



Thirteenth General Assembly in Munich, West Germany, 1961. From the Archives of AICA International; Courtesy of the Archives of Art Criticism in Rennes, France.



Ninth AICA Congress and Eighteenth General Assembly, Prague, Czechoslovakia, 1966. From the Archives of AICA International; Courtesy of the Archives of Art Criticism in Rennes, France.

heralded the "beginning of the end of the Golden Age of art criticism and its replacement by market values."

The 1960s brought not only a shift of focus in contemporary art from Paris to New York and a rapid increase in its commercialization and mediation, but a corresponding growth in the Association's membership and its radius of influence. The decade opened with a memorable Congress in Communist Poland ("Modern Art, as an International Phenomenon," 1960) and continued with a comparably influential event in Prague and Bratislava ("The Essence and Function of Art Criticism," 1966) at the height of the Prague Spring, and was marked by issues such as the Vietnam War and the student rebellions of 1968. By the early 1970s, the membership had grown to a total of around 1,300, 250 of whom were full members and 950 mainly younger associate members, and the number of sections had increased from the initial 15 to a total of 42. One of the highlights of this decade was the initiative into Africa with the extraordinary 3rd AICA Congress in Kinshasa, Zaïre (the present Democratic Republic of Congo). It took until the first decade of the 21st century for this early initiative on the African continent to be followed up in a consequential way; however, a geographical pattern had already begun to emerge, and has been preserved today, with the division of the world into five broad areas—North America and Europe, the Middle East, Latin America, Asia, and Africa—and levels of activity in those economically disadvantaged areas of the world that reflect both the expansionary objectives of AICA itself and the funding priorities of UNESCO and partners, such as the Getty Foundation and the Prince Claus Fund. Throughout the 1970s, considerable resourcefulness went into devising, and bidding for, UNESCO funding for projects that could profit from AICA's ever expanding networks, up to and including the far-sighted "survey of all the biennials throughout the world" that provided the basis for a two-day conference in Venice in September 1983, and heralded the onrush of globalization in the years that followed.

The rapid expansion of the Association and the democratization of the interest in contemporary art led to a revision of the critical canon, in the light of postmodernism, the new art history, and postcolonial theory; to an investigation of new media, such as video; and to the re-evaluation of "old" media, such as the traditional craft-based skills of sculpture and painting. This went hand in hand with geographical consolidation, but the real push for expansion came in the 1990s, following the end of the Cold War and loss of regular funding from UNESCO, and the immediate effects of these related events were the push to have the established in some of the newly independent countries of Eastern Europe and the commission, both to seek external sources of funding and to stabilize the core income raised from membership. The latter was achieved by abandoning the long resented distinction between "Associate" and "Full" membership in favor of a unitary category of international membership, with concessionary rates for adherents from economically disadvantaged countries.

The decades following the collapse of Communism led, not only to the reorganization of Sections, such as Mexico, Turkey, and Ukraine, but to the creation, or re-establishment, of others in Armenia, Croatia, Nigeria, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (F.Y.R.O.M.), Pakistan, Slovenia, Serbia, South Caribbean, Taiwan and, most recently, Cuba. Over the following 20 years both the venues for meetings and the leading themes that were selected for them reflected the very changed conditions of the world. Membership congresses and general assemblies, for those privileged to experience them,

were held successively in Tbilisi ("The Evolution of Art at the End of Twentieth Century," 1989), Macau/Hong Kong/Canton ("East and West in Contemporary Artistic Creation," 1995), Tokyo ("Transition: Changing Society and Art," 1998), South Caribbean ("Repositions, Repossessions," 2000), São Paulo ("The Institutionalisation of Contemporary Art: Art Critics Biennials and the Market," 2007), Paraguay ("Art and Criticism in Time Crisis," 2010), Zürich ("Writing with an Accent," 2012) and Slovakia ("Where Places—Black Holes," 2013), with South Korea in prospect (October 2014). In the same period, regional workshop/seminars—many of them supported by UNESCO—have been conducted across Africa (Dakar, Addis Ababa, Cape Town), the Balkans (Istanbul, Skopje, Yerevan), and South Asia (Karachi and most recently Colombo).

A thorough revision of the Association's Statutes in 2002 to 03 resulted in a liberalization of the criteria for membership, reaffirming the primary focus on contemporary art; granting recognition to the range of new disciplines relating to it and the parity between them; recognizing the growing power of new media and forms of communication; and acknowledging the intimate relationships of criticism to the newly emergent fields of curating and the history of exhibition-making. The revised Statutes also devolved further powers of responsibility onto the national sections. Partly as a result, the membership has grown steadily, from an approximate total of 3,500 in the 1990s to close to 4,600 today and 63 fully functioning sections (including the Open Section for members without a national affiliation).

