

Examining the Avant Garde (Ann Arbor, 16–17 Oct 08)

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Second call for papers - deadline extended by 2 weeks

Examining the Avant Garde

A Graduate Conference

October 16 and 17, 2008

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What is the avant garde? Does it have an expiration date? Peter Bürger and others have argued that avant garde movements such as Dadaism, Futurism, Constructivism, and Surrealism responded to and broke with what was deemed a socially and politically detached art establishment. According to the avant gardes themselves, both left and right, this brief period in the early 20th century was marked by its revolutionary potential. Through the performative language of the manifesto and the radical mixing of styles and media, the avant gardes articulated their positions on political modernity and aesthetic modernism as acts of rupture and renewal. Detached from these specific movements, though, the term avant garde stands not so much for a particular aesthetic engagement as it does for an inquiry into art's social function and political potential, an acknowledgement of art's historicity, its representational and medial experimentation, and the possibility of its renewal. In this conference we propose to explore this extremely rich terrain called "avant garde" by examining the genealogy and construction of the historical phenomena and considering the possibility of vanguardist positions now in the European context, with particular attention to the German-speaking countries.

We invite graduate students from all disciplines to submit proposals for 20-minute papers exploring the meaning, origins, and afterlife of the avant garde, as well as its epistemological and critical potential. Possible topics include:

The history and meanings of autonomous and engaged art

Proto-avant gardes

Reconsiderations of the historical avant garde

The relationship between the avant garde, modernism, and postmodernism

Contemporary concepts of the relation between the aesthetic and the political

Neo-avant garde and counter-avant garde forms

Recuperations of the avant garde in contemporary art and letters

Avant garde/vanguardism through the lens of gender, race, sexuality

* Avant garde, art-historical knowledge, and the processes of
canon-formation

Forward abstracts of no more than 300 words in English to
avantgarde@umich.edu by August 1st, 2008.

Reference:

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