On the future of (social) history of art

Deadline: Feb 15, 2014

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Art History Supplement, March 2014

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Art History Supplement welcomes submissions discussing aspects and perspectives of social history of art. In addition, papers engaged with the history of social art history in Africa, in America, in Asia, in Australia and Europe (meaning in their countries and territories), for instance, are more than welcome. More, what might be the differences, if any, between a western and a non-western social history of art perspective?

Taking a closer look at the narrative elements and patterns of social art history, one could not help but wonder. Could historians and philosophers of art feel comfortable with the application of a simple generic social art history compound? This compound (as equation) may contain the variable, in size and content, elements of
a) an “in vivo and in vitro context”,
b) an “artwork”, and
c) an “(?) and (n) public,
” while emphasising on and examining the quality and quantity of their bonds in history. Could also such a notion of an art history be translated as a systematic art history, or with a systematic approach? The element of context could also be translated as the in vivo environment, as historic, of that particular compound and as the in vitro environment of the examination of that particular compound. Further, the concept of an “artwork” central to the narrative may be used paradigmatically to denote an exhibition (permanent or not), a museum or any cultural institution, in their generic term. While (?), from set theory, is indicating the least infinite ordinal number of publics in history – diachronically; whereas (n) notes the cardinal number – as description – of different publics in their synchrony. More, I might tend to consider the concepts of p/matron, curator, and artist to be distinct subcategories of that great and variable parameter of public. For patron, matron and artist are also viewers of art – some them even before making it, both in terms of style and iconography; as the meaning imposed to an artwork may originate well back before the time of its production; and as pictorial signs exist before their production.

Moreover, on these grounds, discussions may, thus, arise on the status of history of art as science; regarding patterns of methodology, for instance. Such a theoretical standpoint does not juxtapose, though, to, an almost innate, as far as I am concerned, distinction in art history – as histo-

ry of art and technical art history; a distinction translated as intellectual discourses and practical applications.

However, could such an intellectual demonstration be necessary or useful for certain communities? In nothing but in art history for art history's shake context, or better, it may well provide the foundations for threshold in a space for real life problems to be challenged, in the future.

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Reference:

CFP: On the future of (social) history of art. In: ArtHist.net, Dec 10, 2013 (accessed Nov 23, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/6591>.