

Rethinking Complicity and Resistance: Visual Arts and Politics (Aberdeen, 23-24 Oct 09)

Ceccarelli, Rachele

Visual Arts and Politics'

Call for Papers. Submission Deadline: 11h September 2009

Rethinking Complicity and Resistance:
The Relationship between Visual Arts and Politics

A two-day Postgraduate Conference, University of Aberdeen

23-24th October 2009

Sponsored by the Beyond Text Programme, AHRC

"The arts only ever lend to projects of domination or emancipation what they are able to lend them, that is to say, quite simply, what they have in common with them: bodily positions and movements, functions of speech, the parcelling out of the visible and the invisible. Furthermore, the autonomy they can enjoy or the subversion they can claim credit for rest on the same foundation."

Jacques Rancière

The long contested issue of the relationship between art and politics has lately re-emerged in critical debate, in conjunction with an explosion of interest in political theory and the exhaustion of the postmodernist model. Recent technological developments have radically transformed modes of creation, circulation, assimilation and dispersion of images, reframing perception and making the investigation of the interdependency of visual arts and politics an urgent ethical necessity. Yet now that activism, militancy and engaged art are back on the agenda, it is essential to analyse contemporary artistic practices and thought in an attempt to discover not just what art can say about politics, but what art can and cannot do as politics. As many of the critical models developed in the last decades have been absorbed and assimilated by the structures they were trying to destabilize, as the avant-garde and radical art has become a commodity, as revolutionary projects and ideas neutralize themselves and lose their corrosive power, we ask: can art be an effective political gesture? And if so, how?

This conference invites a critical rethinking of the complementary concepts of complicity and resistance: asking complicit with what; resistant to what? It does so in the context of current critical debate in the field of contemporary visual arts, promoting a provocative and challenging exploration of the technical, thematic, and institutional possibilities/limitations/implications of artistic strategies aimed at intervening in the political.

Keynote Speaker: Zeigam Azizov. Born in Azerbaijan, the London-based artist and theorist studied art and philosophy in Azerbaijan, Russia, England and France. His work has been exhibited worldwide and he is currently teaching at the University of Klagenfurt.

The conference organizers invite papers that explore the relationship between contemporary visual arts and politics at both theoretical and applied levels. Recognizing the need for an approach that overcomes disciplinary boundaries, we welcome abstracts from practitioners with an interest in theory, and research students from a wide variety of backgrounds.

Possible themes include, but are not limited to:

- Revolution / Counter-Revolution
- The Politics of Visibility
- Artists and Institutions
- Physical Traces / Digital Traces
- Beyond the Critique of the Spectacle
- Boundaries, Migrations, Peripheries
- State of Violence / State of Fear
- Human Rights and Ecological Collapse in the Global Era

We welcome proposals from postgraduate students within and outside the UK. We have two bursaries available for travel and expenses; if you would like to be considered, please let us know when you submit your abstract.

Please send a 250 word abstract and a brief biographical statement to Rachele Ceccarelli (r03rc7@abdn.ac.uk) and Lorna Muir (lemuir@abdn.ac.uk) by September 11th. Applicants will be informed about the outcome of their submission shortly after the deadline.

Papers will be automatically considered for publication in the first issue of *Interstices: Critical Interventions in Visual Culture*, an online graduate

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journal being established at the University of Aberdeen, with the support of the AHRC's Beyond Text Programme.

For further information check the webpage www.abdn.ac.uk/visualculture, or contact the conference organizers:

Rachele Ceccarelli: r03rc7@abdn.ac.uk

Lorna Muir: lemuir@abdn.ac.uk

Emma Grey: emma.grey@abdn.ac.uk

Nicole Plumb: nicole@peacockvisualarts.co.uk

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