

Meyer Schapiro: Thinking Between Art and the 20th Century (London, 19 Mar 20)

Courtauld Institute of Art, London, Mar 19, 2020

Registration deadline: Mar 19, 2020

Oliver O'Donnell

Meyer Schapiro (1904-1996) was a dazzling midcentury entrepôt of ideas, bridging the worlds of artists and intellectuals in ways that are truly incomparable. Just as he impressed Noam Chomsky, beseeched Walter Benjamin, and critiqued Martin Heidegger, so too did he mentor Robert Motherwell, assist Barnett Newman, and inspire Fernand Léger. Schapiro's interstitial position between high art and high academe, however, has made him difficult to understand. Most scholarship about him isolates different aspects or moments of his life — his early Marxism, his forays into psychoanalysis, his relations with practicing artists, or his late semiotics. Stepping back, this workshop seeks to draw inspiration from Schapiro's very position in an uncertain middle ground.

As a medievalist but modernist, Cold War socialist but Cold War American, documentarian but theoretician, Meyer Schapiro was perpetually, indeed in many ways by definition, in between. Combined with the longevity of his career, the medial nature of Schapiro's work can serve as a powerful prism for rethinking some of the most consequential historical transitions through which he lived, for instance from modernism to postmodernism, from humanism to neo-liberalism.

Programme

14:00 – David Peters Corbett, London / Courtauld Institute of Art: Introductions and Welcome

14:15 – Oliver O'Donnell, London / Warburg Institute: Science and Art in Meyer Schapiro's Early Thought

Readings:

"Review of Emanuel Loewy's "The Rendering of Nature in Early Greek Art"

"Review of The New Viennese School"

15:15 – Jérémie Koering, Fribourg / University of Fribourg: Drawing, Thinking, and Knowing in Meyer Schapiro

Readings:

"On Some Problems in the Semiotics of Visual Art"

"On Representing and Knowing"

16:15 – Hagi Kenaan, Tel Aviv / Tel Aviv University: Meyer Schapiro on Art and Philosophy

Readings:

"The Still Life as a Personal Object: A Note on Heidegger and Van Gogh" and "Further Notes on Heidegger and Van Gogh"

"Cézanne and the Philosophers"

17:15 – Reception

At this seminar-style, afternoon workshop, texts by Schapiro will be pre-circulated. Speakers will briefly introduce the texts in short presentations so as to facilitate discussion and a wine reception will follow. Interested participants should contact Oliver O'Donnell at odonnell@bilderfahrzeuge.org to receive the readings.

Further information about the speakers can be found at

<https://courtauld.ac.uk/event/meyer-schapiro-thinking-between-art-and-the-20th-century>

Reference:

CONF: Meyer Schapiro: Thinking Between Art and the 20th Century (London, 19 Mar 20). In: Arthist.net, Feb 13, 2020 (accessed Aug 21, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/22583>>.