Editor’s Column

Last year’s *Space Between* editorial column promised to deliver in 2011 a special topics issue on visual cultures of the 1930s that would be composed of articles written “almost entirely...by art historians.” As it turns out, this special issue is composed entirely of articles written by art historians. Erika Doss, Leo G. Mazow, John Fagg, Mona Hadler, and Valerie Holman all offer rich investigations of the forms, themes, contexts, institutions, personalities, and politics of visual arts in America and Britain, crossing cultural divides and hierarchies just as nimbly as they cross disciplinary boundaries. I am very grateful to them for generously forgiving me a background in British literature and for working closely with me throughout the long editorial process as though I were one of their own.

One of the challenges of this visual arts and cultures issue has been selecting, gaining permissions for, and reproducing images. I encourage readers to take extra time examining the reprints as they are integral to the analysis and history introduced in the articles. Even a quick flip through the pages of this issue will show that it is more richly illustrated than usual: twenty-two images are included. While the reprints of work by the American Thomas Hart Benton dominate articles by Doss and Mazow, images of paintings by Doris Lee, Raphael Soyer, Stuart Davis and even the nineteenth-century artist George Caleb Bingham accompany Fagg’s article on genre painting; Hadler brings us a David Hare photograph and sculpture and reprints of two 1930 comics covers that inspired them. Focusing on the 1930s art scene in Britain, Holman directs us to photographs of sculptures by Jacob Epstein and Henry Moore that appeared in art books of the 1930s, reminding us that images of art—the art of representing art—is at least as culturally significant for our understanding of art history as it is for the fields of book history and print studies.

Focusing on visual arts at this point in the journal’s history validates in print what has been evident in person at recent *Space Between* conferences: the increased participation of art historians and more frequent and focused discussion about visual culture of the years 1914-1945. I’d like to think that this increased participation is a consequence of the welcoming, intimate, and intellectually-open character of the Society, its members’ self-conscious and self-reflective efforts to make real the promise of interdisciplinarity. If the June 2011 conference at McGill is any indication, these
efforts are working. The program offered 75 papers, 25 of which engaged with visual arts and cultures of the period. By the end of the conference, art historian Andrea Pappas (Santa Clara University) and architectural historian Elizabeth Darling (Oxford Brookes University), both first time attendees, were persuaded to run and then were elected to the Society’s board. (The McGill Space Between conference had 10 papers on music, sound, and aural cultures and its keynote address, by CUNY’s David Savran, was on American musical theater.) This 2011 issue, planned before but published after the 2011 conference, can be read as a happy extension of the many fascinating discussions on visual culture initiated in Montreal. Its narrower focus on arts of the 1930s owes something to my enduring special interest in that much maligned decade, but is also a sign of my more pragmatic interest in producing a thematically coherent special issue. I hope it inspires discussion about relationships between the art objects, institutions, or theoretical debates discussed here and those associated with earlier or later decades explored at Space Between conferences or in the pages of this and other scholarly publications.

My long term goal is to turn The Space Between into an arts institution in and of itself. This goal seems more and more reasonable as the next three issues begin to take shape: 2012 will bring publication of a robust general topics issue; 2013 publication of a special topics issue on middlebrow and modernism, guest edited by Genevieve Brassard, Phyllis Lassner, and Ann Rea; and 2014 publication of a special topics issue on World War I, guest edited by Mark D. Larabee. Study of World War I has been a cornerstone of Space Between scholarship from the earliest days of the Society and journal, so it is fitting that the 2014 special issue marking the 100 year anniversary of that conflict’s beginning will also mark the tenth anniversary of The Space Between’s publication. Perhaps at that point “the space between” will not need qualification with the phrase “1914-1945” for any scholar studying twentieth-century culture—visual, aural, or otherwise.

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