Temporary Architectures (St Andrews, 25 Feb 15)

Boswell Room, School of Art History, University of St Andrews, 79 North Street, Feb 25, 2015

Elsje van Kessel, University of St Andrews

Temporary Architectures: Performance, Theatre and Ephemerality

Workshop organisers: Catherine Spencer & Elsje van Kessel

The seventeenth century witnessed a climax in the interaction between visual arts, architecture, and the theatre. One of the outcomes of this interaction was the ubiquity of the temporary. The art of the Baroque was arguably an art of the ephemeral, displaying a preference for transitory elements like clouds, light and floating drapery and turning these into stone - all the while denying stone's hard and cold qualities. It transformed the more permanent art forms of painting, sculpture and architecture into elements within elaborate temporary performances and rituals. Yet the period is also characterised by an increasing emphasis on canonisation and preservation, with a marked change in the scale of art collecting and a rapidly growing body of art historical writing. Similarly, scholars in the modern and contemporary period have begun to complicate the association of performance and conceptual art after 1960 with 'dematerialization' pointing instead to the endurance of the document, the very physical experience of the labouring body - particularly in terms of gender, ethnicity, sexuality and class - as well as the site-specificity and architectural aspects of many ostensibly impermanent works. The separation between 'performance art' and theatre in experimental practices of recent decades can also been questioned, in light of enduring theatrical conventions, the continued influence of theatre practitioners and collectives on visual art, and the return to previous modes of theatre. Such oscillations between the ephemeral and the permanent can be found in other periods and geographies, and this afternoon workshop at the University of St Andrews seeks to take a trans-temporal approach to the links between ephemerality, theatricality, the visual arts and architecture, in order to begin making connections between time periods and moments of interdisciplinary overlap which are often not considered in relation.

Timetable:

12.00 - 12.45pm
Lunch

12.45 - 12.55pm
Introductions (Elsje van Kessel and Catherine Spencer, University of St Andrews)

12.55 - 2.00pm
First set of four 10-minute presentations, followed by discussion
- Stjin Bussels (Leiden University)

- Andrew Horn (University of Edinburgh)
- Fiona Anderson (University of Edinburgh)
- Elizabeth Swarbrick (University of St Andrews)

2.00 - 2.15pm
Coffee and tea break

2.15 - 3.00pm
Second set of three 10 minute presentations, followed by discussion
- Genevieve Warwick (University of Edinburgh)
- Kristen Aldhoch (University of St Andrews)
- Caroline van Eck (Leiden University)

3.00 - 3.10pm
Comfort break and chance to re-fill coffee and tea

3.10 - 3.50pm
Roundtable discussion

3.50 - 4.15pm
Break and transfer to School II

4.15 - 5.30pm
Theatre and the Visual Arts in Early Modernity
School of Art History Graduate Research Seminar, School II, Arts Building

- Stijn Bussels: How to perform performativity? Tableaux vivants as 'restored behaviour'
- Bram van Oostveldt: Sculpturing Performance or Performing Sculpture. On the Relation between Theatre and Sculpture in the Eighteenth Century

Workshop Participants:

Leiden University: Caroline van Eck, Bram van Oostveldt, Stijn Bussels

University of Edinburgh: Fiona Anderson, Andrew Horn, Genevieve Warwick

University of St Andrews: Elsje van Kessel, Catherine Spencer, Kristen Adlhoch, Elizabeth Swarbrick, Tanya Walker, Bram van Leuveren

Because seating at the workshop venue is limited, we ask those interested in participating to contact us in advance at catherine.spencer@st-andrews.ac.uk or ejmvk@st-andrews.ac.uk. For the Art History Graduate Research Seminar in School II no registration is required.

Reference:

CONF: Temporary Architectures (St Andrews, 25 Feb 15). In: ArtHist.net, Feb 9, 2015 (accessed Nov 22, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/9442>.