

Art History and Art Criticism (AAH Conf, Manchester, 2-4 Apr 2008)

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Session Title: Art History and Art Criticism: Intersections, Disconnections, Non-Communications

Session Proposal:

Various relationships have been posited between the practice of art criticism and the discipline of art history. Some writers, like James Elkins, have argued that the two activities belong to, or stem from very different contexts, with art history being rooted in academia and art criticism in public/journalistic discourse. Likewise, Michael Fried proposed a differentiation based upon art history's 'neutrality' and art criticism's 'judgmentalness'. On the other hand, Michael Baxandall has stated that he uses the terms 'art history' and 'art criticism' interchangeably. Likewise, Stephen Melville has suggested that the distinction between art history and art criticism is neither particularly deep nor clear. Finally, it often seems that (past) art criticism functions largely as evidence and reception theory for art-historical narratives. Such an attitude perhaps dovetails with a marked hostility towards issues of judgment and 'taste' on the part of art historians in recent decades.

The relationships between art history and art criticism, then, seem characterisable as intersection, disconnection, and perhaps even non-communication, which further suggests different intersections/disconnections with the artwork. This session seeks to explore these relationships and encourage a more nuanced understanding of the relation between the two modes. Moreover, with art history being increasingly conceived as subsumable under an overarching programme of visual-cultural studies, and art criticism being simultaneously in a state of crisis and yet present everywhere through the 'blogosphere', it is arguably more crucial than ever to explore these relationships carefully. We invite contributors to examine these relationships, to consider the perceived cleavage between academic and 'journalistic' criticism, and other related topics.

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For further information relating to the conference, please see:

<http://www.aah.org.uk/conference/index.php>

Reference:

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