

The Museum in Transition

In the complex and rapidly changing society of today, art institutions face serious challenges. It is arguably harder than ever before for a museum to remain relevant to its growing constituencies. A geographically expanding art world, new technological possibilities and the need to acknowledge diverse publics and perspectives are key aspects of our contemporary condition to which museums and cultural institutions need to respond.

The CiMAM 2018 Annual Conference focuses on the contemporary situation for art institutions in the context of these dynamically shifting technological, cultural, socio-political positions and the challenges of diminishing resources and mixed economies.

How can art institutions navigate in this fast-changing world and maintain their ethical positions? In an unstable political landscape, where standards of integrity are questioned daily, how can we revitalize the arguments to stand by the core values of the museum and of CiMAM?

Day 1: Global Realities – Challenges for Modern and Contemporary Museums

There is nothing new about the global condition of the art world. Yet, this reality continues to be one of the main challenges for museums today. The art world keeps expanding, and our organisations struggle to cope with shortage of space, funding and research. Insisting on discussing sustainable models of operation in this context is not only justifiable but also our duty.

In what way can a contemporary museum address the challenge to be globally relevant and locally significant? The key note speakers are

heads of art museums and will address this question from their own points of view and offer their respective strategies. These proposals will be followed by a perspective highlighting the issues of predetermined structures of historical legacies and – often overlooked – local indigenous cultures. A further perspective will address the issue of knowledge, research and networks. On the assumption that we cannot invite what we do not know, the main question will be: “so how do museums gain knowledge about the ‘global world’”? How is research made? What is funded and where does funding come from? And furthermore: how do information and research circulate in networks and between institutions?

Day 2: The Future Intelligence of Museums

The full impact of the digital revolution is hard to grasp, as are its social and cultural effects. What is evident is that the consequences of an interconnected world now influence most aspects of our private and public spheres. Phenomena such as smartphones, the Internet of Things, and AI have radically transformed and continue to change human interaction, and our relationship to technology. As the machine is becoming more and more imperceptible, our dependence on its functions increases. The emerging technology also raises concern – in view of the fast-developing AI industry, the idea of ethics in computer programming is paramount, as are the issues of having a handful of dominating corporate actors, and the intensified digital surveillance of private life.

Similarly, new technology is affecting the arts, as it has throughout history; and the scientific fields are being bridged by artistic experimental practices. Technical innovations and their applications are also challenging museums, structurally and practically. Established methods for collecting, curating and interpreting are tackled by novel artistic practices and new means of communicating. However, in the so-called Post-Fact era, the cultural institutions could serve as unique

spaces for reflecting and discussing democracy. How can the art world live up to the new demands of rapid technological change? What type of intelligence is required by a museum in the future?

Day 3: Ethics of Museums in an Age of Mixed Economy

There is a wide diversity in funding and governance structures among museums of modern and contemporary art today. Socio-economic, political and cultural conditions vary across the world, and the question is if and how one code of ethics could be relevant to all the disparate art institutions within CIMAM. In an age of mixed economies, with strong political forces of all kinds, and constantly changing social environments, the ethical dimension tends to be disregarded.

What is funded and where does funding come from? The interests that shape our society are multifaceted, and it is not always obvious which resources could be rewarding for a non for profit organisation and which would hollow it out in the long run. This uncertainty can be an ethical challenge to a museum, when values are questioned and rearticulated in a perpetually changing society.

Indeed, the cultural landscape of today presents new challenges for art institutions that want to remain meaningful to artists and critical audiences and operate in ways that do not simply pander to the demands of tourism and commerce. In the previous conference days, we have discussed two of the key aspects of our contemporary condition to which all art institutions need to react: the geographically growing art world, and the new technological environments.

The final day's invited speakers are addressing a third issue, which relates partly to the speed of change regarding globality and technological progress: How can art institutions navigate this age of mixed economy and still maintain their ethical positions? When standards of integrity are questioned daily, how can we as members of

CiMAM revitalise the arguments for standing by the museum's core values?

The CiMAM 2018 Contents Committee consists of six board members: Ann-Sofi Noring (chair), Saskia Bos, Suzanne Cotter, Corinne Diserens, Elizabeth Ann Macgregor and Eugene Tan.

CiMAM — International Committee for Museums and Collections of Modern Art

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