

‘Local Color in Art’: Nationalism and Impressionism in the United States, Australia, and France

June 7, 2016 4:00 p.m.

American Studies Center, University of Warsaw

In an essay entitled “Local Color in Art” (1894), the American critic Hamlin Garland argued that artistic style could be international, but if the subject matter was local, art would reveal a national culture through the eyes, palette, and touch of each artist. Writing in celebration of American artists’ embrace of impressionism, plein air painting became for Garland a strategy for defining national culture around immediacy. His comment sought to circumvent the sticky question of artistic influence by celebrating local landscape as a metonym for the national.

This talk elucidates the tensions between impressionism and nationalism by analyzing the broader connections between these discourses in three different national contexts: the United States, Australia, and France. While the artistic movement of impressionism is inextricably tied with Paris, the city where it originated, how “French” is it? A few scholars have interpreted the styles associated with impressionism as connected with French politics and French patriotism, yet, on the whole, art historical discourse has preferred to consider impressionism in the context of modernist formalism in its emphasis on facture, materiality, and ideas of time. This talk addresses the problematic of impressionism and its French national context, and considers the questions that arise when American and Australian artists appropriate the style in France or on their home terrain.

Lecture by **Dr. Emily C. Burns**, Terra Foundation for American Art Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow at the Institut national d’histoire de l’art (INHA) and Assistant Professor of Art History, Auburn University. It will take place in room 317 of the American Studies Center.

Event co-organized by Terra Foundation.