Ephemeral exhibition spaces (Geneva, 16-17 Mar 18)

Geneva, Mar 16–17, 2018
Deadline: Dec 1, 2017

Camilla Murgia

Ephemeral exhibition spaces (1750-1918)

During the last decades of the Ancien Régime and throughout the long nineteenth century, people in Europe marveled at absent worlds or past events that were reenacted visually or mentally in a variety of ephemeral exhibition spaces, like temporal museums, exhibits, (private) cabinets and, most strikingly, panoramic theaters and dioramic constructions. The latter installations or decors visually imitated reality, rather than represent it, like art would do, and with their illusory optical effects they were very popular with the big audience. They were however also criticised by those who stressed the imaginative, mental nature of vivification against forms of visual mimicry. From the very outset, reenactment in these spaces comes forward as an ambiguous, multifaceted and conflictive strategy.

In the new public and private spaces of the nineteenth century, ephemeral exhibition spaces or spaces with an exhibitional dimension par excellence fitted more encompassing epistemological and experiential strategies of reenactment. Within a wide scope of cultural practices, they provided new spatial frameworks of understanding and experiencing reality, of imagining, of identification and control. It is however still a matter of debate how the epistemological, visual and experiential dimensions of reenactment interrelated, conflicted and coincided in these spaces. Reenactment in ephemeral exhibition spaces was caught between visual and mental strategies, between material tangibility and imagination. Reenactment in these spaces was also at the same time a tool of (scientific) knowledge and of subjective experience. Imagination could in this context strongly relate to the sensation of the uncanny, to aesthetic rapture, to (ideological and political) identification and to personal memory or even, in particular cases, to solipsist isolation. These spaces, finally, precisely because of their exhibitional nature, are also revealing of a dynamic of control, of voyeurism, of a problematic dealing with otherness, difference and absence, of people, of cultures or of the past.

Our symposium intends to discuss a wide variety of ephemeral exhibition spaces or spaces with a distinctively exhibitional dimension, such as for example dépôts, derelict gardens, ruins, boudoirs, museums, exhibits, private interiors, cabinets, antique stores... against a broad cultural background and treated from various interdisciplinary angles within the humanities, including cultural history, history of art, literary studies and comparative literature, intellectual history, material culture studies, museum studies and others.

We particularly, but certainly not exclusively, welcome papers, either in English or in French, on the

following topics:

- Ambiguous, multifunctional, liminal or hybrid spaces, in-between spaces, spaces between public and private uses, as well as the cultural practices they are connected with.

- Imagery spaces, for example in written or visual sources (literature, catalogues, guides, travel literature, letters, art, images etc.) or material spaces that are able to stage the role of the imaginary in the construction of cultural practices.

- Mediating spaces that worked as catalysts for interaction and interrelation between a number of cate- gories such as gender and social classes.

There is no registration fee for the conference

Final papers, either in French or English, will be published in an edited volume with a reputable editor.

Proposals (maximum 250 words) have to be sent to Camilla Murgia (camilla.murgia@unige.ch) and Dominique Bauer (dominique.bauer@kuleuven.be) by December 1, 2017. Those who submitted their proposal will be notified of their acceptance by December 20

Conveners: Dr. Camilla Murgia, University of Geneva and Prof. Dominique Bauer, Catholic University of Leuven

Reference:

CFP: Ephemeral exhibition spaces (Geneva, 16-17 Mar 18). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 31, 2017 (accessed Nov 19, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/16626>.