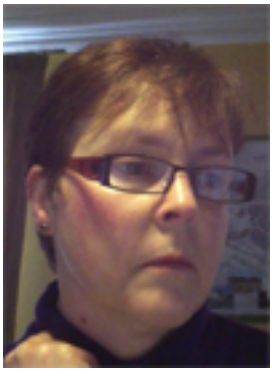
Art on the brain?

October 2013

Ray Tallis , Philip Davis , Rhiannon Corcoran and George Szirtes will introduce a discussion on appreciating art, brain mapping, neuroscience, and our wellbeing

In recent years, the arts have increasingly turned towards **neuroscience** to understand its purpose and value. From Jonah Lehrer's controversial
Proust Was A Neuroscientist
to Harry Witchel's
You Are What You Hear
, there is a huge interest in the burgeoning field of
neuroaesthetics
.

Yet some remain extremely sceptical both to the extent of what scientific findings actually reveal and, more broadly, science's ability to explain art's importance.



Can brain scans ever really explain to us the beauty of a concerto or a sonnet? Does Mozart's and Shakespeare's power ultimately reside in their ability to touch the right neural buttons? Or are critics guilty of mystification and philistinism in refusing to countenance a biological underpinning to 'the art instinct'?

Can scientific research help us better separate good art from the bad? Is this another case of ***n euromania***
exaggerating its claims, or are there other reasons for why art has turned to science to validate itself?

Some background readings

Shakespeare and Wordsworth boost the brain, new research reveals , by Julie Henry, The Telegraph 13 Jan 2013

New music 'rewarding for the brain' , by Rebecca Morelle, BBC News 12 April 2013

Beyond the Brain , by David Brooks, New York Times 17 June 2013

Ultra-high resolution 3D map of a human brain , by Mo Costandi, The Guardian 20 June 2013

There's a lot more to neuroscience than media 'neuromania' , by Mark Stokes, The Guardian 25 June 2013

Never mind the neuro-bollocks , by Stuart Derbyshire, spiked 5 Aug 2013

Watch video of the speaker and audience discussion below. Thanks to Dan Clayton the documentary filmmaker from Leeds for this.

Discussion Partners

The Manchester Salon is joining the fabulous Manchester Science Festival for the fifth year running, itself celebrating its seventh year. With over 200 events for families and adults, you can expect an exciting nine days of cutting-edge research, the brightest minds and amazing events. You'll have the chance to delve into immersive experiences, explore the science of the city by foot, join in the debate, enjoy hands-on activities, see awe-inspiring films and much more. Watch out for trailblazers throughout the year and join us at events throughout Greater Manchester during 24 October - 3 November 2013.

This discussion is a satellite event of the prestigious **Battle of Ideas** 2013 weekend festival of ideas being held on 19 and 20 October 2013, hosted by the Barbican, London. Now in its ninth year, the Battle of Ideas festival comprises 350 speakers at 75 debates and satellite discussions confronting society's big issues and unresolved questions. It affords the opportunity for some clear thinking, rational debate and agenda-setting - above all, it's future-orientated, whilst retaining a healthy regard for the past achievements of humanity.

Supported by Oxford University Press

This discussion is supported by **Oxford University Press**, publishers of a brand new series '***The Literary Agenda***
'.
Edited by Philip Davis, this new series shows why now is the right time to start reinvigorated work into the meaning and value of reading literature. Each short work takes one aspect of 'the literary', exploring the standing of literary thinking in the twenty-first century and speculating on its future direction.

This controversial series will offer strong personal visions involving writers and thinkers from many disciplines, each examining the role of literature within their own life's work and thought, and the effect of that work, in turn, on literary thinking. For more information on the series, visit: http://ukcatalogue.oup.com/category/academic/series/literature/litag.do
.