

Art & Activism (Leiden, 13–15 Dec 17)

Leiden, The Netherlands, Dec 13–15, 2017

Deadline: May 31, 2017

Bram Leven

Art & Activism: Resilience Techniques in Times of Crisis
International Conference

Hosted by the Research Center for Material Culture of the Volkenkunde Museum and the Leiden University Center for Arts in Society (LUCAS)

Confirmed Keynotes:

T.J. Demos (University of California Santa Cruz), and
Susan Cahan (Yale University)

The conference Art & Activism aims to understand the force of art to engage and express political sentiment. At the heart of any art that can be called activist is a firm revolutionary belief in the possibility of societies reforming and improving. Behind its obvious involvement with present issues and concerns, activist art is always oriented to shaping an ameliorated future. This public role is not uncontested. The arts are (perpetually) under attack. A sense of crisis, moreover, is widely felt among contemporary artists and activists, who experience precarity, marginalization, and vulnerability on a daily basis and may put their bodies on the line. The idea of crisis, both in the arts and in society, has been widely articulated by scholars and critics. This interdisciplinary conference aims to create a space in which participants from scholarly, artistic and activist backgrounds can learn from and collaborate on a horizontal plane.

It specifically invites contributions that scrutinize, assess and critique resilience techniques; technologies, technics and tools developed by individuals and groups in the form of material and/or knowledge practices that are developed to cope with (structural) crises. Resilience articulates more than simply a state of being, faculty or habit; it refers to an active ability to rebound and spring back from deforming forces, to recompose oneself and rebuild what has been destroyed or put under pressure. When we argue that the arts can contribute to and help build up civil and political resilience, resilience also points towards an element of civil, aesthetic and political 'elasticity'. The arts are a site where activist strategies and techniques can be developed and performed by fostering the imagination into new modes to "resist!" but also to "persist!"

List of possible topics:

- Why have there been no great [x] artists? The legacy of feminist art historical critique in an intersectional and transnational framework
- A Resilience Studies? Resilience in the context of shock and disaster capitalism in (post)modernity; Relational resilience as "supported vulnerability" (Judith V. Jordan); Artistic research into

resilience techniques (somatechnics)

- Affective politics: Artistic and cultural practices of reparations, reconciliation and redressive gestures; Infrastructures of Feeling (Raymond Williams); Cruel Optimism and Intimate Publics (Lauren Berlant)

Whose lives matter? Material practices of collecting in the scope of colonialism and war with attention to bio- and necropolitics in art world wide

- Structural inequality in the arts industrial complex; Genealogies of particular social movements and artistic movements working together

We particularly encourage attention to the resilient voices in the “subaltern discourses” of Indigenous, Protest and Anti-globalization Practices; Post-Black Art; Bio-Art; Disability Arts; Trans* Cultural Production, and Migrant Aesthetics.

N.B. The conference venue is equipped for ramps and an elevator for people with mobility issues, wheelchair users, and equipment for visually impaired people. Sign language interpreters can be requested with at least one-month notice.

Reference:

CFP: Art & Activism (Leiden, 13-15 Dec 17). In: Arthist.net, May 2, 2017 (accessed Aug 30, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/15391>>.