

Anthro/Socio (Copenhagen 28–29 Jan 2005)

Kirsten Zeuthen

Anthro/Socio: Towards an Anthropological Paradigm in Practises, Theories and Histories of Art?

A conference on emerging crossdisciplinary paradigms for art history and anthropology

January 28 - 29, 2005.

Arken Museum of Modern Art, Ishøj & University of Copenhagen, Amager
http://www.hum.ku.dk/nafc/anthro_socio.htm

The purpose of this international conference is to raise and elaborate on questions related to the emerging cross-disciplinary paradigm bringing art history and its histories closer to the methods and fields of anthropology than they have possibly been before. The first part of the conference title refers to a video installation piece by the American artist Bruce Nauman, "Anthro/Socio. Rinde Facing Camera" from 1995, in which the performer appears to be caught or split between two inseparable levels of being, between two bodies: an anthropological and a social body, a phenomenological and a cultural body and, finally, on the one hand the immaterial and detached body of the screen and on the other a body located in a specific time and place.

Since the German art historian Aby Warburg's pioneering studies of the art and image production of both European and American peoples, periods and cultures opened up a new area of research between art history and anthropology, there has been a regular exchange of ideas, methods and objects of research across the borders separating these two disciplines. But while major exponents of modern anthropology have been willing to cross the line in order to engage with art historical material – for instance Franz Boas, Michel Leiris, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Pierre Bourdieu, James Clifford, Marc Augé or Nestor Canclini, just to name a few – art historians have until recently been much more reluctant to leave what they have considered to be their own field. It is as if the study of 'primitivism', i.e. the modern artistic appropriation of formal or other traits of artefacts from Non-Western cultures, was the closest an art historian could ever get to adapt an anthropological view on the aesthetic production of meaning in different cultures. But the methodological approach to primitivism has, more often than not, been dominated by

traditional notions of style, influence, and form. Thus, the radical early 20th-century artistic experience of cultural otherness never really made an impression on Western academic art history, let alone museum and exhibition practises.

During the last 15 or 20 years, however, new perspectives in a highly expansive art historical discipline have once again brought up for discussion the possible points of contact between art history and anthropology. The emergences of Cultural Studies and Visual Culture Studies, as well as challenging tendencies in works by contemporary artists, have no doubt contributed to important reorientations within both fields.

Today the classical division of labour between an art history mainly dealing with institutionalized Western fine art and an anthropology mainly dealing with all kinds of artefacts from exotic places can hardly be sustained. Thus we can no longer distinguish between the art historical same and the anthropological other. Just as there are ethnologists working with daily life in Western late modern societies undergoing dramatic processes of transformation, art historians now tend to explore visual cultures of all and often distinctly non-institutionalized kinds in order to shed light on image productions and receptions in the broadest ways possible. How, for instance, can art historians today rethink the notion of the body? Is the body still essentially to be considered as a neutral biological phenomenon or as a natural form moving unchanged through history, or is it, rather, an object of cultural and semiotic investment tied up with questions concerning race, gender, politics, pleasure, religion, ritual and changing concepts of nature and work? And in which ways do art historians refashion traditional notions of provenance, place and region? Can one still speak of the origin, the place or the placement of a work of art without considering the 'situation' of the work in all its historical, spatial and political complexity, i.e. without taking into account the territorial, sociological, institutional, and geopolitical implications of such notions? What do the spatial contexts and other material or pragmatic circumstances of images tell us about their function and role in a given culture? Can we still subscribe to the idea of a universal 'aesthetic experience', or should we approach experience in a more anthropological manner by assuming a fundamental tension between general human capabilities of perception and feeling on the one hand and historical and local ways of living and experiencing on the other? Faced with such questions, art history might become a discipline on the move, a travelling discipline, teaming up with anthropology.

Program:

Friday, January 28

Venue: Arken Museum of Modern Art, Ishøj

9-9.30 Arrival and coffee

9.30-13.30 Morning Session

"Opening remarks"

Mikkel Bogh, University of Copenhagen

"The Social Lives of Art and its Histories"

Robert S. Nelson, University of Chicago

Break

"'Anxiety' in Contemporary Western Culture,

Reviewed from Art: the human as ontologically creative imaginary institution"

Anders Michelsen, University of Copenhagen

Lunch break

13.30-16.30 Afternoon Session

"Pictorial Representation. Image, Medium,
and Body. An Anthropological Approach"

Dr. Martin Schulz, Staatliche Hochschule für Gestaltung

Coffee break

"Anthropology in Japanese Art History"

Gunhild Borggren, University of Copenhagen

Audience discussion of pre-papers and talks of the day.

Evening Banquet at 20.00

Grisobasovitz, Overgaden Neden Vandet 17

Saturday, January 29

Venue: University of Copenhagen, Amager

Conference Hall 22-0-11, Karen Blixens Vej 1

9-9.15 Coffee

9.15-13.30 Morning Session

"Field Work in Visual Culture"

Irit Rogoff, Goldsmith College

"Inside Out, Outside In.

On the relations between exhibiting cultures and the world outside museums"

Anne Aurasmaa, University of Helsinki

Break

"When Forms Become Void"

Jesper Rasmussen, University of Copenhagen

Lunch break

13.30-16.30 Afternoon Session

"Art, Agency, and Iconoclasm"

Dario Gamboni, University of Geneva

Coffee break

"Ritual, Image and Historical Change.

The Case of Xenia and Acts 10"

Thomas Lederballe, Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen

"Final discussions and closing remarks"

Mikkel Bogh

For further information, please contact Kirsten Zeuthen (klik@hum.ku.dk)
or Mikkel Bogh (bogh@hum.ku.dk).

Copenhagen Doctoral School in Cultural Studies, Literature, and the Arts

<http://www.hum.ku.dk/klik>

Organising committee:

Mikkel Bogh (University of Copenhagen)

Hans Dam Christensen (University of Copenhagen)

Peter Nørgaard Larsen (Statens Museum for Kunst, The Danish National Gallery)

Anne Ring Petersen (University of Copenhagen)

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<<https://arthist.net/archive/26885>>.