

ESF Exploratory Workshop:  
**Framing Art History – Scientific Report**

The *Framing Art History* workshop was held at Edinburgh College of Art on March 13-15 2003. Papers were delivered by 14 participants from 8 countries, each of whom were allotted approximately 50 minutes to present material and engage in discussion with other participants. A small invited audience of researchers and scholars from Edinburgh College of Art and Edinburgh University was also in attendance.

The immediate aims of the workshop were;

1. To undertake a stock-taking of the various types of historical reflection on Art History that have been conducted during the past 30 years. It will seek to explore the function and purpose of such disciplinary histories,
2. To question the methodological frames governing such enquiry.
3. To provide a forum for scholars that otherwise have few opportunities to engage in the kind of shared debate that it will present.

The workshop was divided into 3 broad themes, each of which took up a day of the workshop. On the final day there was also a plenary session for general discussion of the issues raised by the workshop.

The themes were as follows;

1. Conceptualising the Discipline: Art History as Ideological / Institutional Frame
2. Relocating the Discipline
3. Overturning the Field: Meanings of Visual Culture

Each of these corresponded to recent debates concerning the nature of art historical discourse, which has been subjected to intense critical scrutiny over the past 10 to 15 years. In broad, the workshop met its immediate aims. It was the occasion of important and valuable discussions between scholars, some of whom were familiar with each other's work, but many of whom were not. Within the 3 themes many of the exchanges represented useful extensions of current debates. In particular, discussion of the nature of 'visual culture' benefitted enormously from the comparative material presented by Prof. Schoell-Glass concerning parallel contemporary debates in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Where the workshop proved itself most valuable, however, was in the unexpected points of debate; in this regard its international basis was central, for it highlighted the differences and specificities of individual national traditions of scholarship which are frequently overlooked. Other unanticipated points of debate also emerged. The key issues and points of discussion that emerged from the workshops can be summarised as follows;

1. National Differences. There was a notable difference between the approaches of American and European scholars. These revolved around both differences in discursive style, and disciplinary definition. Thus American participants tended to stress the *rhetorical* character of Art History, whereas European participants held to the notion of Art History as a form of *knowledge*, making various truth claims about its objects. Likewise the debate concerning the nature of visual revolved in part around the anglophone distinction between art, design and architectural histories, whereas German colleagues insisted on the subsumption of all three under the rubric of Art History.
2. National Differences II. European participants held much more strongly to the need for continued disciplinary integrity and traditions. American participants, on the other hand, were much more committed to need to *dissolve* disciplinary boundaries and, if possible, to replace Art History with other paradigms of visual discourse. Zijlmans thus spoke in terms of a global art history where anglophone scholars tended to question the capacity of 'art' history to achieve such a global reach.
3. National Differences III. It was notable that while Art History in Eastern Europe had an established tradition that was often linked to discourses current in German and Austrian historiography, in the post-communist era the primary point of reference was American scholarship rather than those older indigenous traditions of writing.
4. The Status of the Aesthetic. Although much critical Art History of the 1980s and 1990s was informed by Marxist, Feminist and other perspectives that emphasised the social dimension of artwriting, a recurrent concern throughout the workshop was the ambiguities thrown up by the aesthetic basis of the objects of study. Preziosi in particular argued that the aesthetic dimension of Art History's objects presented special and irresolvable epistemological problems for the discipline.
5. Commensurability. A recurrent issue was that of commensurability. In other words, how might Art History might construct a *tertium comparationis* that would enable comparison and analysis both of Western artefacts and also of non-Western artefacts. While some held to the notion of the irreducibly aesthetic kernel of art historical analysis, others explored the possibility of using other axiomatic concepts that might displace and supersede this aesthetic basis.

The above issues were all felt to be highly significant, but in particular items (1) and (2) which it was felt were themselves of sufficient importance to merit further investigation.

The workshop concluded with a general discussion in which the following was agreed;

1. That papers would be made publicly available for further debate between participants. This was done shortly afterwards and papers are now all available as Acrobat files on the website of the Centre for Visual and Cultural Studies of the College ([www.visualculture.org.uk](http://www.visualculture.org.uk)).

