

Art and Work (Evanston, 8 Feb 18)

Northwestern University, Feb 08, 2018

Deadline: Oct 15, 2017

Brian Leahy, Northwestern University

Art and Work

Department of Art History, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL

Submissions due: October 15, 2017

Keynote lecture by Jasper Bernes

The Department of Art History at Northwestern University will hold a one-day graduate symposium on Thursday, February 8, 2018 on the topic of art and work. The symposium will span historical periods and geographic regions to investigate the history, politics, and aesthetics of artistic labor. Our proposal is grounded by historical and theoretical concerns with the social positions of art making, the artist, and work more generally. How do the social and technical conditions of labor in a given society determine the possibilities of its art, and how do artistic imaginaries of work help shape struggles around these very social conditions? What kinds of knowledge, expertise, skills, or discourses come to distinguish an artist from an artisan, engineer, or maker, or from a teacher, political official, or social worker? How and where do these distinctions emerge or dissolve both visually and historically, and how do they relate to other predominant social markers such as race, gender, and class? We see these questions as resonating across boundaries of period and national tradition, and are excited to see what might be learned from thinking within a wide historical frame wherein both art and work are contested terms.

We welcome papers that consider, among other topics, the aesthetics of work and/or non-work; the social position of the artist; the problem of aesthetic autonomy; or spaces of production and their representations—from the artist's studio to the collaborative workshop, the laboratory, the home, the factory, and beyond. We are also interested in how representations of artistic production and exercises in (or negations of) artistic technique mediate ongoing processes of social transformation. We invite papers from any time period or geographic region by graduate students in art history as well as related disciplines.

Possible topics might include:

- Depictions of studios, workshops, factories, spaces of production
- Craft labor and handwork
- Treatises and technical manuals
- Artistic readymades or the absence of work
- Histories of deskilling and automation

- Aesthetics and political economy
- Anti-work politics and aesthetics
- Global precarity and flexible labor regimes
- Reproductive labor, domestic work
- Affective and care-based labor
- Post-Marxist approaches to "immaterial labor"
- Community and public art

Symposium speakers who do not reside locally will receive round-trip economy airfare to Chicago/Evanston, accommodation for two nights in Evanston, and a travel stipend to cover ground transportation to and from the airport. Please email proposals to laurelgarber2015@u.northwestern.edu and brianleahy2020@u.northwestern.edu by October 15, 2017. Include in your proposal a 300-word abstract and a brief C.V. in a single PDF file. Selections will be announced in late October.

Reference:

CFP: Art and Work (Evanston, 8 Feb 18). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 24, 2017 (accessed Jul 6, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/16201>>.