Guest Lecture am Max-Weber-Kolleg

„Concepts of Space in 1930s Abstract Art in Britain: Naum Gabo, Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore“

DDr. Jutta Vinzent, University of Birmingham/UK

15. Mai 2012 | 10.30 Uhr | Am Hügel 1, Erfurt

Jutta Vinzent (M.A. Munich, Dr. phil. Cologne, Ph.D. Cambridge) is Senior Lecturer at the Department of History of Art of the University of Birmingham and currently Fellow at the Max Weber Center in Erfurt. She specialises in modern and contemporary art with a focus on exile and migration, particularly to Britain, and has published on art practices, exhibition cultures and identity formation including Overcoming Dictatorships. Contemporary East and West European Visual Inquiries, 2008 and Identity and Image. Refugee Artists from Nazi Germany in Britain (1933-1945), 2006. Most recently, she has given a paper at the CAA in Los Angeles which will be published as „Challenging the abstract in late 1930s Britain“, Encounters with the 1930s, ed. Jordana Mendelson, exhibition catalogue, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, 2012. She currently prepares a book manuscript about spatiality as a modernist strategy in 1930s Britain of which this paper forms a part.

Zum Vortrag: The presentation explores Naum Gabo’s concept of space, arguing that its principal idea lies in the belief that space is not given, but needs to be constructed and rendered visible through sculpture. It will show that this concept is fullest developed in his writings published while in Britain (1935/6-1946), a time when he also started to use strings in his sculpture. Acknowledging the complexity of influences including science, aesthetics and ideas of socialism outlined by previous scholarship, this article will argue for the usefulness of Kant’s a priori space for the understanding Gabo’s concept of space. To this end, it will draw comparisons with Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason and the reception of Kant at the beginning of the twentieth century, which has had a profound impact on art and art history. A comparison with the concepts of space formulated in the writings of Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth and their string sculptures produced around the same time as those by Gabo will conclude the paper, demonstrating the distinctiveness of each concept of space as well as underlining the dominant role of space in art theory and sculptural practices of 1930s Britain.