

Call For Papers

Material Experience: Thinking with Objects

5th Annual History of Art Graduate Student Conference, University of California, Riverside

New theories in art history, cultural studies, and philosophy have recently called attention to the power of matter in shaping our perception of the world. However, attention to materiality is nothing new. For example, in the 12th century, Abbot Suger defended his extravagant art program at St. Denis in part by inscribing on its doors that “the dull mind rises to the truth through material things.” Suger’s statement makes clear the profound and illuminating potential of material objects that has persisted, in varying forms, throughout history.

However, James Elkins has observed recently that fields of visual studies are characterized by an enduring disparity between written theories about objects and the embodied experience of one’s encounter, indicating more broadly what he calls a “fear of materiality.” At a time in which our experience of art, architecture, and other objects in visual culture is often physically removed through their circulation as digital images, this topic arrives with a detectable urgency. How should we in turn experience the *things* of the world? This multi-disciplinary conference seeks papers that consider how the material conditions of objects invigorate social, political, and aesthetic spheres. Papers from all geographical areas, historical time periods, and methodological perspectives are encouraged.

Questions we seek to consider: What role does materiality have in shaping our perception of objects? How do emerging or established theories of materiality impact art history, visual studies, and other disciplines? And, accordingly, what are the limits of these theories? Do the means of production and exchange alter our perception of the material object? And finally, how does art, regarded as material culture, function as historical evidence?

Possible topics include:

- Commodities, trade, and production
- Archives as material
- History of science
- Materiality and spirituality
- Debris, decay, and consumption
- The collection and display of Internet and digital art
- Marginalized materials and sites of production
- Objects, materials, and identity
- Materializing performance and spectatorship

We invite abstracts of no more than 300 words for 20-minute paper presentations. Proposals from graduate students in any discipline will be considered, including Art History, Archaeology, Anthropology, Comparative Literature, Dance Studies, English, Ethnic Studies, History, Music, Religious Studies, Philosophy, and others.

Please email an abstract and a CV to ahgsa.ucr@gmail.com by **Tuesday, March 1, 2016**.

The conference will be held at the Culver Center for the Arts in downtown Riverside, CA, on **Saturday, May 21, 2016**.

We are honored to host Dr. Daniela Bleichmar, Associate Professor in the Departments of Art History and History at the University of Southern California, as this year’s keynote speaker.

Special thanks to our sponsors:

The Departments of the History of Art, Comparative Literature & Foreign Languages, Dance, and History;
Center for Ideas and Society; CHASS Dean’s Office;
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