

Call for Papers

## **Art History Festival**

**3rd edition**

***Fontainebleau, 31 May- 2 June 2013***

### **The Ephemeral**

**Guest country: United Kingdom.**

## **Art History Festival**

The Ministry of Culture and Communications, the National Institute of Art History and the Chateau of Fontainebleau, with the support of the Ministry of Higher Education and Research are jointly organising the third Art History Festival. Originally conceived as a meeting point and knowledge crossroads, these three days will include conferences, debates, concerts, exhibitions, film shows, lectures and meetings in the chateau and at several sites in the town of Fontainebleau.

The Festival explores a different theme every year, in 2013 it will be "The Ephemeral" and there will be three annual meetings: The Art History Forum, a rendezvous for all the latest news in the world of the arts; the Book Salon and art reviews and Art & Camera, a wide-ranging look at cinema and art and future prospects.

The Festival also includes training offerings for art history teachers in schools in the form of Spring University sessions and training workshops provided and supported by the Ministry of Education.

All these events are viewed from the perspective of a guest country: in 2013 this guest country will be the United Kingdom. Work involving British research or concentrating wholly or partly on the United Kingdom will be particularly welcome.

This Call for Papers is intended for preferably French-speaking, experienced and novice French and foreign researchers. Contributions by young researchers, conservation specialists or restorers will be given especially careful consideration.

## **The Ephemeral**

Art first manifested itself in the earliest standing stones or paintings as an attempt to either amplify the ephemeral (festive celebrations, temporary body ornamentation, etc.) or to defy it (by seeking to capture the fleeting nature of movement as in parietal art; or as an attempt to leave a durable, even eternal mark by building monumental structures for instance).

The history of art therefore swings between permanence and transience, between two opposite extremes: the monumental and performance, the stillness of an image and art that focuses on moving images, a fixed gaze and a gaze that lingers as time passes (ephemeral sequence).

In the light of this fact, it is legitimate to ask several questions that are of interest to historians as well as those who create and to curators and spectators alike. Why did societies invest so much in the ephemeral? Is anything ephemeral necessarily pointless? Can we discern deep structures in ceremonies, ephemeral architecture, costumes, pyrotechnical and Carnival displays, etc.? Is conservation necessary whatever the cost? How can we conserve or reproduce (*re-enactment*) works of art that were designed to be ephemeral and are made of perishable materials? How can we conserve a performing arts heritage? (Here one thinks of the efforts that have been made ever since the Middle Ages to devise a convincing notation system to describe dance). This topic also poses important questions regarding museum policies which currently shift between permanent collections and temporary exhibitions, and strikingly different ways of viewing the relationship between the ephemeral and the permanent in cultures and arts throughout the world.

The 2013 Festival will provide an opportunity to familiarise oneself with both new and established areas of research on less well-known aspects of art history: ephemeral architecture, tableware, body art (hairstyles, tattoos, etc.), performance art, brief moving images (video clips and work by artists using various communication media), etc. It will make it possible to demonstrate possible echoes between extremely different historical periods and geographical areas, between the visual arts and live performing arts and, as always, between art history and the humanities, between art history and contemporary designers. Even though every creation is transient, it is still capable of giving rise to other creative actions, even over extremely long distances in space and time.

Several issues will be explored:

#### *A- Ephemeral artists and ephemeral works of art*

Possible subjects include any art works that are not intended to be permanent: celebrations and ceremonies; hairstyles, garments, etc. Ephemeral artists will also figure: borrowed or collective ephemeral identities, artists who produce a single artwork or work deliberately intended not to last.

What should we do with ephemeral artworks? The Festival will be interested in attempts to make permanent objects that were not intended to be so. Here one thinks, for instance, of the technical and ethical problems associated with conserving primary artworks devoted to transient ceremonies, copying as a method of salvaging an artwork, reiterating (or not reiterating) performances, etc. These efforts seek to prevent the destruction or transformation of works of art whose use and functions change or works of art where their creator intended them to be fragile or accepted their fragility. This issue may involve speculating whether a conservation procedure may constitute a betrayal of the artist. Performance artists will be invited to give their opinion.

#### *B- Artworks and artists that cannot endure*

The fragility and/or obsolescence of some works of art mean that they inevitably degrade or disappear even though their creator's intention was not to make them ephemeral. We will also be interested in changes in taste as well as technology: the transience of fashion, photographs that deteriorate, videos produced on obsolete media, etc.

