

## The Working-Class Avant-Garde (London, 22 Jun 18)

London Southbank University, Keyworth Centre, SE1 6NG, Jun 22, 2018

Alexandra Trott

This one day symposium will explore the contributions to the twentieth-century British avant-garde by artists and writers of working-class heritage.

The avant-garde is often conceived to be the domain of the elite – those with the financial backing, education, and networks to succeed in this competitive arena. Indeed, studies such as John Carey's divisive text, *Intellectuals and the Masses*, have understood the high intellectualism of the twentieth-century avant-garde to have developed in response to the improved education of the mass populace: a means to retain the divide between the masses and the elite. This symposium explores artists and writers who are outliers to this rule: the working-class figures who partook of the elite world of the avant-garde.

8.30-9: Registration

9-9.10: Welcome

9.10-10.30: Canonical Modernists

- Courtney Pina Miller (Brandeis University), 'Working Class Intelligentsia: Orwellian Class Paradox in D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterly's Lover*'

- Robert James Sutton (Coventry University), 'Henry Moore: Neo-Working-Classicist'

- Bernard Vere (Sotheby's Institute of Art, London), '"It's Up to US": James Fitton and the Alpha Group'

10.30-12.10: Modernist Fringes

- Benjamin Kohlmann (University of Freiburg), 'Proletarian Modernism in the Long 1930s'

- Henderson Downing (LSBU), '"To be by Another Aloneness Loved": W.S. Graham and Cornish Modernism'

- Alexandra Bickley Trott (Oxford Brookes), 'Gin Palaces on the Waterloo Road, and Other Reasons for Art'

- Chris Clarke (University of Southampton/Independent), "'It's all chaos, who has what': B.S. Johnson, the Arts Council, and the Faltering Literary Avant-Garde of the 1960s'

Lunch: 12.10-1.10

1.10-3.30: Jewish Culture in London's East End

- Evi Heinz (Birkbeck/Independent), 'John Rodker's Modernist Drama and the Yiddish Theatre in Whitechapel'

- Matti Ron (University of East Anglia), 'Avant-Garde Antagonisms in the East End of Simon Blumenfeld's Jew Boy'

To and From Other Shores

- Ian Dudley (University of Essex), 'Working-Class Avant-Gardism in Decolonial Guyana: Art and Pedagogy at the End of the British Empire'

- Karolina Kolenda (University of Krakow), 'The Uses of American Popular Culture: British Pop Art's Challenge to the Elitist Definitions of the Avant-Garde'

- Louis Armand (Charles University), "'The Barbaric Peoples of the Earth": Gaudier-Brezeska & the Revolt Against Civilisation'

Populist Edges

- Nick Lee (Royal Holloway), 'Escaping the Cage of Shadows: The Outrageous Fortune of Archie Hill'

- Mark P. Williams (University of Duisberg-Essen), 'The Escape of the Outsider: A Working-Class Dialectic of Escapism and Subversion in the British Countercultural Fantasy of Savoy Books'

- Matt Martin (Birkbeck), "'Sogbo is the Protector of Flags": International and Interracial Solidarity in the Poetry of Bill Griffiths'

The Banality of Labour & the Aesthetic of the Factory Floor

- Katherine Jackson (University of British Columbia/Slade School of Fine Art), 'The Problem with Steel: Use-Value and Surplus in Garth Evans' Placement with the British Steel Corporation (1969)

- Carina Brand (de Montford University), 'Stuart Brisley's Performance as Proletarian Horizon: The Politics and Aesthetics of the British Avant-Garde'

3.30-3.50: Tea Break

3.50-4pm: Intro to 'Agit Disco'

4-5pm Punk, Post-Punk & DIY Messthetics

- David Wilkinson (Manchester Metropolitan University), 'Class, Post-Punk and the Avant-Garde'

- Aaron Williamson (Artist), 'Splitting the Atom: Post-Punk and DIY Messthetics'

6-7.30: "Agit Disco" with Stefan Szczelkun

Organised by:

Dr Alexandra Bickley Trott

Dr Leon Betsworth

Dr Nick Lee

Reference:

CONF: The Working-Class Avant-Garde (London, 22 Jun 18). In: ArtHist.net, Jun 7, 2018 (accessed Jun 17, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/18349>>.