Exhibiting (and) History (Rome, 6-7 Dec 18)

Rome, Bibliotheca Hertziana - Max Planck Institute for Art History, Dec 6–07, 2018

Maria Bremer

Workshop

Concept and organization: Maria Bremer (Bibliotheca Hertziana)

Conceived within the framework of the research initiative “Rome Contemporary,” this workshop will be aimed at developing novel perspectives on the relationship between exhibition practice and history from 1960 to the present. The encounter intends to address this relationship by focusing on postwar and contemporary examples worldwide, proposing both a historical and a methodological reflection. Especially since the postwar time, as the understanding of art has been expanded to include artistic practices beyond singular artworks, exhibitions too experienced significant transformations. Hitherto mainly object-based, they diversified into a range of discursive, contextual, and performative formats grounded in modes of acting rather than just modes of showing. These processual and activating formats engage more firmly with a broader social nexus, weaving themselves into the processes and contingencies involved in the making of history. Thereby, they draw our attention to the capacity of exhibitions to both mediate and impact their historical time, to spatialize or enact historical concepts, and, in so doing, to potentially offer new models for historiographical work.

The list of participants speaks to the broad disciplinary scope of the workshop: Louisa Avgita (University of Ioannina), Raffaele Bedarida (Cooper Union, New York), Ana Bilbao (Afterall Research Centre, London), Beatrice von Bismarck (Academy of Visual Arts Leipzig), Ana Bogdanović (University of Belgrade), Nanne Buurman (Kunsthochschule Kassel), Eleonora Charans (IUAV University, Venice), Davor Ereš (University of Belgrade), Flavio Fergonzi (Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa), Anthony Gardner (University of Oxford), Jonida Gashi (Academy of Albanian Studies, Tirana), Kristian Handberg (University of Copenhagen), Sharon Hecker (Independent), Britta Hochkirchen (Bielefeld University), Catalina Imizcoz (Central Saint Martins, London), Vincent Normand (ECAL/University of Art and Design Lausanne), Vanessa Parent (University of British Columbia, Vancouver), Clarissa Ricci (IUAV University, Venice), and Simon Sheikh (Goldsmiths College, London). By convening such a diverse group of scholars, we mean to start a conversation around an expanded notion of exhibiting as entangled in and impacting the historical conditions of its time, and – not least importantly – to re-examine the ways in which art historical research can contribute to the broader field of exhibition studies.

PROGRAM

Thursday, December 6, 2018

10:00 – Welcome (Tristan Weddigen)

10:10 – Introduction (Maria Bremer)

10:30-13:00 – Session I

Beginning with the attempt to locate the exhibition historically, we will discuss its roots in western modernity (Vincent Normand), retracing, in a second step, its currently decreasing specificity and unsettled future (Ana Bilbao). After situating our object of inquiry, our aim will be to concentrate on the ways in which – since the postwar time – exhibition practice has mediated events of contemporary history. By modulating or adjusting their structure, function, format, as well as the form and canon of their individual exhibits, exhibitions have responded or reacted to episodes of their time, such as the protests of 1968 (Clarissa Ricci) or Cold War politics (Kristian Handberg; Britta Hochkirchen).

13:00 – Lunch

14:00-15:30 – Session II

Moving beyond the mediating relationship of exhibitions to history, what will be at stake, then, is their increasing agency in constructing the (art history of the) present, by establishing or disseminating categories of relevance through formats ranging from biennials (Ana Bogdanović/Davor Ereš) to private gallery exhibitions (Flavio Fergonzi).

15:30 – Break

16:00-18:00 – Session III

Delving deeper into curatorial poetics, we will further highlight the aptitude of exhibitions to translate preexisting concepts of history, from universalizing to genealogic and nostalgic models, into the expository realm (Nanne Buurman). Conversely, a philosophy of the present as 'the contemporary' has recently been founded at a global scale through a specific, constellational and trans-historical exhibition practice (Louisa Avgita). Elucidating how the philosophy of 'the contemporary' has rendered linear and teleological patterns obsolete will then lead us to focus on the current state of scholarly historiographical work.

Friday, December 7, 2018

10:00 – Introduction (Maria Bremer)

10:30-12:30 – Session IV

At once attempting to anticipate future trajectories, we will ask whether expository practices could possibly offer new models for historiographical methods. Since their early feminist (Vanessa Parent) and postcolonial (Catalina Imizcoz) declinations, exhibitions have called into question conventional, hegemonic historiographies. Their participation in the rewriting of history can be further examined by looking at a widespread phenomenon, the reconstruction of exhibitions. We will

discuss how such techniques of repetition, enacted in the exhibition medium, resonate with assumptions of curatorial evidence production (Beatrice Von Bismarck), to then dwell on the various effects of expository re-stagings (Eleonora Charans).

12:30 – Lunch

13:30-15:00 – Session V

In the context of expository reenactments, it appears that privately funded recreations of fascist exhibitions (Raffaele Bedarida/Sharon Hecker), or state-driven, public presentations of political archives (Jonida Gashi) urge us to refine our investigation of exhibition practice and its spheres of impact.

15:00 – Break

15:30-18:00 – Session VI

In our concluding session we will thus proceed to discuss viable ways of revisiting the "undisciplined" (Anthony Gardner) realm of exhibition history. By disentangling its categories; reassessing the impact of documentary records (and the lack thereof) (Gardner); or acquiring instruments from conceptual and social history (Simon Sheikh), the discipline can progress beyond the ongoing canonization of 'curator-authors' and 'masterpieces.'

The workshop will be held in English. Participants will engage in group discussion, after each gives a brief presentation about their respective topics. No registration required. See the program at: http://www.biblhertz.it/en/news/event-calendar/

Reference:

ANN: Exhibiting (and) History (Rome, 6-7 Dec 18). In: ArtHist.net, Nov 26, 2018 (accessed Nov 21, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/19628>.