The transient glory of the artist, the role of the historian and the dealer or marketing man in determining the durability or briefness of an artistic career will not be overlooked. If, as Andy Warhol said, "In the future, everyone will be world-famous for 15 minutes", who can demand more and who will decide who enjoys a century of fame?

#### *C- Staging permanence and staging the ephemeral*

Art history and museums create memories and preserve artistic activity. Although temporary exhibitions of works of art predate the construction of museums, they became particularly well-established in the 20th century. How do permanent and temporary presentation of artworks in cultural institutions fit together? The event-based nature of temporary exhibitions monopolises media attention. Is there not a risk of them overshadowing permanent art collections? The views of professionals (curators, conservation experts, stage designers, etc.) should throw light on these issues.

#### *D- Artworks that attempt to depict the ephemeral*

How do the visual arts represent movement, objects that are instantaneous and perishable? From vanity to photography, the ephemeral is more than simply a topic. Formal, technical and iconographical research are all combined in art's common urge to challenge or emphasise the fragility of life and the evanescence of memory.

Cinema, video and the multimedia installations built by contemporary artists are obviously the most striking representations of the ephemeral: the image and the onlooker's gaze are caught up in an endless dialectic of impermanence (the time sequence) and memory.

"If time does not attack an artwork, it savages the workman. To sum up: these trunks full of sap, these vivid colours, these golds washed by the rain and extinguished by the sun. (...)

Rebellion: let us honour the ages in their successive decays and the voracity of time"

(Victor Segalen, *Aux dix mille années*)

## **The Art History Forum**

The Forum is divided up into three sections:

### *1-Museum and historic monument news*

A talk on exhibitions during the coming year, recent acquisitions, restoration work started or completed during the previous year, inauguration of new museum facilities in the previous or coming year, previously private or closed monuments, etc. Suggested debate topics on possible policies, their means and ends will also be welcome.

### *2-Art history research and publication news (books and reviews, hardcopy and electronic)*

The Festival seeks to reflect recent art history research: talks on recently created online or off-line reviews and monographs and collective research publications published within the last two years are expected. Contributions are likely to throw light on novel methods and new resources made available, in particular, by developments in digital technology.

### *3-Art market news. In 2013: the market for performance artists*

This year, the Festival aims to put the spotlight on one particular aspect of the work of professionals in the art market: developing the work of performance artists. By inviting contributions from artists, gallery owners and auction houses, the Festival would like to promote wider understanding of how the market for performance artists is created and developed. Contributions that provide a historical perspective will also be appreciated. Artist selection, presentation methods and the ways in which artists' works are sold have evolved considerably since the 19th century. Nowadays when the Web allows an artist to make his or her work widely known with hitherto unknown speed and when artistic settings can be viewed on the Internet, what is the position and the role of a gallery or auction house?

## **Participation arrangements**

Contributors have the choice of participating in several formats:

- Conference or Debate: no more than 1 to 3 people, including moderator, 45 minutes.
- Round Table: up to 5 people, including moderator, 1 hour 45 minutes.

- Work under Scrutiny: up to 3 people, including moderator, 1 hour 15 minutes. Work under Scrutiny is intended to place a single work, chosen with reference to that year's theme, under the spotlight for review by three specialists who work in different disciplines or periods.

Contributors are invited to make their presentation verbal and accessible in order to facilitate exchanges of ideas between contributors and the audience which will consist not only of researchers and people with managerial responsibilities in institutions, teachers and students or players in the arts world but also large numbers of enthusiasts and interested individuals who are less familiar with scientific discourse and its conventions.

### **Arrangements for submitting and selecting proposed contributions**

The Festival's Scientific Committee will be tasked with examining proposed contributions. The selection criteria will of course be based on scientific quality but take into account the variety of subjects dealt with so as to provide the widest possible vista.

Submitted projects must be presented as follows: project title, summary in 300 characters, description of no more than one page (3500 characters), CV. Submissions must be sent exclusively by e-mail to: [festivaldelhistoiredelart@inha.fr](mailto:festivaldelhistoiredelart@inha.fr) before **31 December 2012**. They must be written in French. The Scientific Committee will notify its decisions from 15 February 2013 onwards.

A list of members of the Scientific Committee in 2013 and the schedule for the 2012 edition can be found at: <http://festivaldelhistoiredelart.com/>

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