

Editors' Introduction

Martina Tanga



William I. Koch Gallery at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, September 2012. (Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston).

We are excited to launch the online art journal SEQUITUR. As we begin publication, we join a lengthy and inspiring tradition of scholarship on art and architectural history. It is with reverence for this legacy, but with an eye to the present and future that we initiate this endeavor, aimed at sparking germane conversations about current happenings in the field and bringing fresh, critical perspectives to the people, events, and scholarship that shape art and architectural history today. In this inaugural issue, we take a global perspective on art collecting and exhibition practices. Our lens encompasses the importance of classical antiquity in the display of art in nineteenth-century Boston, the development of Mannerism in Italy, and a traveling contemporary Latin American art exhibition. The range of essays, interviews, and reviews also covers a long history, from early modern displays of art in the seventeenth century to today. What transpires is the versatility of the exhibition medium: it can be a vehicle to highlight pedagogy, scholarship, and innovative experimentation.

Deborah Stein, in her featured essay “Classical Rhetoric and the Institutional Fine Arts in Nineteenth-Century Boston,” details how esteem for classical literature and the arts among elite Bostonians, especially such influential figures as Charles Callahan Perkins, colored the inception and direction of Boston’s most important art centers. At this time, Bostonians imbued the visual arts with a particular moral agency to educate the public, and this objective was reflected in specific collecting and exhibition choices.

The interview “Inside Museum Studies” with Melanie Hall, History of Art & Architecture Associate Professor and Director of Museum Studies at Boston University, looks at Boston’s art institutions two hundred years on from these nineteenth-century roots. Hall describes Boston today as a vibrant and happening city, with a growing international prestige. At the same time, she is wary of the impact corporate sponsors have on the arts; they tend to favor blockbuster exhibitions, which are more surface than substance, over controversial or esoteric shows. Hall also reveals the many complexities of curatorial work, such as space, funding, and the institution’s promotional agenda.

Additionally, in this issue we present reviews of three recent exhibitions. Christina An's evaluation of the recently installed Kunstkammer Gallery at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, reminds us of our long-time fascination with the display of rare and remarkable objects. She posits the installation as a universe in microcosm, contained within a singular space. Stacey Leonard examines a retrospective of the works of Jim Hodges, on display at the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston. In her review, Leonard analyzes Hodges' oeuvre, arguing that he both reifies lowly materials and creates highly personal homages to deceased loved ones. Lindsay Alberts' analysis of the exhibition highlighting the work of Jacopo da Pontormo and Rosso Fiorentino at Palazzo Strozzi in Florence, Italy, underscores how the exhibition format can be deployed to compare two artists side by side, showing their divergent approaches to art making, as well as their similarities. Alberts also calls attention to different national approaches to scholarship – American and Italian – noting how the former tends to understand aesthetic production in relation to art movements, while the latter examines artists as separate individuals.

Lastly, Jordan Karney considers how an exhibition can have a life beyond the temporary gallery installation of artworks, as she reviews the catalogue for the show *Permission to be Global/ Prácticas Globales: Art from the Ella Fontanals-Cisneros Collection*, recently on view both at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and Fontanals-Cisneros Art Foundation in Florida. She argues that while the curatorial team of this particular exhibition uses the catalogue as a space to give a sharper theoretical lens to the thematic underpinnings of their show on global art practices, the publication is ultimately a missed opportunity to participate in the growth of Latin American scholarship, especially on emerging artists.

Ultimately, this issue of SEQUITUR shows that the collection and display of art is a continually evolving and open-ended process. As intimately linked practices, art collection, curation, and display find themselves at the nexus of academic research, educational objectives, and the realm of creation.