

Summer School

CONTEMPORARY ART AND CURATORSHIP: FROM DOCUMENTA TO THE BIENNALE

Curatorship of Contemporary Visual Art and Performance

FIRST WEEK 8-12 July 2019

Monday, July 8 (10-12) Matteo Bertelé

FROM THE ORIGINS TO THE SECOND WORLD WAR

This lesson is part of the module on History of the Venice Biennale and concentrates on the genesis of the Biennale through a survey of its international models and sources on the backdrop of 19th century positivist culture translated into the “exhibitionary complex”. The lesson will highlight the Biennale’s double role as a promoter of universalist values—with the fine arts intended as the highest human achievements—and as a showcase of the “national character”, derived from the World’s Fairs and Expos. A particular attention will be paid to the different scales of reference involved, from the local context in which the Biennale was conceived and founded, to the national management, especially under the rule of fascism, up to its international scope, which has contributed in recent years to a reassessment of the “Mother of all Biennials” as a (pre)global event.

Literature

Bruce Altshuler, *Exhibition History and the Biennale*, in *Starting from Venice*, edited by Clarissa Ricci, Milano, et al., 2010, pp. 17-27 (11 pp.)

Joel Robinson, *Folkloric Modernism: Venice’s Giardini Della Biennale and the Geopolitics of Architecture*, “Open Arts Journal”, no. 2, Winter 2013-2014, pp. 1-24 (24 pp.)

Wednesday, July 10 (10-12) Matteo Bertelé

THE CULTURAL COLD WAR

This lesson is part of the module on History of the Venice Biennale and focuses on the Biennale within the context of the cultural Cold War, as a battleground of geo-political confrontations and as an institute fostering international cultural diplomacy. The inquiry will start from the first post-war exhibitions, dictated by the policies of reconstruction and reconciliation, and by the intention to outline a history of European modern art through the display of retrospective exhibitions. Inner reforms introduced in the Seventies drastically changed the Biennale’s format into a multidisciplinary platform of cultural encounters, open to critical debates and aesthetical challenges, through the institutionalization of previously disqualified practices, such as political activism and cultural dissent. The diversified program of the Venice Biennale will be highlighted on the background of the first large-scale perennial exhibitions of contemporary art emerged worldwide.

Literature

La Biennale di Venezia, *The General Four-year Plan of Activities and Events (1974-1977)*, 1974, “Annuario 1975: Eventi del 1974”, Venezia, La Biennale, pp. 71-75 (4 pp.)

Nancy Jachec, *Introduction: The Idea of Europe*, in Id., *Politics and Painting at the Venice Biennale, 1948-64*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2007, pp. 1-17 (17 pp.)

Vittoria Martini, *The Space of the Exhibition: the Multi-Cellular Structure of the Venice Biennale*, in *Pavilions. Art in Architecture*, Bruxelles, Muette, 2012, pp. 145-167 (22 p.)

Friday, July 12 (10-12) Matteo Bertelé

REDEFINING THE VENICE BIENNALE WITHIN THE GLOBAL STAGE

This lesson is part of the module on History of the Venice Biennale and focuses on the significance of the Biennale in the age of the “global contemporary”, and more specifically to new strategies adopted in Venice as a response to the pop up of Biennials worldwide.

Examples thereof include the “expanded format”, with the extension of the Biennale throughout Venice and outside the historical venues of Giardini, and the launch of the collateral events. The final part of the module will discuss key-aspects derived from the Biennials held in the last decade, which will serve as preliminary introduction to the on-site visits at the ongoing exhibition.

Literature

Boris Groys, *Europe and its Others*, 2008, in *Art Power*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2008, pp. 173-181 (8 pp.)
Achille Bonito Oliva, *Cardinal Points of Art*, exh. cat. (La Biennale di Venezia, 45. International Art Exhibition, 14 June – 10 October 1993), Venezia, Marsilio, 1993, vol. 1, pp. 9-27 (18 pp.)
Elena Filipovic, Marieke van Hal, Solveig Øvstebø, *Biennialogy*, in id., *The Biennial Reader*, Bergen, Bergen Kunsthall; Ostfildern, Hatje Cantz, 2010, pp. 13-25 (12 pp.)

SECOND WEEK 15-19 July 2019

Tuesday, July 16 (10-12) Matteo Bertelé

THE CURATOR BETWEEN ICONOCLASM AND ICONOPHILIA

This lesson is part of the module on Curatorship and focuses on the origins and evolution of the curator on the basis of key-concepts, strategies and personalities emerged in 20th century art history. Stages of such a process include the curator’s genesis as an institutional “caretaker” of cultural heritage, the new professional skills assigned to her/him in relation to the modernist cult of the autonomous artwork, and the rise of the first independent “exhibition makers” in the late Sixties. Further cross-cutting topics include the interplay between authorship and curatorship, the criteria upon which artworks are considered as such, thus endowed with artistic values, and the role of the spectator as a quintessential component and reference in the history of curating exhibitions.

Literature

Alfred J. Barr, *A New Art Museum; A New Museum*, 1929, in *Defining Modern Art: Selected Writings of Alfred H. Barr, Jr.*, eds. Irving Sandler, Amy Newman, New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1986, pp. 69-76 (8 pp.)
Harald Szeemann, *O Joyful, O Holy Thematic Exhibition*, 1977, in Id., *Selected Writings*, eds. Doris Chon, Glenn Phillips, Pietro Rigolo, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, 2018, pp. 14-18 (4 pp.)
Boris Groys, *On the Curatorship*, 2007, in *Art Power*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2008, pp. 43-53 (10 pp.)

Thursday, July 18 (10-12) Matteo Bertelé

CURATING THE GLOBAL CONTEMPORARY

This lesson is part of the module on Curatorship. Starting from the “curatorial turn”, the lesson highlights new theories and endeavors assigned to the curatorship as a result of its shift from sheer practice to cultural discourse. A particular attention will be paid to the new studies, sources and vocabulary related to the “Biennialization of the global contemporary”. On the basis of a selection of curatorial statements from the Biennials of the last three decades, the lesson will highlight the role of the Venice exhibition not only as a mere form(at) of contemporary art, but also as a first-hand field in producing and staging contemporary curatorial practices.

Literature

Molly Nesbit, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Rirkrit Tiravanija, *What is a Station?* 2003, (3 pp.)
Paul O'Neill, *The Curatorial Turn: from Practice to Discourse*, 2007, (16 pp.)
Piotr Piotrowski, *On the Spatial Turn, or Horizontal Art History*, in “Umění”, LVI, 2008, pp. 378-383 (6 pp.)