

The Practice of Criticism (Vienna, 1–2 Jun 23)

University of Applied Arts Vienna, Jun 1–02, 2023

Hannes Loichinger

The Practice of Criticism

How do art and criticism actually relate to each other? Whereas the classical understanding of art criticism still envisaged a separate sphere of art that was to be evaluated and criticized, the boundaries between the spheres of art and criticism seem to be largely blurring today. In particular, art has become just as critical as criticism, and criticism has strayed from its referentiality to art, resulting in a situation where criticism revolves more and more around itself, while aligning itself with art precisely in this respect. One can welcome or lament this situation of structural “indistinguishability,” but one can also make it the starting point of a specific reflection in which their difference is preserved and the ways in which they are related can be addressed. From this perspective, it is not the merging of the realms of art and criticism, but the exchange between them that can be grasped as the actual productive moment of contemporary art.

The problem of this exchange, however, is that it can no longer be related to a common horizon of a canonical safeguarding of values, in the sense of a functioning “art world” or “bourgeois public sphere.” The lack of systemic integration of the various institutional, discursive, media, or market conditions, invoked by every articulation of art and criticism, is constitutive for the symbolic space of contemporary art. Perhaps the high degree of autonomization of the individual spheres of value—and thus the impossibility of a common canon—even forms the actual ground for the longing for the fusion of the categories of art and criticism. This impulse of the imaginary, which scatters differences, can only be countered by a focus on the exchange relations in which the practice of criticism—as criticism and as art—is crucial. Such a practice of criticism presupposes both reflection on its own specific conditions and an understanding of the particular interplay between value claim and value contestation: art and criticism undermine each other, whereby criticism requires an art that can only be critical to a certain extent, but which nevertheless presupposes and selectively suspends criticism. Moreover, beyond any empirical assertion of practical criticism and critical practice as art or as criticism, it points to the necessity of conceptualizing one’s own horizon of significance.

Accordingly, the conference asks on the one hand art critics about their own decisive art experience, which led them to work as art critics, and on the other hand artists about their understanding of the practice of criticism in general that underlies the impulse for their own (art) critical activity. Within this field of reference situated between different media, the practice of criticism is to become recognizable not so much as a universally applicable and always already legitimate method, but rather as a historically specific attitude or positioning in which the contingency of one’s own conditionality is accepted and transformed into the social-symbolic space of contempo-

rary art. Here, the lack of a given canonical meaning corresponds to the importance of an engaged practice of judgment, in which one's own indeterminacy can appear as a condition for the possibility of a symbolic opening onto a beyond of art and criticism.

Contributors: Taslima Ahmed, Judith Barry, Catherine Chevalier, Jay Chung, Anke Dyes, Manuel Gnam, Alex Kitnick, Valérie Knoll, Ken Okiishi, Kristian Vistrup Madsen, Jakob Schillinger, Megan Francis Sullivan, and Tanja Widmann

Moderation: Antonia Birnbaum, Amanda Holmes, and Christian Egger

Concept and organization: Helmut Draxler and Hannes Loichinger

Presentations and discussions will be held in English.

The conference is based on a cooperation of the Art Theory department and the Painting department and kindly supported by Stadt Wien Kultur.

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PROGRAM

Thursday, June 1, 2023 / Seminar room 07 (OKPF, 1. OG)

2:00 pm Introduction by Helmut Draxler and Hannes Loichinger

2:30 pm Alex Kitnick: Talking criticism

3:30 pm Break

4:00 pm Panel "The Art of Criticism", Moderation: Amanda Holmes

- Jay Chung: Mind Over Matter?

- Tanja Widmann: Ah, critique!

- Ken Okiishi: Against Better Judgement: Problems in the Artist as Critic

6:00 pm Break

6:30 pm Judith Barry: Casual Confrontations

Friday, June 2, 2023 / Lecture hall 1 (OKPF, EG)

11:00 am Panel "The Criticism of Art", Moderation: Antonia Birnbaum

- Catherine Chevalier: Forms of Articulation of Art Criticism and Art Practices, and Beyond

- Kristian Vistrup Madsen: Discernment and Distinction: Current challenges in the practice of art criticism

- Jakob Schillinger: Prost Critical

1:00 pm Break

2:00 pm Valérie Knoll: Criticism is banned from my house

3:00 pm Panel "The Media of Criticism", Moderation: Christian Egger

- Anke Dyes: Big Data as Woman, or, The Fear of Selling Out

- Taslima Ahmed / Manuel Gnam: Critical update required: your current version of art critique no longer runs on this operating system
- Megan Francis Sullivan: Jill Johnston: The Disintegration of A Critic. A Walk-through

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A selection of printed materials related to the conference will be on view at
Tiny Mutual Admiration Societies
in the department of Painting Oskar-Kokoschka-Platz 2, room 626
from June 1–July 2, 2023.

More information:
https://www.dieangewandte.at/jart/prj3/angewandte-2016/data/uploads/Aktuelles/Veranstaltungen/2023/The_Practice_of_Criticism_Program.pdf

Reference:

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