as the Uruguayan artist, Luis Camnitzer, who argued that American Pop art was itself 'a very provincial aesthetic'. These contrasting ascriptions of 'the provincial' signal the nexus of issues that our conference seeks to address.

Our aim is to explore how the international status of American art both helped and hindered artists' careers during this post-war period. We also want to address how location-oriented terms in art discourse – 'the provincial', 'the peripheral' and 'the regional', etc. – can be understood in an era when the authority of the mythological 'center' no longer seems so total or secure. We aim to build on the important scholarly work that has been done to challenge the principle that cultural innovation ripples out from a few western metropolitan cities, to deconstruct conventional evaluative notions such as artistic 'originality' and 'influence', and to trace alternative models for narrating the histories of intercultural relationship, notably the 'transnational' and the 'translocal'. In this respect we take our cue from a number of important exhibition projects, such as 'In & Out of Amsterdam: Travels in Conceptual Art, 1960–1976', but moreover hope to generate a deeper art historical understanding not only of the movement of both artists and ideas, but the exclusionary frictions that fissure this fluidity – an understanding that feels particularly pressing in light of the cur-

rent US Executive's divisive and discriminatory actions regarding migration.

Questions that papers might explore include, but are by no means limited to:

- How have artists and practitioners navigated the construct of 'provincialism' in relation to American art between 1940 and 1980?
- In what ways have locational politics informed American artistic production in this period?
- How might tracing transnational networks of artistic exchange enable us to re-work the boundaries of 'American art' both historically and conceptually?
- To what extent have notions of provincialism, marginality, fieldwork, the peripheral and the regional fostered collectivity and communality in artistic practice?
- In what ways have tensions between locational subjectivities and transnational solidarity inflected, for example, works produced by feminist practitioners affiliated with the Women's Art Movement?
- How have the politics of class, race, gender and sexuality informed location-specific terminology, and how have artists, both individually and collectively, sought to disrupt and co-opt the power structures embedded in these formulations?
- How have artists used specific media to address locational politics and both their psychical and psychological ramifications, from alienation and opposition to movement and dialogic exchange?
- How have artists challenged the spatial and temporal politics of the 'inside' and the 'outside', and what ramifications might these legacies have for our contemporary moment?

Please send proposals of 400 words maximum for papers of 30 minutes by the deadline of Monday 6th March 2017, together with a short biography of 100 words maximum, to Alistair Rider, Sam Rose and Catherine Spencer at inandoutofamericanart@gmail.com

Reference:

CFP: Provincialism and Transnationalism of American Art (St Andrews, 27-28 Oct 17). In: ArtHist.net, Feb 4, 2017 (accessed Apr 5, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/14690>>.