

Art Criticism and Art in the US and EU in the Age of Right-Wing Populist Movements

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Given the ongoing political upheavals in the US, and the EU, what kind of contemporary art criticism remains relevant in an age of populist uprisings, when the far right is gaining power throughout the world? Taking the reviews that I published at *The Brooklyn Rail* as a point of departure - *Martha Rosler and Hito Steyerl: War Games* at the Kunstmuseum-Gegenwart in Basel, Switzerland, and *Forest Law* (Ursula Biemann) at the Mary Porter Sesnon Art Gallery at the University of California, Santa Cruz, USA - this paper attempts to respond to the queries raised by this conference. I will address how art criticism can continue to provide a space for creativity and critique dedicated to thinking through in imaginative ways how to address the violence of our current world blighted by unregulated capitalism, technological innovation, accelerated climate change and ongoing wars.

In this paper, I am primarily interested in how artists produce and analyze what I am broadly calling art under pressure – facts, material things, images, and their practices of production and circulation – that might intervene in official state and corporate information relevant to our current political emergency. Artists have entered the fray with work that goes beyond illustrating how our democracies are under strain or even simple data to pressure the constitution, production, analysis, and circulation of information. Rather they are engaging with a problem more fundamental than the political suppression of specific images to reframe and create narratives about what kinds of art are adequate to the task of conveying this political emergency. And perhaps most importantly, I will talk about my own strategies for thinking about what kind of art and art criticism can stem paralysis while triggering critical thinking and action.

Short Bio

Lisa E. Bloom is the author of many books and articles in contemporary art, feminist art history, and the environmental humanities. She is currently in residence at the Beatrice Bain Center in the Department of Gender and Women's Studies at the University of California, Berkeley (USA) completing her latest book, *Polar Aesthetics in the Anthropocene*, on how art and visual culture play a key role in our thinking about the climate crisis.

Statement to the Congress Topic

Given the ongoing political upheavals in the US, and the EU, what kind of contemporary art criticism remains relevant in an age of populist uprisings, when the far right is gaining power throughout the world? Taking my own strategies for writing art criticism as a point of departure, this paper attempts to respond to queries raised by this conference to engage with a problem more fundamental, that is how art criticism can help reframe and create narratives about what kind of art can convey this political emergency, and perhaps most importantly, stem paralysis while triggering critical thinking and action.