What does AICA offer to the generality of its membership? And what of the future?

The most obvious and visible benefit to the membership, as a whole, is the universally recognized press card, underwritten by UNESCO, which grants member free access to publicly funded museums worldwide, as well as to many other private institutions and foundations, exhibitions, and events. Members are also encouraged to contribute in any way they can to the international activities, including the annual congresses and activities in connection with prizes and competitions, seminars and debates, publications and research activities, organized or facilitated by AICA's head office, in Paris. On top of this, individual sections arrange regular opportunities for face-to-face encounters between members in their own, or neighboring countries—especially in large sections such as that of the United States, which maintain a continuous high profile.

One project, established by AICA members in the 1990s, which has now grown to full maturity in a new purpose-designed premises, is the Archives of Art Criticism in Rennes, France. This is particularly unique, in its single-minded concentration on building a collection of critics' writings (publications, audio-visual recordings, archival documents), exploiting them for scholarly and artistic research and making them accessible online to a general public (archivesdelacritiquedart.org). Allied to this is the long-running, bi-annual magazine *Critique d'art/International Review of Contemporary Art*, which was recently redesigned and launched as a bilingual French and English review for critical writings in all languages, from many parts of the world.

Among AICA's most recent initiatives has been the successful creation of a new Prize for Distinguished Contribution to Art Criticism, awarded to a critic from the country that hosts AICA's annual congress for a lifetime's achievement, and an Incentive Prize for Young Critics, both of which are

The Art Scene and the Art Critic in France: A Bird's Eye View by Raphael Cuir, translated by Nick...

In this extremely brief overview, I will outline in five points the current situation of contemporary art in France, and the prospects that it offers for the art critic. 1) France's many publications in print and online provide many platforms for the art critic's expression; 2) Places multiply the opportunities to practice criticism; 3) The abundant supply of conferences and public discussions should provide opportunities for reflection on the public expression of art criticism; 4) The abundance of prizes for artists demands a corresponding AICA France prize for art criticism; 5) In France the professional status of art critics remains unclear and must be strengthened.

Publications

In France we have the good fortune of having many publications, including *artpress*, which just celebrated its 40th anniversary. In *artpress* and elsewhere, the proof of the vitality of art criticism and, because they cannot have one without the other, the vivacity of the world dynamic which fuels the need for publication. *artpress* is the longest-running journal in France that is dedicated exclusively to contemporary art. *Beaux Arts Magazine*, *Art & Critique*, *des arts*, *Artension*, *Art Actuel* and *Art Absolument* are younger or more general. Although it was originally dedicated exclusively to contemporary dance, the magazine *Mouvement* has been exploring all facets of contemporary creation since 1995. *May* (its title being a nod to *October* magazine) was founded in 2009 by Catherine Chevalier and Eva Svennung, and is directed to a more specialized audience, much like the *Cahiers du Musée National d'Art Moderne*, the journal of the Centre Pompidou, or *Critique*, the journal of *Archives de la Critique d'Art*.

New Platforms

The appearance of numerous Internet publications also expresses this dynamic while undergoing the evolution of medium. There are many examples: *parisART*, founded in 2002 by André Lussat, *La critique*, created in 2006 by Christian Gattinoni, editor-in-chief and a member of AICA France, *Revue d'art*, the quarterly journal of the online collective *Comptium* since 2009, *Code Magazine 2.0*, revived in 2010 by Valéria Chauvin and Clément Dirie, editors-in-chief, and members of AICA France, and *Le Quotidien de l'art*, created in 2011 by Philippe Régnier in collaboration with Roxana Azimi, for which a paid subscription is required.

This all demonstrates the important presence of art critics on the Internet. It is a challenge for organizations with limited resources—even AICA France—to maintain a site on such a tight budget, so this is a difficult challenge to overcome. In order to reach beyond our "followers" and among art professionals and enthusiasts, it only makes sense to bolster our web traffic and work with social media platforms that direct traffic to our websites to broaden our audience.

Print Publications

As everyone knows, it is becoming more and more difficult to get published in a book, and to work as an editor, in France as elsewhere. It is a field where the Matthew Effect, "the rich get richer and the poor get poorer," figures prominently. Writers who have already published are able to publish again more easily. This is why I think that AICA France should develop its publishing activity to provide writers easier access to visibility in the field.

