

Re: RE Q: The scholarly use of CD-Roms

Rainer Donandt

Dear Pedro,

I completely agree with you about the clumsiness and lessening of quality and text space with the use of cd-rom for art history. I would add that this holds true even with the use of softwares like Powerpoint in art history presentations - in class rooms or at conferences. Perhaps -- or no doubt -- the technology will improve to the point where it can be useful to art historians.

But so far, not only are the aspects you mentioned a problem, in addition, there is the techno-elitist aspects of the computerized media.

As someone who has pioneered art historical exchanges in the area of modern and contemporary art in Indonesia and South and Southeast Asia, and given and participated in art historical fora various places throughout Asia, I have experienced that anyone who comes with fancy technical demands, for the MOST part would either find themselves unable to give their presentations, in most places, and/or they would insult and hurt their hosts and colleagues.

And this, I might add, is not meant as a way to reinforce any outmoded 3rd world - 1st world distinction, as I encounter the same situation (i.e. lack of computerized image display facilities -- or even proper slide set ups) that serve art historical needs, in Canada, the US and Europe, every time I step outside of an art history context (for example at interdisciplinary studies conferences, or giving guest lectures in art courses taught in class rooms outside the art history dept., if there even is one, locally.

The technology, then, to many of us, does not yet support art historical work. And this should come as no surprise when we look at the values and needs that drive the computer industry: if you come to a business or engineering conference or teaching facility, suddenly the technology and the local set ups prove to be a perfect match.

Art history occupies the lowest rung on the ladder of the humanities (all of which are embattled) these days, at least in North America, and certainly in the rest of the world outside of Europe. (I left Norway when I was in my 20s, so I am a little out of touch with the situation for kunsthistorie/Kunst Geschichte/l'histoire de l'art/art history in Europe

