
The History and Criticism Workshop

Jean-Marc Poinot

Translator: Simon Pleasance



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- 1 For visual arts criticism, there was a moment when it was thinkable that the value construction paradigm represented by the historical model had been discredited by the combined effects of postmodernism and globalization. The fact is, however, that both the host of projects which are picked up by *Critique d'art* contributors, and the subjects they have chosen to crystallize their ideas, show that this history has once more become the questioning factor, tool and major challenge of many books about recent art, and its slightly more distant past. For all this, history in art, art in history and history as a political project of the work are far from forming any kind of homogeneous matter.
- 2 In fact, for example, if Marina Abramović's practice of reenactment opens up the possibility of conjugating the immediacy of the experience incarnated by the performance with inclusion in a history which is not reduced to a documented evocation, as mentioned by Laura Iamurri, the fact remains that performance, like choreographic praxis ranging from Merce Cunningham to Boris Charmatz, cannot be conceived without its twofold incorporation in a history of the body. Nor can it be conceived without that of its memorial fragility as an art object, when it appears, furthermore, in books such as Abigail Solomon-Godeau's, that with photography, the porosity between artistic works on the body, and the images of torture at Abu Ghraib, or the challenges of a feminist eye on the body, erase the distance between the historical fact conveyed by the archive and the artist's work, the photograph of which assumes a permanence, while representing an autonomous aesthetic object.
- 3 The two historical stances which Maria Stavrinaki dissociates with the spectre of the end of history and that initiated by the "Arab spring" movements lead to a political criticism of the historical consciousness of the capacity of artists and theoreticians to be players in history. But her observations about the urgency of history, with Judith Butler, Dork Zabunyan, Giovanni Careri, Bernhard Rüdiger and Georges Didi-Huberman, among others, themselves very dense, cannot be summed up in just a few lines.

- 4 Julia Ramírez Blanco shows, with books by Markus Miessen, Alexander Alberro, Guy Cools, Samuel Bianchini and Erik Verhagen, how the organization of participation in art and politics is not a homogeneous historical object, in particular by quoting Miessen as follows: “participation has become the contemporary ritual of instant relief [...], a problem-solving ideology that has deeply infiltrated the political and cultural sphere.” We will understand, on reading these texts, that there is still some way to go, criticism-wise, with regard to this issue of participation.
- 5 The article “After the War”, written by Cécile Bargues, highlights the difficulty of coming up with a new geo-history of modernity by combining the need to grasp time-frames and terrains, like that of Spain under Franco, for example. What also emerges is the difficulty of reconstructing syntheses which broaden the territories covered by certain countries in Africa and the Middle East, by building links between “cosmopolitan modernisms” and canonical scenes.
- 6 Other relations to history inform the story of the way *Art brut* was received, a task undertaken by Marc Decimo with the reading of six books, some of which are new editions, and that of Hans Hartung and his early interest in archives, the preparation, wealth and interest of which, also with regard to other comparable collections, are reconsidered by Thomas Schlessler, director of the Hartung Foundation.
- 7 History, however, no longer constitutes the predominant paradigm in the face of the deconstruction of “the conception of nature as matter” in the books examined by Estelle Zhong Mengual, under the title “The Coming Nature”, where there is a succession of ecological, ethological, anthropological and philosophical approaches in which “the end of the absolute centrality of human beings” is announced.
- 8 Lastly, on reading some of the articles in this issue of *Critique d’art*, it would seem that, in the writing of those who have kindly contributed to it, books are announced which others will have a chance to look at in the future. Which goes to show that the history and criticism workshop is at the heart of the texts under review, but also in their very criticism.
- 9 Good reading!