



Writing Modern Art History: Papers in Honour of Christopher Green

5.30 – 7.15pm, Thursday 3 July 2008 (registration from 5.00pm)

9.30am – 4pm, Friday 4 July 2008 (registration from 9.00am)

Kenneth Clark Lecture Theatre, Courtauld Institute of Art
Somerset House, Strand, London WC2R 0RN

ABSTRACTS AND BIOGRAPHIES

Dr Grace Brockington (University of Bristol)

“A Jacob’s Ladder between Country and Country”: Art and Internationalism before the First World War

This paper examines the formation of internationalist cultural identity in Britain before the First World War, focusing on the cultural infrastructures of internationalism, and on the practice of cultural diplomacy between Britain and Germany. Brockington argues that internationalism as a cultural and political movement gathered speed at the beginning of the twentieth century, but that the simultaneous growth of nationalism across Europe and the outbreak of war in 1914 have cast a backwards shadow, prejudicing the hindsight with which we select and interpret events. This teleology obscures the interplay between nationality and internationalism which shaped cultural identity before the war. She therefore draws attention to some of the ways in which internationalist idealism shaped the art world around the turn of the twentieth century; and to the ways in which the visual arts operated as active agents in the tricky processes of pre-war diplomacy.

The paper makes a case study of two events: the founding exhibition of the International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers in 1898; and an exhibition of work by contemporary German artists mounted at Prince’s Gallery, Knightsbridge in 1906. It examines the rhetoric used to promote these shows, the artists involved, the arrangement of exhibits, and the critical reception. One theme to emerge is the idea of art as a means of communication: a ‘Jacob’s ladder between country and country’ (Frank Rinder, 1906) bridging otherwise hostile territories. She ends by exploring this notion of art as a language, locally inflected, but suggesting the possibility of better international understanding.

Grace Brockington is Lecturer in History of Art at the University of Bristol. She read English at Pembroke College, Cambridge, before going on to do an MA in History of Art at the Courtauld. Her doctoral thesis on art and pacifism in Britain 1900-1918 was co-supervised by Christopher Green. A book based on this project is now under

contract with Yale University Press. She is also editing a collection of essays with Peter Lang, entitled Internationalism and the Arts at the Fin de Siècle. Her research interests include peace movements, internationalism, and the relationship between education and the visual arts.

David Cottington (Kingston University)

Differential Spaces of the Avant-Garde: Modernities and Modernisms in Paris and London, 1900-1914

This is a paper of two halves: the first a recapitulation of some of the questions David Cottington has been engaged with over three decades of doing art history, and an indication of his indebtedness to the example of Christopher Green for this engagement; the second a set of further questions, deriving from these, that are presently directing his research and writing. From a consideration of Professor Green's early work on Léger and the Avant-Garde and its influence on Cottington's research into the cultural politics of the cubist movement in pre-1914 Paris, it moves to an outline of an enquiry into the determinants of the emergence and consolidation of the formations of the artistic Avant-Gardes of Paris and London in that period, and offers a set of speculations as to the factors this enquiry should address.

David Cottington is Professor of Art History at Kingston University, London. He was an MA student at the Courtauld in 1970-2, and after some years' teaching at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver he returned to study for a PhD at the Courtauld in 1978, where Christopher Green was his supervisor for a thesis, completed in 1985, on 'Cubism and the Politics of Culture in France, 1905-1914'. The study of early 20th century Parisian modernism has until recently been his particular research interest, and his publications include Cubism in the Shadow of War (Yale University Press, 1998) and Cubism and its Histories (Manchester University Press, 2004). The objects of his current research are the Avant-Garde formations of Europe before the First World War, (he is presently writing a book on those of London and Paris in this period), and the recent and contemporary growth of the 'creative industries'.

Charles F.B. Miller (Courtauld Institute of Art)

The Archaeology of Picasso

Archaeology begins with archè – Greek for origin, primacy. This is a talk about origin, in the ('original' or 'primitive') sense of the Latin origo: ancestry, coming into being, beginning, that from which something is derived, source. Miller wants to uproot the first fruits of his relationship with Christopher Green, and revisit the drawings Picasso made at Cannes in 1927. These, he contends, overlap with the discourse of prehistoric archaeology and its cognate ideology of origins. One context is the Palaeolithic genre of feminine figurines discovered in the early twentieth century, known as 'Venuses'. The Venus figures were the oldest known artworks, and palaeontologists interpreted their morphology as physiological evidence of a primordial Black European 'race', intermediate between the Neanderthals and the Cro-Magnons. A second context is the controversy around the site at Glouzel, whose proponents claimed to have unearthed a Stone-Age phonetic script, relocating the origin of civilisation in favour of the West. The 'idoles phaliques et bi-sexuées' found at Glouzel might be a source for the phallic women of the Cannes sketchbooks; yet this 'source' was reputed to be a fake – a false archè. The correlation between Picasso's prehistoric primitivism and the infantile fantasies of origin described by Sigmund Freud and Melanie Klein proposes the common archive of archaeology and psychoanalysis – but the perversity of the Cannes nudes deconstructs any epistemology of origin.

