

Conference Report

“Art History for Artists. Interactions between scholarly discourse and artistic practice in the 19th century“, Technische Universität Berlin, 07 July – 09 July 2016

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Set out to “examine the shaping of art history as a discipline during the 19th century in relation to artistic training and exchanges between artists and scholars”, the international conference *Art History for Artists*, held at the Technische Universität Berlin, provided a forum for the presentation of 23 papers by PhD students, post-doctoral scholars, as well as established art historians. The conference was organized by Eleonora Vratskidou in the context of her post-doctoral research project on the transnational mapping of the way art history was taught in Art Academies throughout the 19th century.

The first of three conference sections was dedicated to the manifold institutional framework of 19th-century higher art education. Amidst the seven papers presented were a few trying to highlight broader tendencies in teaching art and architecture history at schools and academies through case studies of scholars. While Eric Garberson (Virginia Commonwealth University) looked into the teachings of Prussian architect Wilhelm Stier at the Bauakademie Berlin in the 1830s, Pascal Griener (Université de Neuchâtel) turned to Swiss artist David Sutter’s influence on the art history curricula at the École des Beaux-Arts de Paris during the Second Empire. The forming and reforming of institutions lay at the heart of Heinrich Dilly’s (Martin-Luther-Universität Halle) and Julia Witt’s (Technische Universität Berlin) presentations. Deborah Schultz (Regent’s University London) showed the rise of photographic reproductions as a means of teaching and studying at the Royal Academy London and Foteini Vlachou (Universidade de Lisboa) gave an account of her research into the hitherto ignored Lisbon Academy of Fine Arts in the late 19th century.

Another eight research papers comprised the second section of the conference which charted the entanglements of art historic discourse and its contemporary art production. Two completely different artist-scholars were the protagonists of the papers by Robert Skwirblies (Technische Universität Berlin) and Spyros Petritakis (University of Crete) – the Nazarene Johann David Passavant, who went on to write the first German biography of Raphael and was director of the Städelsches Kunstinstitut in Frankfurt; and the anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner whose lecture illustrations showed ties to contemporary artistic production in the early 20th century. The majority of presenters in this section chose another way to tackle the question at hand. Different media of production were the foundation for their search for reactions to the present within the context of 19th-century art historical discourse. Melanie Sachs (Philipps-Universität Marburg) turned to the writings of mostly German art historians to look for critical voices in regard to historicism. The challenge to recognize a contemporary style in printed architectural histories inspired Petra Brouwer’s (University of Amsterdam) talk. Lena Bader (Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte Paris) and Pier Paolo Racioppi (IES Abroad Italy, Rome) contrasted artists’ and scholars’ points of view in the lasting debates of the 19th century – Bader chose the Holbein dispute for her poignant paper while Racioppi discussed the concept of invention among the Faculty of the Accademia de San Luca in Rome.

Art history by artists was the guiding theme in the conference's concluding section and artistic production itself was the focus in these final papers. Michael Thimann (Georg-August-Universität Göttingen) and France Nerlich (Université François-Rabelais de Tours) were the only scholars at the conference sticking to the literal academic framework of art production. Thimann discussed the importance of Carl Wilhelm Oesterley's drawings for his lectures as professor for art history in Göttingen and Nerlich argued for an in-depth comparison of "painted art history" by Friedrich Overbeck for the Städelsches Kunstinstitut in Frankfurt with that by Paul Delaroche for the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Through thorough readings of singular oil paintings by Matthew Pratt and Henri Leys, Léa Kuhn (Ludwig-Maximilians Universität München) and Jan Dirk Baetens (Radboud University Nijmegen) offered a somewhat more personal artistic reflection on the history of art. Finally, two more papers should be quickly mentioned: Margherita D'Ayala Valva (Scuola Normale Superiore Pisa) spoke about artists' note-taking and copying from art-theoretical writings of the past as a means to further their artistic production. Anne Gregersen (University of Copenhagen) found in J. F. Willumsen's art collection and private museum a truly unconventional artist's take on the course of art history.

The research presented at the conference offered a kaleidoscope of *desiderata* in the historiography of art history. The founding of the academic discipline of art history was shown to have been accompanied by shifts and constant corrections of its own course, as well as a strong dependency on its local framework. The multitude of methodological approaches mirrored the dynamism of current art historical research and should claim the global scope it deserves.

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