Contemporary Arts and European Fascisms (Rome, 8-9 Apr 19)

French Academy in Rome - Villa Medici, Apr 8–09, 2019
Deadline: Jan 31, 2019

Arthur Godard

Between Memory and Oblivion: Contemporary Arts and European Fascisms

French Academy in Rome – Villa Medici and Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max Planck Institute for Art History

The historical consequences of fascism have played an important role in the formation of the European political project. The memory of fascism has had a sometimes violent and sometimes a more subtle and complex impact on European citizens' daily lives and the intellectual sphere. Questioning history has been for many artists a way to address the memory of a traumatic past, both as a sporadic occurrence or a main topic of their work.

After the conference held in Rome in 2018, dedicated to Italian Fascism through the Prism of Contemporary Art. Reinterpretations, Montages, Deconstructions (Università Roma Tre, April 5–6, 2018), we aim at extending our reflection beyond Italy, taking into account the different forms of dictatorship inspired by the Italian fascist regime in a number of European countries before and after the Second World War (Germany and occupied countries, Falangist and Francoist Spain, Portugal under Salazar, the military regime in Greece). Conversely, other European countries that hosted refugees fleeing dictatorship are equally considered. The European lens allows us to extend the chronology and invites us to investigate fascism in its various forms, both as a historical event and as a political mechanism and a ritual of power.

We are interested in the manifold ways contemporary art has dealt with fascism's legacy, between memory and oblivion, and in relation to continuity and discontinuity, questioning and protest, iconographic investigation and historical awareness.

While a comparative analysis is a valuable way to understand better the artistic strategies, it also raises the theoretical problem of the diversity of the historical phenomena to which the works of art refer. One of the aims of the conference is to problematize comparative scholarly approaches to artistic strategies that have been proposed across disciplines so far.

The focus of the conference lies on the artists' working methods and on the relationship that different generations have developed with the past. More specifically, we would like to understand how the use of specific artistic mediums shapes the relationship with the past and how this influences the contemporary visuality in terms of, for instance, still and moving images, design, exhibiting or typography. This also includes addressing the material history of the artifacts as objects of

collecting and questioning the seemingly distant gaze of art historiography. In this way the conference intends to explore the longue durée of the construction and deconstruction of historicity beyond the traditional study of single people, works and events.

We welcome proposals for papers that address (but are not limited to) the following topics:
– the artistic reflection on fascisms and the aesthetic phenomena of authoritarianism;
– forms and mediums of artistic practices;
– gendered practices and theoretical stances;
– montage as an epistemological tool;
– memory and the public space;
– design, typography and other forms of mass communication;
– the survival of objects related to the authoritarian power and the role of collecting of fascist heritage;
– the critical fortune of art and artists involved with the regime;
– the political and discursive formation of the consciousness of art history.

The workshop will be held in English, French and Italian. The format is discussion-oriented and open to the public. We invite doctoral students, postdoctoral researchers and senior scholars to submit proposals for 20-minutes presentations.

Please send an abstract of 700 words along with a 150-word CV to Patrizia Celli (patrizia.celli@villamedici.it) by January 31, with the heading “European Fascisms”.

Scientific Committee:
Luca Acquarelli (CNRS-EHESS); Patrizia Celli (French Academy in Rome – Villa Medici); Laura Iamurri (Università Roma Tre), Tristan Weddigen (Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max Planck Institute for Art History).

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