

Is Paris Still the Capital of the 19th Century? (Williamstown MA, 30–31 Oct 09)

Clark Symposium: Is Paris Still the Capital of the Nineteenth Century?
The Painting of Modern Life Now

October 30, 2009 - October 31, 2009

The art of the French avant-garde produced between the Salon des refusés of 1863 and the last Impressionist exhibition of 1886 has for twenty five years at least been the focus of active and pace-setting research in art history, as the art of Manet and the Impressionists became the focus of some of the most lively debates about modernity, feminism, social and cultural history in the discipline. This two-day Clark symposium has a double mission: to put excellent new work on view from across the generations of a famously active field, and to consider the fortunes of that field today. Does anyone still care about “Parisian Modernity”? Is this category still a hub for thinking about our discipline? Or have other modernities and post-modernities, other more global and more contemporary concerns, made it just another branch of art history?

In 2009, we celebrate the 150th anniversary of Charles Baudelaire’s infamous essay that gave a name to a generation: “The Painter of Modern Life” (first published in 1863, but written in late 1859 and early 1860). 2009 will also mark the 25th anniversary of the publication of T. J. Clark’s *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and his Followers*, the book—itself titled with a nod to Baudelaire—that marked a turning point in the study of the field, and remains controversial to this day.

From the later 1970s, into the 1980s and beyond, all eyes looked to this particular sub-field of art history for inspiration and leadership. The liveliness of the entire discipline of art history seems to have depended in part on the excitement attending the particular epistemic shifts first launched there—whether querying the “social,” the “sexual,” the “gendered,” or the “visual.” But what of today? Have these debates, has the field as a whole, lost some of their earlier urgency?

This symposium seeks to air the debates—some old, others new—that have seethed over the borders and centers of this zone of art historical

scholarship: Paris vs. the provinces, the hexagon vs. the globe, the nation-state vs. its empire. Scholars have pointed to the presence of an avant-garde sensibility well before 1863, and have argued that Impressionism did not end with its last official exhibition. The dominance of painting as the central artistic medium of the period has been vigorously contested by a consideration of all things (apparently) visual and material. But do these developments ultimately imply that a specific set of questions, concerns, and methodologies relevant to the particular conditions of avant-garde art production in France between the early 1860s and late 1880s are no longer necessary, or all the more so? It is with this question uppermost in mind that we are bringing together the newest work in the field.

<http://www.clarkart.edu/visit/event-detail.cfm?ID=12416&CID=28>

Friday, October 30

Introduction, 9:15–9:45 am

Michael Ann Holly, Starr Director of Research and Academic Program, the Clark; Mark Ledbury, Associate Director, Research and Academic Program, the Clark; Hollis Clayson, Bergen Evans Professor in the Humanities, Northwestern University; and André Dombrowski, Assistant Professor of Art History, University of Pennsylvania

Session 1: Collectives, 9:45 am–12:00pm

Chair: Hollis Clayson, Bergen Evans Professor in the Humanities, Northwestern University

“Manet’s Empire”

Howard Lay, Associate Professor of Art History, University of Michigan

“Brotherhood of Individuals: Degas’s Group Portraits”

Bridget Alsdorf, Assistant Professor of Art History, Princeton University

“Baudelaire and the Melancholy Art of Modern Life”

Paul Smith, Professor of Art History, University of Warwick, United Kingdom

Lunch, 12:00–1:30 pm

Session 2 : Classifications, 1:30–3:45 pm

Chair: Carol Ockman, Professor of Art History, Williams College

“Revisiting the 1860s: Race and Place in Cape Town and Paris”

Tamar Garb, Professor of the History of Art, University College London

“Manet’s Race”

Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, Associate Professor of Art History, University of California, Berkeley

"The Concealed Labour of Art History in the Formation of the Musée Guimet"
Ting Chang, Assistant Professor of Art History, Carnegie Mellon University

Session 3: Politics, 4:00–6:15 pm

Chair: André Dombrowski, Assistant Professor of Art History, University
of Pennsylvania

"Jean Jaures, Philosophy, Politics and Art"
Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, Professor of Art History, University of
Delaware

"Housewife or Harlot? Painting the Bourgeoise"
John House, Professor of Art History, Courtauld Institute of Art

"The Guillotine Sublime: Corday to Redon"
Marc Gotlieb, Director of the Williams College Graduate Program,
Williams College
Reception in the Clark Courtyard for all attendees, 6:30 pm

The galleries will be open late on Friday evening

Saturday, October 31
Clark Exhibitions, 8:45–9:00 am

"Paris-centered shows at the Clark: a glimpse"
Richard Kendall, Curator-at-large, the Clark

Session 4: Reproduced, 9:00–11:00 am

Chair: Sarah Lees, Associate Curator of European Art, the Clark

"Modern or Anti-Modern? The Art of the Academy and the Technologies of
Reproduction"
Stephen Bann, Professor Emeritus, University of Bristol

"Manet, Originality and Reproduction"
Anne Higonnet, Professor of Art History, Barnard College, Columbia
University

"Pimping Out Painting: Courbet, Manet and Cézanne in the 1860s and 1870s"
Aruna D'Souza, Associate Professor of Art History, Binghamton
University, SUNY

Session 5: Privacy, 11:15 am–1:15 pm

Chair: Nancy Mowll Mathews, Prendergast Curator of American Art,
Williams College Museum of Art

"Living on Manet's Balcony, or the Right to Privacy"

André Dombrowski, Assistant Professor of Art History, University of Pennsylvania

"Cassatt Agonistes: Modernism, Darkness and Light"

Hollis Clayson, Bergen Evans Professor in the Humanities, Northwestern University

"The Private Lives of Public Paintings"

Martha Ward, Associate Professor of Art History, University of Chicago
Lunch, 1:15–2:45pm

Session 6: Genealogy, 2:45–4:45 pm

Chair: Mark Ledbury, Associate Director, Research and Academic Program, the Clark

"Modernity's Abstraction"

Richard Shiff, Professor of Art History, University of Texas at Austin

"The Medium of Air: Manet, Mallarmé and Pleinairism in the 1870s"

Margaret Werth, Associate Professor of Art History, University of Delaware

"Cézanne, Color, and Forgetting"

Nancy Locke, Associate Professor of Art History, Pennsylvania State University

Roundtable Discussion, 5:00–6:00 pm

--

This symposium is convened by Hollis Clayson, Bergen Evans Professor in the Humanities, Northwestern University, and André Dombrowski, Assistant Professor of Art History, University of Pennsylvania

\$30 adults, \$20 students, free for Williams students and faculty

For further information, call 413 458 0469, or email research@clarkart.edu.

--

Reference:

CONF: Is Paris Still the Capital of the 19th Century? (Williamstown MA, 30-31 Oct 09). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 8, 2009 (accessed Jun 18, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/31829>>.