

Art in Public Life & the Life of Public Art (New Haven, 1 Apr 17)

Yale University, Apr 01, 2017

Deadline: Jan 15, 2017

Victoria Hepburn

Call for Papers:

The Thirteenth Annual Yale University American Art Graduate Symposium

Theme: Art in Public Life & the Life of Public Art

Symposium Date: April 1, 2017

Keynote Speaker: Ruth Phillips (Carleton University), "Between Rocks and Hard Places: Indigenous Lands, Settler

Art Histories, and Sites of Power"

While the concept of "public art" in the American context is often associated with twentieth-century modernism and monumentality, this symposium invites scholars to consider an expanded definition of the term. For instance, how and when does art become public? And how might its meaning shift as its public changes?

At Yale, recent events have illustrated art's potential capacity to actively shape collective priorities. In 2016, the University convened the Committee on Art in Public Spaces in order to survey artworks on campus and articulate policies to guide future commissions and acquisitions. Furthermore, this past summer, in the aftermath of the University's decision not to rename Calhoun College, a Yale employee broke a stained glass window depicting enslaved African Americans picking cotton—an act of iconoclasm that exemplified the emotional, social, and political potency of art in the public sphere. The debates that have followed upon these events highlight the key role art can play in discussions of shared space, institutional memory, and inclusivity.

With these recent controversies and conversations in mind, we invite proposals that examine the public, communal, and collective in the art of the Americas. In hopes of broadening the discourse on public art, we invite a wide range of submissions from graduate students working on the visual and material culture of North, Central, and South America and the Caribbean across all time periods and media.

Possible questions and themes may include but are not limited to:

- What happens when art is exposed to new publics, is seen by unexpected audiences, or enters new historical, cultural, or geographical contexts?
- How does social practice influence the way art is positioned in public spaces or the way in which

the public understands art?

- How might new definitions of public art accommodate discussions of works such as prints, ephemera, textiles, or performance?
- What constitutes an understanding of public art before modernism?
- How might a consideration of public art address indigenous visual and material cultures?
- How does physical scale inflect our understanding of what counts as public art?
- How do institutional interventions alter or shift our understanding of public artworks?
- How might public art speak or relate to the disenfranchised, or be used as a tool of the enfranchised?

Interested participants are invited to submit an abstract of no more than 250 words along with a CV to americanist.symposium@gmail.com by January 15, 2017. Accepted participants will be notified by February 3, 2017. Accommodations will be provided for all participants.

Reference:

CFP: Art in Public Life & the Life of Public Art (New Haven, 1 Apr 17). In: ArtHist.net, Nov 11, 2016 (accessed May 24, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/14191>>.