Re-Enactment Strategies in Contemporary Arts and Theory (Berlin, 16–17 Nov 17)

ICI Berlin Institute for Cultural Inquiry, Nov 16–17, 2017
Deadline: Aug 4, 2017

Cristina Baldacci

Call for papers
International Symposium

OVER AND OVER AND OVER AGAIN
Re-Enactment Strategies in Contemporary Arts and Theory

ICI Berlin
16-17 November 2017
In English

Organized by Cristina Baldacci, Clio Nicastro, and Arianna Sforzini

Re-appropriating, re-thinking, re-editing, re-visiting, re-staging: since the 1990s, re-enactment has undoubtedly emerged as a key issue in the field of artistic production, in theoretical discourse, and in the socio-political sphere. Taking an ever larger distance from notions of historical revival and 'Living History', current re-enactments call into question whether the present can unpack, embody, or disentangle the past. Accordingly, to re-enact is to experience the past by reactivating either a particular cultural heritage or unexplored utopias. If to re-enact means not to restore but to challenge the past, history is thus turned into a possible and perpetual becoming, an opening for invention and renewal. This process of creative repetition branches out into at least three directions: (1) a manifold and asynchronous temporal dimension that entails the return/survival of the past understood as generating meaning and values for both the present and potential future/s, in terms of what one could call a symbolic archaeology; (2) an epistemological-axiological challenge to the traditional dichotomy between true and false, original and copy; (3) a performative bodily practice that physically re- stages events. Methodologically, the notion of re-enactment will be approached from three directions: the archive, the arts, and curatorial practice.

The symposium investigates both the conceptual foundation and practical aspects of re- enactment, based on a genealogy of the concept and a comparison with related terms and their meanings (revocation, reconstruction, replica, repair, rehabilitation, revision, revelation, reinvention, among others). Of particular interest is the close relationship between repetition and seriality on the one hand and the emergence of neo- and post- movements of the 20th and 21st centuries on the other: from neo-realism to the neo-avant-garde, from the post-modern to 'retro-futurism'.

The symposium will provide an opportunity for an interdisciplinary discussion of contemporary re-

enactment strategies and practices and welcomes participants from all academic disciplines. Areas of investigation might include:

• Archival re-enactments: contemporary archives have increasingly shifted from physical and symbolic spaces of documentary conservation to staged reactivations of cultural memory. How does this experience of the archive, inspired by Foucault's mobilization of archives, reshape historical subjectivity?
• Aby Warburg's concept of Nachleben (survival/afterlife), harbouring an unsolved, temporally inflected enigma concerning the return of the same form (Pathosformel) across time and space, and its expressive metamorphosis: How do re-enacted artistic forms 'touch' emotions at a distance, and how do they thereby relate to Warburg's celebrated motto 'you live and do me no harm'?
• Re-enactment as a creative technique and questioning: Playing with the idea of appropriation, translation, authority, resignification, recirculation, artistic re- enactment functions as a vehicle of memory and cultural transfer, and addresses an entire set of challenging issues, such as: the relationship with institutional contexts and socio-political frames; the selection of artworks to be reconstructed; the differences that arise in the adaption/revision process.
• Cinematic re-enactment as a practice that blurs the border between fiction and documentary film, and unravels not only the multilayered temporality of an event, but also the strategies of representation: How can the different uses of archival images, interviews with witnesses, and/or fictional restagings of real occurrences produce in the spectator a peculiar empathic relation with images 'at a distance'?
• The way in which re-enactment has influenced curatorial practice and changed the modality in which exhibitions are organized and studied: Is the reconstruction and restaging of a pivotal or previously underestimated exhibition a new approach to the making and rewriting of the history/histories of art?
• The potential of re-enactment to bring to light oppressive narratives of history and therefore being an effective tool for feminist, post-colonial, queer, and gender studies.

Papers to be given in English, limited to 15 minutes. Please email an abstract of no more than 300 words and a short bio-bibliographical profile (100 words maximum) to reenactment@ici-berlin.org, by 4 August 2017. A full programme will be published in due course. As with all events at the ICI Berlin, there is no registration fee. ICI Berlin can provide assistance in securing discounted accommodation for the conference period.

Reference:

CFP: Re-Enactment Strategies in Contemporary Arts and Theory (Berlin, 16-17 Nov 17). In: ArtHist.net, Jul 9, 2017 (accessed Nov 19, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/15974>.