

Brigid Doherty lecture

“A Footnote to Art History in Walter Benjamin's 'Artwork Essay' ”

Thursday, November 12th, 6:30 pm

List 110, 64 College Street



This lecture considers an important footnote to the third version of the ‘Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility’ in which Walter Benjamin presents an account of ‘a certain oscillation’ between ‘cult value’ and ‘exhibition value’ as typical of the reception of all works of art. Benjamin’s example in that footnote is the *Sistine Madonna* (1512/13), a painting by Raphael in the Dresden Gemäldegalerie that has played an important part in German aesthetics since Winckelmann. Benjamin’s footnote on the *Sistine Madonna*, along with his critique of Hegel’s idealist aesthetics in that context, demand to be understood in relation to his remarks on Dada elsewhere in the artwork essay, and to his claim that technological reproducibility leads to the ‘actualization’ of the original reproduced. In that connection, the lecture concludes with an analysis of Kurt Schwitters’s 1921 montage picture *Knave Child Madonna with Horse*.

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