The Composition of Movements to Come: Aesthetics & Cultural Labor After the Avant-Garde


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Abstract

How does the avant-garde create spaces in everyday life that subvert regimes of economic and political control? How do art, aesthetics and activism inform one another? And how do strategic spaces of creativity become the basis for new forms of production and governance? The Composition of Movements to Come reconsiders the history and the practices of the avant-garde, from the Situationists to the Art Strike, revolutionary Constructivism to Laibach and Neue Slowenische Kunst, through an autonomist Marxist framework. Moving the framework beyond an overly narrow class analysis, the book explores broader questions of the changing nature of cultural labor and forms of resistance around this labor. It examines a doubly articulated process of refusal: the refusal of separating art from daily life and the re-fusing of these antagonistic energies by capitalist production and governance. This relationship opens up a new terrain for strategic thought in relation to everyday politics, where the history of the avant-garde is no longer separated from broader questions of political economy or movement, but becomes a point around which to reorient these considerations.

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The challenge in reading The Composition of Movements to Come: Aesthetics and Cultural Labor After the Avant-Garde is therefore to uncover new insights concerning today's social compositions as well as the value of working with the concept of the artistic avant-garde as a model for practice. Based in autonomist politics, Shukaitis's book argues against the traditional revolutionary politics that are focused on labor unions, political parties, and the working class as the privileged subject of History. These could include the Occupy movement, student struggles, black politics, feminist politics, or indigenous movements. They would exclude, however, nationalism, religious fundamentalism, and reactionary forms of identity politics (118). The Composition of Movements to Come: Aesthetics & Cultural Labor After the Avant-Garde Stephen Shukaitis. How does the avant-garde create spaces in everyday life that subvert regimes of economic and political control? How do art, aesthetics and activism inform one another? And how do strategic spaces of creativity become the basis for new forms of production and governance? The Composition of Movements to Come reconsiders the history and the practices of the avant-garde, from the Situationists to the Art Strike, revolutionary Constructivism to Laibach and Neue Slowenische Kunst, through