

Art for the People? (Vienna, 27-29 Sep 18)

Vienna, Sep 27-29, 2018

Deadline: Apr 15, 2018

TIAMSA - The International Art Market Studies Association

Art for the People? Questioning the Democratization of the Art Market

2nd Conference

TIAMSA – The International Art Market Studies Association

In Cooperation with:

Belvedere Research Center, Vienna University - Department of Art History, and Dorotheum

The art world and the market have traditionally been the domain of the elites and have thrived on exclusivity. However, the art world has arguably become much more democratic in recent years thanks to the digital revolution, the inclusion of emerging economies in the world art market system, and the vastly improved access to art and information. The price histories of works of art can nowadays easily be reconstructed using online databases; the threshold for art buying is significantly lowered by online sales platforms; and new buyers in emerging economies are making the art market much less Western-oriented. Moreover, an ever broader range of artworks in different price categories has put (fine) art within reach of the middle classes across the globe. At the same time, art institutions such as museums are under tremendous pressure to be less exclusive. Some of these democratizing tendencies are of course not new. For instance, publishing houses in Europe started disseminating prints on a massive scale already in the sixteenth century, thereby enabling larger segments of the population to acquire images.

Whether or not the internet and globalization are genuine game changers in the contemporary art world, we can assume that new platforms through which art is mediated – both offline and online – are reconstituting the manner in which art is being viewed, valorized, acquired and enjoyed. These developments could have far reaching implications. TIAMSA's second annual conference explores to what extent the art market was affected by comparable developments in the past, how it is embracing today's democratic potential, and at what cost. Are digital innovations, from search engines and big data analytics to virtual auctions, transforming the long-existing modus operandi of the art world and the traditional structure of the art market? And if the art market is indeed living up to its democratic promise, is it also becoming less opaque and therefore more transparent?

Possible session topics are outlined below. However, this CFP is also open to submissions proposing to approach the theme from other angles.

Historical perspective: The history of the art market might be read as a long process of transition from a domain of the happy few to a progressively more democratic arena where less privileged

classes gained access to the market. For instance, the Dutch Republic of the seventeenth century saw the birth of an early mass market for pictures. Have there been similarly transforming instances elsewhere?

Evaluation and Expertise: In this digital age, declarations on the death of the expert and the democratization of information abound. Crowd wisdom is seen as the new guide, questioning staid and Western-dominated constructs on art quality. What is the role of art experts today and how has art expertise evolved with the inclusion of emerging art markets and the advent of the internet? Does the new contemporary art market encompass a novel, different, and perhaps radical valuation system which relies more on distributed agency, whereby a myriad of voices help shape the art canon? And will the internet become an intelligent and coherent conduit for a new democratic conversation on art

Audience and Participation: How are new art consumers reached through various internet platforms? Is the online market for works of art drawing in new buyers who would otherwise not engage in the art world? Are both established and new art market institutions such as private museums drawing in art novices?

Market and intermediaries: The art market has relied on trusted intermediaries such as dealers, auctioneers, gallery owners and various other experts who facilitate transactions and determine the artistic and monetary value of works of art. Are new technologies and increased mobility making it possible for both artists and collectors to bypass the traditional middlemen?

Globalization and Hierarchies: How are Western art canons being challenged by cultural consumers and intermediaries from emerging markets? Are we witnessing the construction of new criteria for the valuation of goods and art quality, submerging time-honored traditions?

Old and new elites: If the art market is indeed experiencing a process of democratization, what has happened to the traditional elites of collectors, connoisseurs and others? Have they been swept away or have they reconstituted and redefined themselves in the face of new tendencies? Are new elites emerging and how do they differ from traditional ones? Where does power reside in the art market today?

In line with the aims of the International Art Market Studies Association, this conference will approach the chosen topic from a range of viewpoints and thus welcomes proposals on all periods, geographic locations and disciplines (e.g. art history, economics, law, history, sociology, etc.).

APPLICATION

Applicants are invited to submit an abstract of max. 300 words for 20 minute contributions and a short CV to office@artmarketstudies.org. Those who require financial assistance (e.g. students, unemployed) may apply for a lump sum travel grant (Europe: GBP 150; overseas: GBP 400) by submitting a simple accompanying letter / e-mail explaining why this support is needed and stating whether their participation in the conference depends on the receipt of such a grant.

Christian Huemer (Belvedere Research Center, Vienna); Veronika Korbei (Independent, Vienna); Johannes Nathan (Nathan Fine Art, Zurich / Potsdam); Sebastian Schütze (University of Vienna); Gretchen Simms (University of Applied Arts Vienna); Felicitas Thurn (Dorotheum Vienna) Olav Velthuis (Universiteit Amsterdam); Filip Vermeulen (University of Rotterdam)

Application deadline: 15 April 2018

Conference language: English

Contact: Dr. Veronika Korbei and Dr. Gretchen Simms: office@artmarketstudies.org

The dates of this conference will coincide with Vienna Contemporary, Austria's International Art Fair, 27-30 Sept 2018

Reference:

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