

Painting Politics (Auckland, 26–27 Jul 19)

Fine Arts and Art History, The University of Auckland, NZ, Jul 26–27, 2019

Deadline: Apr 1, 2019

Gregory Minissale, University of Auckland

Painting Politics Symposium, 2019

The central focus of this two-day symposium, Painting Politics, is to explore the intersection of aesthetic experience and political thought. On the one hand art is often characterised as the domain of inwardness and subjectivity and on the other politics is viewed as the objective and rational analysis of external structures 'out there' in the world. This symposium examines how these two domains intersect to produce a mutually-constitutive critical paradigm in which politics is sensitised to inwardness and art with political outwardness: a place where outward directed perception and inner-directed introspection become continuous.

According to the philosopher Herbert Marcuse Marxist aesthetics is in danger of devaluing inwardness: "This scorn for inwardness is not too remote from the scorn of the capitalists for an unprofitable dimension of life" (The Aesthetic Dimension, 1978: 38). For Marcuse such inwardness, rather than being irrelevant to the class struggle because it does not directly articulate oppression using the language of reason, may act as a bulwark and place of refuge against the ubiquity of the ideology of capitalism, consumerism, authority and statehood. These realities infiltrate every aspect of human life demanding that time and inner life be accounted for and made purposeful using the correct methods of rational cognition.

It is Adorno who insists that art must have a certain autonomy from the 'empirical' aspect of political and social behaviour: "although the demarcation line between art and the empirical must not be effaced...artworks nevertheless have a life sui generis...the emphasis on the artifactual element in art concerns less the fact that it is manufactured than its own inner constitution...Yet it is precisely as artifacts, as products of social labor, that they also communicate with the empirical experience that they reject and from which they draw their content" (Aesthetic Theory, 1997: 5-6).

As well as contributions from scholars and theorists in conventional academic formats, we welcome pairings or small groups of practitioners or practitioners and theorists to undertake focused discussions and panel sessions to address a broad set of issues and provocations:

What are the possibilities for political expression in painting today?

How can art, and in particular painting, provide something original to political thought and action by virtue of its sui generis character? And how can politics inform painting without trampling on its 'inner constitution', its autonomy?

How does the intersection of painting and politics help us to understand subjectivity in different ways?

Those who are interested in contributing papers are required to submit their proposals (200-500 words) by 1 April, 2019.

Keynote speakers

David Joselit is a Distinguished Professor of Art History at The Graduate Center (CUNY), author of key texts on modern and contemporary art (After Art, Princeton University Press; Infinite Regress, MIT; Feedback, MIT press) and is a contributing author to October (also at MIT).

Helen Johnson is a Melbourne artist whose primary interest is painting's potential to open up and destabilise its imagery. Recent exhibitions include Artspace (Sydney), New Museum (New York), Institute of Contemporary Arts (London), Basel Statements (Basel) and Glasgow International.

We aim to publish an edited volume based on papers presented at this symposium.

Organised by Simon Ingram, Greg Minissale and Caroline Vercoe at The University of Auckland

For further enquiries:

g.minissale at auckland.ac.nz

s.ingram at auckland.ac.nz

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