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Eleanor Heartney: Art as a Vehicle

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We are pleased to have with as Eleanor
Heartney, independent art critic and scholar,
contributing editor to Art in America,
recipient of the College Art Association's Frank
Jewett Mather Award for distinction in art
enticism in 1992 She has been widely and
extensively published on contemporary art, and
has lectured in nagar universities and museums
such as the Whitney Iduseum, the Parsons
School of Design, the Chicago Art Institute, the
University of Massochusetts, abroad at Korean
University and much no re

to stay, and then I gradually worked my way into the New York art world. It is e_{λ} act y thirty years

Would you like to expand on your editorial role in Artin America, and how your art criticism benefits from that?

I am involved with magazines like Art in America in the US and Art Press in France. It is writing for those publications that keep me on the edge of what's happening. I think there is art is so diverse now and has so many different threads and narratives, (lorganize my thinking around some of the larger ideas that are important in the world, and how artists have a way to help us understanding that idea.

One of the themes you are approaching in a future project deals with relationship hetween art and religion: what is the thread of your reflection?

My favorite project is the one I feel least appreciated, a book that I wrote about Catholicism and contemporary art titled Post Modern Heretics It was published about ten years ago by a little publisher, Mid March Arts Press Ges des Amazon, the book does not have a wide c reliation, but it had a bit of cult following, because it is a topic of great interest to people.

The book project came out of my observations during the cultural ways of the early Nineties, when most of the attists that were getting into trouble politically in the United States came from Ontholic backgrounds For many years through the Modern and the Postinedern periods, there has been this assumption that religion and art have nothing to do with each other, that artists if anything are antireligious it is much more complicated relationship and that's what the book is about. Catholic sare much more interested in issues of the body and sexuality and they express them in ways: that tends to be seen as transgressive That's way people like Mapplethore Seriano Finley, Gober got into trouble It is a topic I am coming back to my most recent project is a book on art and the apocalyptic imagination, which is about the larger notion of the world coming to an end Art sis such as Keith Haring Matthew Ritchle, and Roget Blown. to nake jest a few exunples

> How has art criticism changed inthese last years, and what do you suggest to young people who want to opproach the profession of art critic?

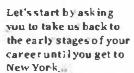
I came to realize that you become an art or tic by writing about art. An important aspect of the cu rent crisis in art criticis n is that with the preliferation of different formats, frem blogs to online magazines it is becoming less and less likely to get paid for your writing The oldfash oned magazines still do that but the new ones don t, and this creates a real problem for young people. You can't think about writing as a May to make a living, but one aspect of the larger picture. Start your own magazine or exhibit on space of public program. Right oow the system is in disarray, with so much art, so many voices so many places where people are commenting on art. For young people, it is an opportunity to recreate the system, because the system is now

Just because that's the way it was always done, it does not mean it will be done that way in the future, so you have to think about it in different ways.

ELEANORHEARTNEY

ART AS A VEHICLE

Interview by LEDA CEMPELLIN
Associate Professor of Art History of
South Octobs Stoke University



I grew up in Des Motnes, which is a small but progressive city in lossa, with an excellent art center I took a lot of art classes, and I even considered at one point becoming an artist. Because I was also into philosophy, I terature and other disciplines. I got a Masters in art history from the University of Chicago thinking that maybe this was a good preparation for museum work. I never thought about being a critic until I moved to Minneapolis. I lived there for a couple of years, and that's where t got involved in writing about art, by looking into the regional contemporary art scene. I was also in contact with the New Art Exontines, a publication based in Chicago I did quite a bit of writing about at t until I realized it just wasn't enough to live on, and also I wanted to know more In 1983, some friends were moving to New York; I decided to go too because I had a place



a difference between being an art critic versus an art historian, because you really have to stay aware of what's going on and try things before there is sonsensus about them.

Let's think at your book Art & Today: in your perspective, what is the main function of art nowadays? What is your thought process ns on arteritic, how do you make all these thematic connections that are in the book?

You are right, I tend to think thematically. What interests me about art is that it is a way of understanding larger issues in the world. For me, a lot of times it starts from something outside in the world, and artists respond to the world. If it an issue that is important in our culture has been dealt with by writers, political thinkers, nusicians, there should be artists working on it as well, and often from a very interesting viewpoint. Because contemporary