

Where do you stand, colleague? (Berlin, 11 Dec 2010)

Redaktion Texte zur Kunst

Wo steht's Du, Kollege? / Where do you stand, colleague?

Kunstkritik als Gesellschaftskritik / Art criticism and social critique

Symposium on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of „Texte zur Kunst“

December 11th , 2010, Hebbel-Theater am Ufer (HAU 1)

Conference Organizers: Isabelle Graw & André Rottmann

Conference language: English

Tickets: 7€, reduced 5€

On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the renowned Berlin-based journal for contemporary art, this symposium investigates art criticism's potential to become social critique. At the time of the journal's foundation in Cologne in 1990, it was the return to the methods of social art history that promised to link current artistic production to larger economic and ideological frameworks. Even if this approach has remained an important touchstone in the critical work of the journal and its most frequent contributors, new models have emerged:

Discussions around biopolitics and immaterial labour under postfordist conditions have radically questioned long-held methodological assumptions about the visual arts' potentially antagonistic role in the capitalist societies of the West. Moreover, the notion of the aesthetic, for many years utterly dismissed due to its association with idealist concepts of autonomy has returned in unforeseen ways, for instance with recourse to an emphatic and ethically motivated defence of aesthetic experience and an immersive attention to formal detail.

The symposium takes this situation as a point of departure in order to reflect the role and potential of art criticism as social critique today.

Program, Saturday, December 11th , 2010

4 p.m.:

Official Welcome

by Arend Oetker, Berlin

and

Isabelle Graw, Frankfurt am Main/Berlin

Opening Statement

by Diedrich Diederichsen, Wien/Berlin

4:30 p.m.:

Panel I: New Spirit of Criticism? The Biopolitical Turn in Perspective

Like no other field of theoretical investigation, studies of biopolitics and related discourses around immaterial forms of labour in postfordism have come to inform recent art criticism and history. Such an approach to art allows a revisiting of historical as well as contemporary artistic practices in terms of their complicity with an economic and political regime that seeks to produce social life and to control subjectivity by way of internalized notions of productivity, creativity and individual freedom. It is these notions, still so dear to art historical discourse, which seem more problematic from such a vantage point than repressive structures of authoritative interpellation. Yet the urgent question arises and needs to be addressed in how far this new master trope of (art) criticism does not itself amount to a totalizing gesture that subsumes all aesthetic phenomena to the insurmountable grasp of a omnipresent but elusive regime of power. Is the recourse to biopolitical thought maybe even part and parcel of the notion of life it wishes to critically analyze?

with

Franco Berardi, Milan

Luc Boltanski, Paris

Sabeth Buchmann, Vienna/Berlin

André Rottmann, Berlin

chaired by Martin Saar, Frankfurt am Main/ Berlin

6:30 p.m.:

Panel II: Between Specificity and Context. Social Art History Revisited

Social Art History, as it had been rediscovered and expanded as a methodology in Anglo-American art history in the early seventies, once provided the privileged critical model of aligning supposedly autonomous aesthetic phenomena with the specific historical, discursive, ideological and economic conditions that determined their production and the subjectivity of both artist and beholder. However, this approach was rightfully contested for its tendency to interpret art works in a rather schematic fashion as mere illustrations of social conditions, thereby ultimately neglecting the genuine logic of the aesthetic in its capacity to estrange the beholder's self-image as well as the perception of life-world reality. Are there theoretical models today that while staying true to Social Art History's methodological insights can lead a way out of this theoretical impasse? Is there a way to reconcile

formalist or phenomenological considerations with determining historical factors? And how could one write a contemporary social history in a non-reductive way, given recent shifts in media culture and forms of immaterial labour?

with

Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, Cambridge, Mass./New York

Andrea Fraser, Los Angeles

Gertrud Koch, Berlin

Isabelle Graw, Frankfurt am Main/Berlin

chaired by Sven Lütticken, Amsterdam/Utrecht

8:30 p.m.:

Break

9:30 p.m.:

Panel III: From the Anti-Aesthetic to Aesthetic Experience?

In recent years art criticism has witnessed a complete re-evaluation of the validity and reach of the notion of the aesthetic. Whereas postmodern theories of artistic production of the 1980s were largely determined by an anti-aesthetic impulse in their attempt to contest idealist tenets of art's bourgeois appreciation, today's debates are shaped by a return of the aesthetic in terms of new valuation and conceptualization of the beholder's experience of artworks even if those defy modernist ideals of autonomy and self-sufficiency. This section sets out to explore the implications and repercussions of this paradigm shift: Is the notion of aesthetic experience inadvertently championing an individualistic idea of the beholder? In how far can it provide a model paying attention to the specificity of a work both in terms of its form, content and social context rather than explicating a universal mode of perception? Could it be that the aesthetic is reliant on an emphatic idea of Art that for many good reasons had been challenged if not utterly shattered by critical art practices ever since the avant-gardes and the new spirit of capitalism that is to an extent based on the recuperation of artistic critique?

with

T.J. Clark, London

Helmut Draxler, Stuttgart/Berlin

Jutta Koether, Hamburg/New York

Juliane Rebentisch, Frankfurt am Main/Berlin

chaired by Christoph Menke, Frankfurt am Main/Berlin

11:30 p.m.:

Reception at HAU 1 restaurant

with DJ EFDEMIN

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