

Sites of Interchange (London, 2-3 Nov 18)

The Courtauld Institute of Art, London, Nov 2-03, 2018

Deadline: Nov 15, 2017

courtauld.ac.uk/event/sites-interchange-modernism-politics-culture-britain-germany-1919-1951

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Call for Papers

Sites of Interchange: Modernism, Politics, and Culture in Britain and Germany, 1919-1951

Early twentieth-century Germany was a site of extremes, in which art and architectural production were entangled in the swiftly changing political and social landscape. Radical utopias and pragmatic solutions for art and life were proposed, creating a crossroads of unparalleled burgeoning cultural outpouring in the midst of extreme politics. Britain in the same period could be characterized as comparatively stable, a nation often wedded to established traditions in the face of economic, political and social developments. Yet throughout the period, there remained a lively interchange between the two countries. This conference proposes to look anew at the complicated and entangled cultural relationship between Britain and Germany in the first decades of the twentieth century.

With the end of the First World War, Britain was in the position of victor – yet it was Germany which was given the opportunity to forge a new society and a progressive republic, in which culture was to play a central role. The foundation of the Bauhaus in 1919 became perhaps the most influential articulation of this new optimism – distinctly German, it was nonetheless born from both British Arts and Crafts ideas and a desire to answer British nineteenth-century industrial dominance, as displayed at the Great Exhibition of 1851. During the 1920s and '30s, British figures from both ends of the political spectrum were drawn to Germany for inspiration. Many from the British art world were fascinated by Germany's Weimar Republic, with its breaking down of social, cultural and artistic barriers. In the following decade, many in Britain were intrigued by the new National Socialist regime. With the arrival of émigrés fleeing Hitler in the years after 1933, Britain was exposed to a cross-section of German culture, in particular modernism. Britons and international artists - not limited to those holding German passports, but including those who had worked there - formed new groups and collaborations. By 1939 the countries were once again at war. Following World War II, modernism in Britain flourished in the arts with renewed vigour. The Festival of Britain in 1951, in which many of the German émigrés who had settled in Britain were involved, marked a high point of modernism in London.

This conference sets out to explore the connections between British and German culture during the period 1919-1951, in the fields of art, architecture, design and craft, photography, art history and theory, and art pedagogy. How did the British learn from and influence the Germans in these

areas? How did the Germans learn from and influence the British? And what is the significance of these cultural connections today? We solicit 20-minute papers from scholars and museum professionals (at any stage of their careers) that set out to explore these questions.

Topics for proposed papers may include but are not limited to:

- The influence of British ideas in the culture of the Weimar Republic, and the extent to which Weimar ideas reached Britain
- Displacement of German artists, architects, designers, photographers to Britain after 1933, and the significance of time spent in Britain (including German émigrés who later emigrated elsewhere)
- The cultural impact of émigrés from National Socialism in Britain
- British official and individual responses to National Socialist cultural policy in the period 1933-1945, and attitudes towards British culture in National Socialist Germany
- The impact of Germany on post-war British culture
- The impact of Britain on post-war German culture, particularly in areas under British occupation
- German practitioners who studied, travelled or worked in Britain, or who drew influence from the country, and vice versa
- The impact of the German experience on a subsequent British work of art, building, or object, and vice versa
- Displays of German culture in Britain, and vice versa (governmental, museum, commercial, private)
- Collectors, patrons and supporters of German culture in Britain, and vice versa
- The awareness and impact of German cultural theory in Britain, and vice versa
- Perception of German culture in Britain, and vice versa
- The prevalence of ideas of "shared cultural heritage"

The conference will take place at the Courtauld Institute of Art, London, on Friday 2 November and Saturday 3 November 2018.

Submissions are to be made by midnight GMT, Wednesday 15 November 2017, by email with the subject line "Sites of Interchange" to both of the organisers: Dr Robin Schuldenfrei (robin.schuldenfrei@courtauld.ac.uk) and Dr Lucy Wasensteiner (lucy.wasensteiner@courtauld.ac.uk).

Please combine in a single PDF file:

- A proposed title and abstract (max. 400 words) for a 20-minute paper
- A current CV

The conference is being organised on the occasion of the exhibition London 1938: A Statement for Modern German Art / London 1938: Ein Statement für die deutsche Kunst which will take place at the Wiener Library in London from 13 June to 31 August 2018 and at the Liebermann-Villa am Wannsee in Berlin from 7 October 2018 to 14 January 2019.

Funds will be available towards travel and hotel costs. The accepted papers may be considered for publication in a forthcoming edited volume.

Supported by the German Federal Cultural Foundation.

Reference:

CFP: Sites of Interchange (London, 2-3 Nov 18). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 15, 2017 (accessed Jan 8, 2026),
<<https://arthist.net/archive/16494>>.