Charlie Miller is The Courtauld Institute's Mellon Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow for 2008-2009. His research project is for a book called The Ambivalent Eye: Picasso and Surrealism. He read English at Magdalen College, Oxford, before doing an MA and PhD at the Courtauld with Christopher Green; he received his doctorate in 2006 for a thesis about Picasso 1925-1933. From 2005 to 2007 he was Senior Research Officer at the AHRC Research Centre for Studies of Surrealism and its Legacies at the University of Essex, where he worked on the 2006 Hayward Gallery exhibition, Undercover Surrealism, and edited the online journal, the Papers of Surrealism. He has published essays and articles about the magazine Documents, as well as Picasso. In 2007-2008 he was Visiting Lecturer at The Courtauld, and is putting together an exhibition and catalogue for the Helly Nahmad Gallery, London, entitled Les Années Folles: Paris in the Twenties (October 2008). Another (short) book project of his is about the poetics of the Picasso literature.

Romy Golan (City University of New York)

Muralnomad: the Mural Effect in European Art 1927-1957

Between the late 1920s and the 1950s in Europe, the question of the mural returned to centre stage. This was a paradox because, as every progressive (and even not so progressive) architect and artist of that time knew, mural painting was an anachronism. Yet at the moment of its impending death, the mural became an ideological focal point. Through the discourse on and around the mural, fundamental questions about modern art and the modern condition – fragmentation, commodification, home versus homelessness, cult versus exhibition value, monumentality versus nomadism – were forcefully and controversially addressed. Romy Golan's talk, based on her forthcoming book with Yale Press, focuses on works that problematize and complicate in myriad ways their status as murals.

Romy Golan teaches 20th century European art at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. She is the author of Modernity and Nostalgia: Art and Politics in France between the Wars with Yale University Press, 1995. Her articles include 'Point de chute: Restany à Domus', in Le Demi-Siècle de Pierre Restany/The Half Century of Pierre Restany, Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art (INHA), Paris, 2007; 'From Monument to Muralnomad: the mural in modernist architecture' in The Built Surface: Architecture and Pictures from Antiquity to the Millennium, Karen Koehler ed. Ashgate Press, London, 2002; 'L'éternel décoratif: French art in the 1950s' in Yale French Studies, Spring 2001; 'Triangulating the Surrealist Fetish' in Visual Anthropology Review, Spring 1994.

Her book Muralnomad: the mural effect in European Art 1927-1957 – which she will talk about at the conference – is forthcoming with Yale University Press, London. She is currently working on a book on Italian art from 1945 to 1973, the end part of which is under contract with Electa under the title "Accesso Libero": mostre Italiane in spazi non istituzionali 1964-1973' (Free access: Italian exhibitions in non institutional spaces, 1964-1973) for the year 2010.

Dr Gavin Parkinson (Courtauld Institute of Art)

On Picasso and Quantum Mechanics, or, Supervision, Learning and the 'Oedipal Will'

Since the 1940s, Picasso's work has frequently been related to the idea of the fourth dimension as time and specifically to Einstein's Theory of Relativity. However, the attempt by several writers to link it to that other major revolution in twentieth century physics, quantum mechanics, remains absent from modern art history. Gavin's paper

discusses such a reading, which took place in the 1920s and 1930s partly in the cultural context of the journal *Documents*, which was overseen by Georges Bataille and Carl Einstein, and which has been an important component in the research and teaching of Christopher Green. By focussing upon a major revolution in physics and the philosophy of science, he uncovers a set of overlapping institutional contexts that were crucial in the formation of the thought of Bataille, and also demonstrates an alternative 'postmodern' context for Picasso, connected to modern physics. The proto-postmodern language explored by his paper is then deployed to close with a discussion of Christopher Green's teaching and a statement about 'authority' in academic art history.

Gavin Parkinson teaches at The Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London. He is the author of Surrealism, Art and Modern Science: Relativity, Quantum Mechanics, Epistemology (Yale University Press, 2008) and The Duchamp Book (Tate Publishing, 2008) as well as articles, essays, and reviews on modernism, Surrealism, Marcel Duchamp, and Adolf Wölfli.