In 2013, we published three books which all resulted from public events. *Hybridation et Art Contemporain* (Al Dante/AICA France, 2013) was the result of a roundtable discussion organized in Johannesburg on the eponymous topic. *La Performance: vie de l'archive et actualité* (Les Presses du Réel, 2013) followed a colloquium organized at la Villa Arson (Nice, October 2012) in conjunction with the Getty Research Institute. With a Pecha Kucha event on art criticism at the Palais de Tokyo in 2013, we published a monograph of Laura Lamiel, written by Anne Trouche, which was selected as the winner of the first AICA France prize.

Spaces

In the last few years the French art scene has been considerably enriched by new spaces, providing abundance and diversity, thus fulfilling the need for art criticism. Le Musée de la Ville de Vitry-sur-Seine opened its doors in 2008, the Centre d'Art Contemporain in 2008, the Centre d'Art Contemporain in 2008, Le Centre d'Art Contemporain Metz in 2008, the Palais de Tokyo in 2010, which contains over 72,000 square feet of exhibition space, while in contrast the private foundation La Mairie hosts its distinctive, rigorous programming on a more modest scale. There are also private, non-profit galleries offering specialized programming. For instance, La Vitrinesm (art and branding). For an international art fair, completely renovated in 2013, did the Salon de Montrouge, dedicated to contemporary artists, and the latest edition of Drawing Now, dedicated to contemporary drawing, was enthusiastically praised. The Louis Vuitton Foundation, which will soon open its doors in the Bois de Boulogne, just west of Paris.

Public Discussion

All the spaces mentioned above, and many others, develop programming featuring conferences, debates, and roundtables, giving this abundance of offerings, it seems crucial to reflect on public formats of art criticism in the field, elaborating new ways to revitalize public interest in art criticism and valorize it by showing it in a new light. This is why I took the initiative, in conjunction with Elisabeth Couturier and Marc Partouche, to launch the AICA France and AICA International to launch the AICA France branch of art criticism. The first installment of the program occurred at the Palais de Tokyo in 2013, and the second at the Ecole des Beaux-arts de Paris in 2014. Its format—20 images are discussed for 20 seconds each, for a total of six minutes and 40 seconds—has a strong momentum, permitting us to give floor time to more artists in one evening, and to underline the role of art critics in taking a position regarding particular artists, and to defend these choices. The event has been considerably successful, exceeding their high expectations.



Tania Mouraud, "WYQ", 1989. Wall painting, 350 x 1000 cm. Exhibition view at Musée de l'Art Moderne, Grand Palais, Paris, 2010. Collection Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. Photograph: Olivier Brette. Copyright Tania Mouraud, ADAGP 2012.

The Prize

There are many prizes for artists in France. The Prix Fondation d'Art Contemporain Ricard (established 1999) and the Marcel Duchamp Prize (created by the Association for the International Dissemination of French Art [A.D.I.A.F.] in 2000) are now reference points for other, newer prizes to follow. Created in 2009, the Prix Canson Art School was founded to support young artists in three disciplines: drawing, painting on paper, and photography. La Société Émerige founded La Bourse Révélation Émerige to support recently graduated artists under 35. However, a prize for art critics did not exist in France. It was necessary to fill this gap by creating an AICA France prize to reward and honor French art critics. We organize it with an international jury, taking advantage of the annual rotation of AICA presidents in Paris, and the inclusion of different national chapters of AICA. It was Anne Tronche who received this prize in 2011 for her discussion of Laura Lamiel; the special prize of the jury was awarded to Marie-Cécile Burnichon, who spoke on the work of Miriam Cahn. This year Marc Lenot received the prize for his work on the artist Estelina Peñafiel Loiza, and Mathilde Roman received the special prize of the jury for her work on Émile Poinset. This prize is awarded in partnership with AICA International, with *artpress*, which publishes books by winning critics, and with the Musée d'Art Moderne de Saint-Etienne, which hosts an exhibition of the artist presented by the winning critic. AICA France finances the corresponding catalogue.

Professional Status

Despite the vibrant scene, art critics still face considerable difficulties in practicing their craft. One key problem is that due to the lack of an official professional status in France, art critics' labor goes unrecognized. Unlike professional interpreters, for example, professional art critics do not benefit from a status or specific place within the social order. While interpreters' official status permits them to impose official salary rates, art critics often struggle to receive fair payment for their work, simply due to this legislative technicality. Their compensation does not fit within the current parameters of what organizations are legally required to respect. Discussions are currently underway with the Ministry of Culture and GIPAC (Fédération des professionnels de l'art contemporain) to overcome this obstacle, working toward a *convention collective*. There are also signs of promise elsewhere: for example, a recent publication for children presented "art critic" as a potential career (*Fil à Fil: Lectures et Mise en Réseau*, Isabelle Chachette, 2013). ©