

1. Introduction: Genealogy and Epistemology of Art History

During the first online seminar, we will address the origins and institutionalization of Art History as a discipline, exploring the genealogy of its foundational methodology and terminology, and its relations to the dominant narratives and epistemologies of the time. We will discuss how art historical concepts and periodizations were shaped by the positivist paradigm, related to racial theories, and linked to colonialism and the emergence of the nation-state.

2. Horizontal Art Histories

This block will critically consider the existing art historical approaches to temporal and geographical divisions. We will discuss the relevance of the “multiple modernities” (Shmuel N. Eisenstadt) for Art History and explore Piotr Piotrowski’s theory of “Horizontal Art History”, which implies the necessity to abandon hierarchies and canons based on the “vertical” center-periphery paradigm, while art produced in cultural centers and peripheries should be studied on an equal footing.

3. Art and Agency

In this section, we will discuss the questions of intentionality, agency, and performativity of the art. Particularly, we will explore Alfred Gell’s anthropological theory of “living presence response,” which implies that the viewers react to works of art as if they were living beings open to a personal relationship. We will further trace the development of this approach in W. J. T. Mitchell's theory of the communicative power of images (*What Do Pictures Want?*), and critically compare it with Harun Farocki’s concept of “operational image”.

4. Materiality Market Infrastructures

Within this topic, we will look at art as material culture, exploring how the practices of production, trade, and consumption inherent to a given society form its artistic phenomena. We will explore how economic relationships shape artistic careers, how the supply chains, technical, and logistical infrastructures define the physical substances and techniques employed in artistic creation, and how material choices embody cultural values and ideologies.

5. Visual vs. Sensorial

This theme questions the dominance of the visual in art historical scholarship by exploring the multi-sensory experiences of art. It will highlight how sound, touch, and other sensory dimensions expand the understanding of artworks and their contexts through bodily knowledge.

6. Performativity and the Experiential Turn

In this section, we will explore the concept of performativity and reflect on the corporeal aspect of art. We will examine how art engages with actions, rituals, and gestures, considering the publications dedicated to the blurred lines between the static gaze and the dynamic nature of viewing and interacting of an audience and environment with artifacts.

7. Power Relations in Art

In this module, we will look at power dynamics inside the field of art, and also at how social and political struggles shape artistic practices. We will explore the practices of iconoclasm in society and art, discuss the relationship between images and violence, and the role of visibility in projecting and contesting power. The block will also touch upon the issues of iconoclastic gestures towards artifacts and the idea of “difficult heritage.”

8. Posthumanist Ecofeminism

Posthumanism and ecofeminism are mutually interconnected methodological approaches that challenge patriarchal, anthropocentric, and Eurocentric epistemologies. Thinking through and with posthuman theory alongside ecofeminism in art history can open up new aesthetic forms of expression, narrative modes, ways of knowing, and visual practices. These frameworks invite us to reimagine artistic processes and interpretations beyond human exceptionalism and dualistic thinking. Accordingly, this section will explore the dynamics of relationships, hybridity, and interdependencies between human and non-human actors (Braidotti, 2016, 2019) in their attempt of “making worlds together” (Haraway, 2016). Such an approach foregrounds the entangled agencies and co-creative capacities that shape visual culture in a time of ecological and ontological transformation.