Westsplaining in Art History (online, 28 Jun 24)

Online, Jun 28, 2024
Deadline: Apr 12, 2024

Matthew Rampley

'Westsplaining' in Art History – An Online Workshop

Organized jointly by:

• Margaret Tali, Institute of Art History and Visual Culture, Tallinn
• Magdalena Radomska, Piotr Piotrowski Centre for Research on East-Central European Art, Art Sciences Department, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań
• Matthew Rampley, Centre for Modern Art and Theory, Masaryk University Brno
• David Crowley, National College of Art and Design, Dublin

The term 'westsplaining' became popularized amongst political theorists in Central and Eastern Europe in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and was used critically to denote the 'phenomenon of people from the Anglosphere loudly foisting their analytical schema and political prescriptions onto the [Eastern European] region' (Smoleński and Dutkiewicz). As such, it was a specific example of a wider, long criticized, problem to do with the colonial nature of knowledge production and the hegemonic status of (western) European and North American epistemic practices.

The critique was a response to debates in political theory, but it might be applied to many other domains of inquiry, including the humanities. It has gained increasing currency in art history, and this workshop aims to consider the different forms of art historical 'westsplaining.' The term implies the need for an intellectual archaeology, a recovery of local discourses and intellectual traditions that have been eclipsed by hegemonic western discourses. The workshop thus seeks to explore such alternative models of art historical analysis. It asks:

• What is the 'West' in westsplaining and who / what does non-western mean?
• What does it mean to the use the term in the context of art history? What blindspots does it reveal?

Some have argued that in Central and Eastern Europe the critique of western hegemony has been used to shore up xenophobic nationalistic narratives. Consequently, the workshop also asks:

• When might it be right to dispute accusations of 'westsplaining'?
• Is there a danger that such accusations can sometimes be used as an avoidance strategy, as a way of not engaging with external perspectives?
• Does the fact that certain schemas are hegemonic mean they should always be disputed?

• Does the fact that this call for papers and the workshop will be in English mean that this event, too, is vulnerable to criticism ?

The organizers invite proposals for 20-minute presentations on the topic of ‘westsplaining’. We welcome proposals that discuss specific interpretative case studies in literature or exhibitionary practices, as well as broader conceptual and methodological issues.

Although the original focus of the term was Central and Eastern Europe, proposals are also welcome on topics with another geographical focus. Submissions should be sent to: westsplaining@gmail.com. The deadline for submissions is: 12 April 2024.

Reference:

CFP: Westsplaining in Art History (online, 28 Jun 24). In: ArtHist.net, Feb 21, 2024 (accessed Nov 9, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/41282>.