

**OSL Research Day, 11 October 2019, Parallel Session 5**

**Arts and the Public Sphere: The Art of Criticism**

**Convenors: Prof. dr Margriet van der Waal and Dr Thijs Lijster**

Resilient democracies ask for an inclusive public sphere, where political disagreement can become productive and the dynamic exchange of ideas furthers the collective endeavours of society. Cultural, art and literary criticism have always been an integral part of this modern public sphere. In the past two decades, however, the field is struggling to adapt to digitisation of media and communication and to a structural decline of public funding and revenues for criticism. In addition, the Dutch cultural landscape faces pressure due to the abundance of Anglo-American cultural products and platforms. The goal of this session is to discuss the fundamental transformations that cultural criticism has undergone in the last two decades and subsequently debate possible ways in which critical practice could be successfully inserted into the new public sphere, thus contributing to a resilient society. The introductory analysis will focus on three main shifts: (1) the turn from universality to situated knowledge, (2) the turn from an authoritative position of the critic toward a mediascape in which consumers are also critics themselves, and (3) a turn from judging the artwork toward a situation in which art itself has incorporated features of criticism.