

Aggression, Transgression, and the Avant-garde (Edinburgh, 6 Jun 17)

University of Edinburgh

Deadline: Apr 14, 2017

avantgardeconference2017.wordpress.com

Naomi Stewart

A One-Day Interdisciplinary Conference at the University of Edinburgh

"The twentieth century will undoubtedly have discovered the related categories of exhaustion, excess, the limit, and transgression – the strange and unyielding form of these irrevocable movements which consume and consummate us." (Michel Foucault, 'Language, Counter-Memory, Practice')

In the political tumult of the twentieth century, an era which saw humanity face the worst excesses of war, revolution, fascism, capitalism, and communism, the arts have provided a constant critique of the social order, and not always politely. This one-day conference explores the historic role of the avant-garde as aggressor towards the status-quo, and the ways it has sought to subvert cultural norms through a diverse range of creative engagement and expression. This may not always have been for the better, nor may it always have been political, but it was frequently transgressive, and constantly fascinating.

Etymologically, 'aggression' stems from the Latin *aggressio* meaning 'an approach' or, more forcefully, 'an attack'. It has its roots in *ad-* (towards) and *gradior* (to step, to proceed) and therefore, more intellectually speaking, takes on the sense of encountering and tackling contrary notions, which the avant-garde constantly did in its various guises: from Futurism's declaration in its founding manifesto that "No work without an aggressive character can be a masterpiece," to Georges Bataille's and Roger Caillois' theories of violence and aggression.

As we find ourselves entering a new epoch in the twenty-first century, with some new, but regrettably familiar challenges posed to society, we seek answers to the questions: what can we learn from the historic avant-garde's counter-hegemonic practices, and its emancipatory projects? How are aggression and transgression employed to upset convention and break taboos? In what ways can these strategies be problematised?

We are seeking cross-disciplinary responses which address the ways that the avant-garde (in its various manifestations) sought to transgress social and political boundaries, and what ends their attacks - at both an individual and collective level - hoped (but sometimes failed) to achieve. Contributions may include, but are not limited to:

- Artistic responses to political ideologies

- The subversion of traditional values
- Iconoclasm in the avant-garde
- Representations of violence (visual, literary, and historical)
- Sexuality, the body, and transgression
- Revolution and protest in literature/visual art/philosophy
- Challenges to accepted theories of the avant-garde
- Politico-historical (re)readings of key avant-garde movements and moments

This is an interdisciplinary conference open to postgraduate research students and early-career researchers (no more than 3 years post-completion of PhD) in all fields of the humanities, and social sciences. It will be held at the University of Edinburgh on Tuesday, 6th June 2017 and is part of an ongoing programme of events organised by members of Edinburgh College of Art's Dada and Surrealism Research Group.

Please send abstracts (250 words max.) for 20 minute papers, along with a short biography (c. 100 words), to avantgardeconference2017@gmail.com

The deadline for submission of abstracts is 14th April 2017. Successful applicants will be notified the following week.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact the organisers, Naomi Stewart and Josh Bowker, at the above email address. More information can also be found on the conference website: avantgardeconference2017.wordpress.com

Reference:

CFP: Aggression, Transgression, and the Avant-garde (Edinburgh, 6 Jun 17). In: ArtHist.net, Mar 23, 2017 (accessed Dec 19, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/15027>>.