Frenemies (London, 19-20 Jul 18)

London, Paul Mellon Centre for British Art, Jul 19–20, 2018
Deadline: Dec 14, 2017

Sarah Turner, The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art

Frenemies: Friendship, Enmity, and Rivalry in British Art, 1769-2018

From the earliest histories of art, the friendships and rivalries of artists have been the subject of anecdote and gossip. For that reason they have been associated with the popular storylines of art, rather than with the scholarly discourse of art history. However, the wide-ranging re-evaluation of affect and emotion that is taking place in the humanities, and the increasing recognition of a synchronic, network model of understanding rather than a diachronic, emulative one in art history, have suggested that artistic friendships and rivalries are key agents in the production and reception of works of art. This methodological shift has helped art historians perceive the significance of interpersonal relationships to art-making. It has drawn attention to the sociability of artists, and to the entwining of their personal and professional networks. Meanwhile, across other disciplines, the impact of friendship, personal networks and communities of rivalry upon cultural production have been the subject of important studies. Furthermore, the idea of productive or inhibiting enmities (a more awkward but still profoundly important category of affective relationship) is also becoming a fruitful avenue of exploration.

The long history of British art furnishes many examples of complex and productive friendships and bitter, crushing rivalries. The Royal Academy, from its foundation to today, is one major locus of such complex affective networks, as has been its annual summer exhibition. In conjunction with the exhibition "The Great Spectacle: 250 years of the Summer Exhibition", to be held at the Royal Academy between June and August of 2018, and curated by the Paul Mellon Centre's Mark Hallett and Sarah Victoria Turner, this conference seeks to explore the impact of friendships and enmities on subject matter and artistic method, as well as on the formation of artistic careers and on the reception of works of art. We aim to re-evaluate and elevate these relationships, shifting them from the peripheral status of cultural gossip to central aspects of making and meaning.

We seek applications for 20-minute papers that address these questions in imaginative ways, and which focus on the history of British art in an international context, from 1769 to today. Whilst proposals that look to the Royal Academy as a locus of interpersonal artistic exchange are welcome, we also invite papers on other relevant topics.

How to submit

Please submit titles, 300-word abstracts and a brief professional biography and c.v. to Ella Flem-

ing on efleming@paul-mellon-centre.ac.uk by December 14 at 5.00PM 2017.

The symposium is funded by the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and convened by Georgina Cole (The National Art School, Sydney), Mark Hallett (Paul Mellon Centre), Mark Ledbury (The Power Institute, University of Sydney), and Sarah Victoria Turner (Paul Mellon Centre).

Reference:
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