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SERIES ON THE HISTORY OF ART

ADVOCATING FOR ART HISTORY

Edited by
Jennifer P. Kingsley
Cindy Persinger
Rosemarie Trentinella



Cindy Persinger, Jennifer P. Kingsley, Rosemarie Trentinella (Eds.)

Advocating for Art History

SERIES ON THE HISTORY OF ART

About the editors

Jennifer Kingsley is Teaching Professor at Johns Hopkins University, where she directs the interdisciplinary academic Program in Museums and Society. Over the past 12 years, she has developed over twenty public humanities projects both on and off-campus in collaboration with students, museums, and community organizations. She served as the respondent for the “Advocating for Art History” panel that sparked this book project. She is a member of Engaged Art History (engagedarthistory.org) and has advocated for public art history in presentations at the National Humanities Alliance, College Art Association of America, and National Council for Public History.

Cindy Persinger is Professor of Art History in the Department of Visual & Performing Arts at Pennsylvania Western University. She is the co-editor of *Socially Engaged Art History and Beyond: Alternative Approaches to the Theory and Practice of Art History* (2021). She chaired and presented at the “Advocating for Art History” panel at the College Art Association (CAA) conference in 2023 that sparked this project. She has advocated for socially engaged art historical practices in presentations at SECAC and CAA beginning in 2014. She is actively involved in Engaged Art History (engagedarthistory.org), for which she co-organized the online Engaged Art History Event series (2022–24).

Rosemarie Trentinella is Associate Teaching Professor of Art History (Department of Art & Design) at the University of Tampa where she has served on a university-wide general education committee since 2020. She presented at the “Advocating for Art History” panel at the 2023 College Art Association conference that sparked this project and has chaired and presented at several panels at SECAC, CAA, and regional pedagogical conferences about “Decoding” the discipline of Art History. Her 2025 article in *Transformative Dialogues*, “Toward a Future for SoTL in Art History via Decoding the Disciplines,” exemplifies her deployment of the Decoding the Disciplines framework to advocate for art history in and beyond her classroom.

Summary

At a moment when various uncertainties surround higher education, ‘Advocating for Art History’ offers theory-informed investigations, case studies, and actionable strategies to empower art historians to assess their individual policy environments and institutional contexts, recognize their spheres of influence, and develop strategic approaches to advocacy that leverage their expertise as educators and researchers.

Edited by Jennifer P. Kingsley, Cindy Persinger, and Rosemarie Trentinella, the volume draws on its contributors’ decades of experience across diverse types of public and private institutions—from R-1 universities to liberal arts colleges as well as a medical school and military academy. Chapters share successes and failures, strategies for securing and maintaining institutional support, analysis of art history’s distinctive contributions to skill and professional development as well as of the discipline’s broader value as a social good. Together, the chapters present a nuanced picture of the current moment, in which art history’s perceived vulnerabilities intersect with (and serve) broader narratives about the humanities and higher education’s supposed failures—complexities the book examines and largely counters.

Capturing a broad spectrum of contemporary art historical advocacy, ‘Advocating for Art History’ argues that the discipline’s future depends on art historians actively participating in shaping their institutions’ priorities, making their work visible across a variety of stakeholders both within and beyond the academy, and building collective momentum. Above all, it aims to spark reflection and essential conversations about the discipline’s future, and champions the potential for positive action. It is an essential resource for anyone invested in sustaining the humanities in higher education.

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