

Museums in Progress: Public interest, private resources?

Modern and contemporary art museums have been built as institutional tools that share knowledge and education with society. They have become essential parts of both local and national socioeconomic frameworks. Addressing the recent past and present, these museums play a central role in constructing the myths of our times and the writing of local histories while becoming platforms of transcultural international exchanges with worldwide impact.

The global scale of technological, economic, social, and political transformations profoundly affect the mission and operation of these kinds of museums. CiMAM's 2014 Annual Conference raises discussions and focused studies about the effects of these changes in the institutional environment and seeks to develop an argument for museums to adapt their original missions in line with these new institutional ethics, challenges, and realities.

Commercial market forces such as galleries, art fairs and auction houses, are increasingly adopting the language and the attributes historically hosted by the museum institution. Vast white-cube spaces, the production of catalogues raisonnés, access to artists and their estates, and academic lectures are no longer exclusive qualities of the museum.

Following the same logic, private collections are appropriating the name and taking on the role of public museums. This profusion of museums based on private enterprise models, along with the increase of art prices has begun eroding the museum's capacity to offer a public service.

Additionally, public museums are coerced by public powers to prove efficiency and achieve measurable impact, inducing corporation-like behavior. Despite this, private initiatives would not assimilate the function of the museum to gain credibility and gravitas if its attributes were not still valid.

And yet museums are actively modifying their traditional practices and opting for alternative public outreach strategies. Is this reactionary or is it prescient? Is there an unprecedented focus on traditionally market-resistant media such as performance and film or is this a default reaction because museums are being sidetracked by the flux in contemporary art interests? Are the museums actually contributing to the bifurcation of the 99% – 1% by relinquishing their mission to the commercial and private spheres?

Sunday 9 November 2014

Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha

What is public interest today?

Is “the public” equal to audiences? What is “public trust” today? What do we consider a Public Museum? Increasing transformations in the financing of museums question the nature of public interest in relation to the many agents and matters that shape the economy and the activity of museums.

This session proposes the analysis of the elements defining “public” in the light of new definitions of the common such as common interest or shared uses. Political corporations that regulate both local and national cohabitation are tending to withdraw the administration of public

services traditionally provided by the welfare state. What are the means and ways of providing and negotiating citizen access to art, heritage, creativity and global narratives?

Monday 10 November 2014

University College of London, Doha

Building institutions in the African and the Middle East contexts

In the past 10 years, Africa and the Middle East have emerged as areas of new institutionalization. Following the process of independence from the colonial powers after World War II, Africa and the Middle East have become important zones for producing and collecting art. We will trace the genealogy and the evolution of both private and institutional collections of modern and contemporary art in this part of the world.

The modern notion of art locates this practice as a means of communication outside of the constraints of the old regime's political and religious power. The euro-centric or western notion of modernity places the value of autonomy as the mainstay of modern art from which the spirit of the avant-garde nourishes the art of our time, contemporary art.

This session will be dedicated to discussing strategies for building collections in Africa and the Middle East that have given way to museums and institutions devoted to the writing of history. This is also the moment to introduce the questions around the type of modernity that resulted from the process of national emancipation and decolonization after World War II that made way for the nations and political entities of today.

What is the role of art in the construction of a specific historical narrative within this globalized environment, strongly dominated by economic and political hierarchies? How is history written from

territories that are dominated by religious, military and gender conflicts while also being submitted to censorship?

Tuesday 11 November 2014

Qatar National Convention Center, Doha

Private to public, public to private: what are the new professional practices?

In the past fifteen years the art world has come to be dominated by an overflow of capital in colossal proportions. As modern and contemporary art have become havens of monetary value for global investors, the cultural value of art has ceased to exist as a unit with any measure of relevance. Its gradual quantification and its objective usefulness and efficiency have overthrown the role of the critic and the museum professional along with their authority to influence taste, value or public opinion.

This session proposes the critical analysis of the changes that this transformation of the system's balance have signified within the professional structures of the art world. We will pay special attention to the fluctuation of functions from the public to the private sector, and vice-versa, with special emphasis on the regions that have been recently colonized by the market and its own forms of legitimation.

What are the regulations that operate around the transformation of professional activity and the nature of jobs in the art sector? Does the evolution in the composition of professions demand a new deontological code?

CiMAM — International Committee for Museums and Collections of Modern Art

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