

MEDIA RELEASE

Zurich, 22 October 2009

Avant-Gardes Focused Through Art Criticism. A Tribute to Carola Giedion-Welcker (1893–1979)

The Swiss Institute for Art Research (SIK-ISEA), in collaboration with Dr. Iris Bruderer, author of the extensive monograph on Carola Giedion-Welcker published in 2008, is holding an interdisciplinary symposium entitled «Avant-Gardes Focused Through Art Criticism. A Tribute to Carola Giedion-Welcker (1893–1979)». The conference will take place on 22 and 23 October 2009 at SIK-ISEA's premises in Zurich.

«Avant-garde» – fickle and problematic as this term has been throughout its ups and downs in various quarters since the mid-19th century and in the face of critical redefinition – is at its (utopian) core a reference to innovation, future and dynamism. The avant-garde is usually a matter for elites exercising radical critique of traditional cultural values and the conventional aesthetic consensus and seeking by means of provocation to draw attention to their cause and realign the relationship between contemporary art production and anti-bourgeois practice. There is a fundamental dilemma here: the avant-garde is in itself unpopular, resisting comprehension by the mass. If it wishes to prevail, to convert the symbolical capital it has acquired through agitation and self-organisation, manifestos and coalitions, into commercial success, it needs allies. In the age of the historical avant-garde, art criticism was the primary stage for tussles over the power of definition.

Carola Giedion-Welcker (1893–1979), an art historian in Zurich but also an art and literary critic, was embedded within the international modernist network, and she too declared her colours on this stage. The symposium will set the work of this prominent cultural celebrity of her day within the context of art history and the history of ideas, reframing the debate about the significance of Carola Giedion-Welcker and, more broadly, the function of art criticism in European and Transatlantic cultural exchange. Its themes will be the constructs of intellectual discourse and the protagonists and processes involved in Swiss and international projections of contemporary art and literary avant-gardes, in which the critic – with her ambitious deployment of language – took a detailed interest.

Open Programme

Open Abstracts for 22/10/09

Open Abstracts for 23/10/09

Venue and Registration

The symposium will take place on 22 and 23 October at SIK-ISEA, Zollikerstrasse 32 (near Kreuzplatz), CH-8032 Zürich.

Attendance is free. **Please register by 12 October 2009** by post using the enclosed reply card, by e mail to sik@sik-isea.ch, or by fax to +41 44 381 52 50.

Contact for further details

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