2. That in September the convenor would approach the authors to consider the possibilities of a more formal publishing venture. It was felt that the diverse range of the papers might make it difficult to include all the papers, and also that not all the authors might wish their papers to be papers. However, it was agreed that a smaller sample might be suitable for publication in a special issue of a journal.
  
3. That a concerted effort should be made to continue and develop the project, most immediately by seeking funds to establish a longer term series of such events that might be more ambitious in scope and would lead to the formation of a more formal association of scholars. Accordingly it was agreed that Matthew Rampley, as the convenor of the workshop, would put together an application for European Science Foundation network funding, with Andrea Pinotti and Charlotte Schoell-Glass providing advice on the application. The question of national differences would play a crucial role in determination of the principal focus of the proposed network.

Matthew Rampley

Monday, 07 July 2003



## **PROGRAMME**

### **Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2003**

#### **SESSION 1**

#### **CONCEPTUALISING THE DISCIPLINE: ART HISTORY AS IDEOLOGICAL / INSTITUTIONAL FRAME**

- 09:45                    **Mnemonic Traces: Aby Warburg and the Cult of Art History**  
Clare Farago (University of Colorado)
- 10:35                    **The Museum's Role in the Formation of Art  
Historical Discourse**  
Hubert Locher (State Academy of Fine Arts, Stuttgart)
- 11:25                    *Coffee*
- 11:50                    **Conceptualising the Discipline**  
Donald Preziosi (University of California, Los Angeles)
- 12:40                    *Lunch*
- CHAIR: CLARE FARAGO**
- 14:00                    **The "Poverty" of Aesthetics. Again on "Fundamental  
Concepts" in Art History**  
Andrea Pinotti (University of Milan)
- 14:50                    **Physiognomies of Art: Sedlmayr, Benjamin, Plessner**  
Fred Schwartz (University College, London)
- 15:40                    *Tea*
- 16:00                    **What is Research in Art History Anyway?**  
Michael Ann Holly (Clark Art Institute, Massachusetts)



## Friday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2003

### SESSION 2

### RELOCATING THE DISCIPLINE

09:45

#### **The Prague Linguistic Circle and Art History**

Jan Bakos (Institute of Art History, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava)

10:35

#### **The "Art History" of non-Western Cultures**

Kitty Zijlmans (University of Leiden)

11:25

*Coffee*

11:50

#### **Observing the details, or: a sociology of seeing**

Jiri Kroupa (Masaryk University of Brno)

12:40

*Lunch*

**CHAIR: ANDREA PINOTTI**

14:00

#### **Disciplines of the Visual: Art History and Visual Studies in the Context of Globalization**

Keith Moxey (University of Columbia)

14:50

#### **Methodological Philistinism: An Anthropological Perspective on Art**

Matthew Rampley (Edinburgh College of Art)

15:40

*Tea*

16:00

#### **Vasari's Regionalism, or Julius von Schlosser, Benedetto Croce and the Vienna School**

Beat Wyss (University of Stuttgart)



## **Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2003**

### **SESSION 3**

### **OVERTURNING THE FIELD: MEANINGS OF VISUAL CULTURE**

10:00

#### **Visual Culture and the Idea of a Bildwissenschaft**

Charlotte Schoell-Glass (University of Hamburg)

10:50

#### **The October Questionnaire: Riegl, Warburg and Gombrich**

Richard Woodfield (Nottingham Trent University)

11:40

*Coffee*

12:00

#### **Presentation of the European Science Foundation**

Jan Bakos (ESF Standing Committee for the Humanities)

12:15

#### **Plenary Discussion**

13:00

*Meeting closed*



ESF / SCH Exploratory Workshop:  
**Framing Art History: reflections on the discipline**  
*Edinburgh, United Kingdom, 13-15 March 2003*

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## **Framing Art History**

**Dates:** 13-15 March 2003

**Venue:** Centre for Visual and Cultural Studies, Edinburgh College of Art

## **Participants' Details**

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