

Review of Academic Forum*

Art history: formation of the academic discipline in Europe, and related developments in Greece (18th-19th c.)

Rethymnon (3-4 October, 2014)

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The Academic Forum with the title *Art history: formation of the academic discipline in Europe and related developments in Greece (18th-19th centuries)* was co-organised by the Association of Greek Art Historians and the Institute for Mediterranean Studies – FORTH and took place at the Institute's premises in Rethymnon, Crete on Friday, 3rd and Saturday, 4th October 2014. The central aim of the meeting, which actually functioned as a workshop charting the current status of art historiography research in Greece and the rest of Europe, was to explore the ways in which the academic and research fields of art history had been formed from the late 18th century and continued to develop up to the beginning of the 20th century. Shaped by its interactions with other disciplines, art history eventually created its own unique discursive field and distinct methodology.

In this direction, the Organising Committee [consisting of Panagiotis Ioannou (University of Crete – Institute for Mediterranean Studies – FORTH), Titina Kornezou (University of Crete), Annie Malama (National Gallery-Alexandros Soutzos Museum), Ergina Xydous (Mag., Universität Wien), Aris Sarafianos (University of Ioannina), Konstantinos Stefanis (PhD, The London Consortium), all members of the Association of Greek Art Historians Board of Directors] chose for inclusion in the meeting's proceedings 11 original papers, in Greek, from a wide range of approaches and perspectives in current art historical research by contributors at different stages in their career (PhD students, independent researchers, academics) and from various fields of related practice (curators, archivists, scholars and others) currently working either inside or outside Greece. Presentations were followed by a round table discussion where all the contributors participated (Moderator: Nikos Daskalothanassis, Professor of Art History, Athens School of Fine Arts). Suggested topics were about:

- Art history and related fields –ranging from general history and reference works (including encyclopaedias and dictionaries) to art history: Art history and cultural history, art criticism, art publications (treatises, correspondences, etc), translations, monographs, travel writings; art historians, scholars, critics and other writers on art.
- Art historians and methodological issues, art history and its methods.
- Art history and institutions; academies, exhibitions, museums, universities, collections and the Press.

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- Art history, geography and periodization; North, South, East, West, national histories of art, world history of art. Periodization of art history (early, high, late, post-, pre-, or proto-). The emergence of distinct periods in art history (Middle Ages, Renaissance, Baroque etc).
- European art history in Greece.

As already mentioned above, the approaches followed and the perspectives adopted by the speakers in the context of current art historical research were various and so was the deepening of analysis. However, the way all the contributions interacted during the discussion sessions along with the similarities of the questions raised made obvious that art historians in Greece share for sure a common interest in art historiography as a special field of research.

Furthermore, the plenary session led to some conclusions. Given the obvious interest of every single contributor in art historical texts both from practical and theoretical aspect, it seems that the first priority, at least in Greece, should be to create a lineage of art history, a kind of genealogy, by forming a corpus of primary art historical texts in order to expand the references of discussion. In a collection of this kind one could find not only completely unknown texts brought to light just recently but also art historical texts that could use a fresh reading. That point was actually made clear in the context of numerous contributions; for example in the paper about the 'historical autonomy of the cultural sphere' and the art historical part of Richard Payne Knight's work presented by Aris Sarafianos (University of Ioannina), in the contribution of Giannis Galanopoulos (PhD Candidate in Art History, Athens School of Fine Arts) about a review of visual arts in Greece between the years 1863-1888 by Georgios Vizyenos (published in 1888), as well as in Eleni Gemtou's article (University of Athens) on a suggested combined reading of Winckelmann, Goethe and Koumanoudis.

Eleonora Vratskidou's (Post-Doc Researcher, Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung – Technische Universität Berlin) paper also commented on a series of unknown texts, the pedagogical writings of Grigorios Papadopoulos and Stylianos Konstantinidis in particular, who both taught art history at the Athens School of Fine Arts during the 19th century. Vratskidou's study explored in addition the institutional origins of art history in 19th century Greece in relation to the models of teaching from countries like Italy, France or Germany.

Art history and its relations with the broader historical, institutional, ideological reality were also discussed in Konstantinos Stefanis's contribution but in this case, from the art collecting point of view. What Stefanis's study explored was the role of art history as a management tool of artistic production in an art collection context, insisting more specifically on the meaning and the importance of the term *catalogue raisonné* in early 19th century Great Britain.

A different topic, the way art history communicates with political theories, was discussed in Louisa Avgita's (University of Ioannina) paper, focusing especially on the case of William Morris's texts and commenting on their relation to its historical context. Avgita attempted to explain the particular way in which Morris read, understood and interpreted Marxist theory.

The connections among various national traditions were thoroughly explored in the presentations of both Katia Papandreopoulou (Dr History of Art,

Paris I-Panthéon Sorbonne University) and Aris Sarafianos along with an attempt to spot differences and similarities in the ways national and social identities are constructed. Papandreopoulou's contribution in particular, by using Camille Mauclair as a case study, revealed the relation between art criticism and nationalism.

In the same direction and in the context of Italian *Risorgimento*, the case of Giovanni Morelli could also have been discussed. Nevertheless, Paraskevi Gkinosati (PhD Candidate in Art History, Athens School of Fine Arts) chose another approach and examined Morelli's case along with the cases of Charcot and Bertillon by attempting to explore the formation of art history as a science. Her focus was on art history's methods of documentation along with the empirical method of connoisseurship, highlighting the role of image, photography and representation.

The question of periodization and the meaning of historical time, finally, were examined from different aspects in the contributions of Amalia Papaioannou (Dr History of Art, Paris I-Panthéon Sorbonne University), Dionyssi Mourelatos (University of Athens) and Nikos Graikos (Dr History of Art, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki). Papaioannou's paper commented on the importance of the revisionists' approaches and the re-evaluation of certain historical periods of the past during the 20th century; her case study was Giovanni-Battista Piranesi. Mourelatos's and Graikos's on the other hand offered the opportunity to reflect on the common periodization in Greek art history, the first by adding the Christian art parameter next to the byzantine art, differentiating thus dramatically the scheme of Papanigopoulos continuity (Ancient Greece – Byzantium – Modern times), while, the second, Graikos commented on the effect of the Nazarenes and Pre-Raphaelites on the 'theorem of the improved byzantine painting'. These last two contributions raised the question if and in what degree similar discussions can be the object of art history (or maybe of Byzantine archaeology?) and if yes under what circumstances.

To sum up, judging from the emergence of new questions about terminology, methodology, periodization and geography along with the enrichment of the parameters that form the broader cultural context in each case, and the fact that the idea of broadening the discussion in a following conference was more than welcome then one could conclude that this Academic Forum achieved its goal.

Dr Annie Malama is an Art Historian and Curator at the National Gallery of Greece. Her research interests concern visual culture and social identities. The last few years she works on various questions aiming to recompose and describe the territory of the artistic field in Middle War and post Civil War Greece.



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