

Dear Reviews Editor,

The following is intended as a reply to the review by Rachel Chatalbash of my monograph, *Ad Reinhardt* (Reaktion Books, London: 2008).

I have read the brief review on the ARLIS (NA) website of my book, *Ad Reinhardt* with great interest. It is gratifying to read this considered summary of the scope of my book considering the limited amount of space available for such a review.

After reading Yve Alain-Bois's essay in the excellent exhibition catalogue, "Imageless: The Scientific Study and Experimental Treatment of an Ad Reinhardt Black Painting" I am eager to point out that my treatment of Reinhardt as a 'precursor' to Minimal and Conceptual art is entirely qualified and presented, in part, to point out how artists reconstruct the past in the interest of the present. So, I feel it is important not to suggest that I am in agreement with those who would make such a claim.

In fact, I find Bois's assertion of the fraudulence of the category of 'precursor' resonant, especially with its stress that there is no necessary historical trajectory to link Reinhardt, Minimal and Conceptual Art.

At the same time, it seems to me to be important to explain how such a trajectory was constructed and how it came to be seen as persuasive to so many artists and others. This, in my view, is important historical work. I feel it would be unfortunate to abandon such historical investigations and simply assert an over-arching notion of history as a post-hoc reconstruction. It seems to me that there are two issues here of interest to the historian and critic of art, if not the artist, as well: (1) the way in which historical reconstruction may be routinely misused for dubious purposes, and (2) the significant questions about the conditions and possibilities of intellectual debate that can only be posed by taking the protagonists' arguments seriously and criticizing them in detail.

The highly metaphorical and emotive language of the chance collision of balls on a pool table employed by Bois is swiftly rhetorical and a pleasure to read; but at the end of the day, it is clearly not meant to stand in for a rigorous historical argument.

Ms Chatalbash is absolutely correct that the work is not necessarily going to be an easy read for a general audience; the monograph was not really aimed at that readership and without illustrations it could never hope to do so. It is not common knowledge, but the lack of illustrations in the monograph points to a larger issue.

In a recent interview published in *The Brooklyn Rail* (October 2008), I discuss the disastrous events that led to the withdrawal by the Estate of Ad Reinhardt of permission to reproduce any of the artist's work in this monograph. In brief, the Estate objected to the content of the book and used their considerable leverage as the custodians of Reinhardt's work to suppress the publication of the book. Fortunately, my colleagues at the College Art Association (which awarded the book a substantial publication grant) and my publisher fully and unreservedly supported the project.

The lack of illustrations does great damage to the project, but not fatally. It is important to inform readers that censorship by other means is alive and well in the world of fine art publishing. This is an issue that I intend to address in future in concert with the College Art Association; in this regard, I am not alone among art historians and critics who are eager to publish the fruits of their labor with as few constraints as possible.

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