

Women In Space

Master Symposium at Institut Kunst, Basel, as part of the current research program 'Women in the Arts and Leadership'.

4–5 April 2019, 10am, open to the public

Room: AO 11. Campus of the Arts, HGK FHNW, Basel

With Nikola Dietrich, Mareike Dittmer, Raffael Dörig, Elvira Dyangani, Fanni Fetzer, Elena Filipovic, Iliana Fokianaki, Ines Goldbach, Sabine Himmelsbach, Claire Hoffmann, Manuela Moscoso, Marie Muracciole, Elfi Turpin und Nadine Wietlisbach.

Moderated by Chus Martínez and Quinn Latimer.

Making reference to the exploratory nature of space travel, and all its attendant problematics and projections, 'Women in Space' is a two-day symposium that will thematize the role of scale, space and power in envisioning women in the art system. Who is alien here, and in what kind of system, solar or other? Moderated by Chus Martinez and Quinn Latimer, this symposium continues a long-term research collaboration of Institut Kunst, Basel with Instituto Susch / Art Stations Foundation CH.

The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu once wrote that, 'sociology and art do not make good bedfellows'. His reasoning was grounded in the perceived tension between the art world's desire to focus on individual creative geniuses, and sociology's insistent aim to explain phenomena in terms of social forces. Taking the measure of a wide swath of art institutions and spaces run by women curators in recent years, it would seem that these art professionals remain in many cases on the (sociological) side of Bourdieu. The art spaces they activate do not often stress the importance of size, the need for expansion, or the importance of demographic media impact but rather, the necessity of programs that encourage a qualitative interaction between different social spheres as they relate to exhibitions, public programs, and the continuous presence of the artist community. But the question remains: Do women art professionals aim for this outcome or is this the result of the difficult and adaptive process to the very patriarchal conditions in which they, as women in a system created by and for men, are mandated to work?

The transition from the twentieth to the 21st century was marked, in part, by the energy of certain discourses occupying a central place in art institutions, a discursive renewal of ideas that would come to affect the programs of the larger institutions but had its origin in small and medium-size initiatives. The question of the future of representation and its place in the Western democratic system was answered by a proliferation of philosophers and various curatorial and artistic agents, all of whom claimed access to ideas, archives, initiatives... the past became plural, became the competing stories of many, and the question of History began to be fragmented into the problems caused by colonial imperialism and its postcolonial legacy. The archive was the first door, the document—still white (and male)—remained the threshold one needed to pass through to gain entrance to the materials and artistic voices of different territories and histories... restitution started to gain a body, some reality, and was as well prior to the question of enforced racial hierarchies in the myriad art worlds.

Nevertheless, an entire energy of renewal in the Western art system seemed possible, as its many agents were possessed by an enthusiasm, economic growth and social prosperity, that unprecedentedly envisioned an empowered art as capable of opening up the social to its past through ideas of a different education, participation, social wealth, and access. The art world believed in itself and many European politicians supported this wave—at the beginning—in their

hope that it was a powerful way of activating the Union by creating a resonance between the old continental dreams and a new political organization. Europe, a continent with a dubious economic future, trusted its legacy to the idea of culture, once again. This liaison with contemporary art, though, did not last long. Cuts to the cultural sectors and a rapid re-nationalization process across the continent rang the alarm on the future of internationalism and plurality, affecting how contemporary art and its many institutional lives and languages should appear in and be narrated for the public. But this turn not only affected drastically the art world at large, but the way in which it might be occupied and traveled by women artists, curators, writers, administrators...

Ideas of intimacy, the small scale, and the need for a social space in which to express authentically and in solidarity — ideas and ambitions that are often accorded to women professionals, in a specific kind of gendering of care, affective relations, and the minor forms — can seem to clash, simultaneously, with the larger, louder, seemingly more “ambitious” views of what women should want (as outlined by mainstream feminist narratives that center the claiming of traditional modes of power). What do all these ideas — projected or not — imply, and how do they manifest in space itself? What is the historical origin of these conceptions? How have such ideas affected the view of women who claim space, as it were, large or not?

The ambition (for isn't there always one?) of 'Women in Space' is to spend two days on the campus of Institut Kunst in Basel, in dialogue with a group of art professionals addressing these ideas and notions. Like its predecessor in the series 'Women in the Arts and Leadership', this symposium will be dramatized in a way that avoids the power point presentations to be expected, instead creating a sense of real debate and conversation, at once performative and improvised, including live readings on the various subjects being addressed (to bring in voices both historical and farflung). The voices and thinking of each participant will testify to their specific experiences as women in space—a space that is at once certain, uncertain, competing, ever expanding and contracting—as well as offer reflections on the recent past and hoped-for future scenarios of their fields, offering the audience a series of shifting images of the very 'space' that women occupy in the art system today.

The symposium 'Women In Space' is part of the Women's Center for Excellence, a joint venture with Grażyna Kulczyk and Art Stations Foundation CH.

Promise No Promises (link through to <http://institut-kunst.ch/en/we-explore/podcast-promise-no-promises/>) is a podcasts series produced by [the Women's Center for Excellence](#).

The symposia and the podcasts are the public side of this research project aimed to develop different teaching tools, materials and ideas to challenge the curricula, but also to create a sphere in which to meet, discuss, and foster a new imagination of what is still possible in our fields.