

The Modern Art Review in Europe, 1910–1940: Meanings, Markets, Methods

Deadline: May 25, 2020

Kate Kangaslahti

Extended Deadline: 25 May 2020

The first half of the twentieth century witnessed the proliferation of the illustrated art press, including an increasing number of publications dedicated to 'advanced' contemporary practice. Such specialist art periodicals have long been indispensable to the study of art history, a repository from which scholars in the field have looked to retrieve the public meanings of modern art at a particular time and place. By scouring the pages of various reviews, journals and magazines, art historians tacitly acknowledge - and perpetuate - the importance of these illustrated publications in creating the artistic, economic and historic value of modern art and visual culture. Yet the discipline's typical approaches to periodicals themselves have remained largely archival, extracting individual texts or images with little thought or reference to their original contexts or questions of production, readership, and social, economic or political ties. Only more recently has attention begun to turn to the part that editorial activity, as a creative practice in its own right, played in the development of aesthetic theories and in the evolution of modern artistic currents.

We invite contributions from international scholars for a volume dedicated to the history and legacies of The Modern Art Review in Europe (1910-1940). We welcome historical case studies on European modern art periodicals in the early to mid-twentieth century (and their echoes elsewhere), but are particularly interested in investigations that also offer new research in relation to three themes.

Firstly, we want to explore the multiple meanings that specialist periodicals assume within the history of modern art and consider their complexity as artefacts uniting artistic, social, intellectual and economic activity. More than merely the sum of the writing and reproductions they carried, modern art reviews were—were—often coveted art objects themselves. So by what criteria should we evaluate the various publications of the period, or attempt to judge their influence? By the importance of the texts that appeared in their pages, the renown of their contributors, the quality of their production standards and visual design, their place of publication, the size of their readerships and the geographical extension of their distribution, or by their promotion of certain artists, groups or movements? If we generally acknowledge that art periodicals were instrumental in consecrating a particular face of modern art, a cluster of international 'isms,' how might we determine their significance as aesthetic catalysts or incubators? What did the modern art review mean to artists, not only as the authors and contributors of the ideas and works reproduced in its pages, but also more generally as consumers of those words and images?

Secondly, we are interested in accounts of reviews, magazines, and journals that confront the interdependence of the art market and the art press. Standing between the production and consumption of artistic goods, in what distinct ways did modern art periodicals shape public taste, transform aesthetic standards and, by extension, create market value? How did the printed page, alongside the gallery window or museum wall, function as a key site of international exposure and valorisation for contested artefacts in the first half of the twentieth century? The ever greater use of photographic reproductions, a prominent feature of the period enabled by advances in printing technology, was due at least in part to the central function that photographs increasingly played in the commercialisation of work and in the exchange of knowledge across transnational networks. To what extent can we observe market forces through editorial content and publishing policies and how did periodicals themselves operate as commercial product(ion)s, subject to their own economic (mis)fortunes? Often dependent upon donated time, texts, photographs, translations, advertisements, and other services, solicited from an array of sympathetic writers, artists, dealers, and collectors, what do the era's reviews, journals and magazines reveal about the entangled histories of the wider art world?

Lastly, we want to examine some of the different methods emerging in the field of periodical studies. Digitisation, for example, has transformed once limited resources into a vast and readily available corpus, but what benefits do such technologies bring beyond mere accessibility? What fresh insights await, from combining various forms of close and distant reading? Are quantitative methods of analysis, particularly those that look broadly at questions of production, distribution and readership, an important corrective to qualitative studies that have granted a few key publications disproportionate significance in the art historical imagination? If digital tools have more typically lent themselves to unearthing patterns of text, how can they be used to trace, analyse and compare the visual strategies that periodicals employed to present modern art? Conversely, in relying more and more upon digital formats, are we now neglecting the review as a material artefact, have we lost sight of the double-page spread, and the text-image relationships that evolved in this printed, visual space?

We welcome proposals for contributions in English of 6,000-8,000 words in length. The abstract should be 1000-1500 words and include a provisional title, your main research question/s and/or arguments, a brief discussion on how they will be elaborated in the article, the methodological approach you intend to take and your primary source materials. The editors will make an initial selection of chapters, subject to feedback from the publisher. Deadlines for final drafts will be announced to selected authors. Copyright will be the responsibility of the authors and proof of copyright permission should be submitted together with the first draft of the final essay. We expect to be able to offer copyediting and language assistance to non-native English authors.

Abstracts and a brief CV should be sent (in MS Word format) by 30 April 2020 to:

Dr Malcolm Gee (malcolm.gee@northumbria.ac.uk)

Dr Kate Kangaslahti (kate.kangaslahti@kuleuven.be)

Dr Chara Kolokytha (charakolokytha@aol.com)

Reference:

CFP: The Modern Art Review in Europe, 1910-1940: Meanings, Markets, Methods. In: ArtHist.net, Feb 26, 2020 (accessed Dec 13, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/22712>>.