

Spatial, Visual, & Social Effects of Surface (Providence, 24–28 Apr 2019)

Providence, Rhode Island, Apr 24–28, 2019

Deadline: Jun 5, 2018

Kristin Schroeder

72nd Annual International Conference of the Society of Architectural Historians
April 24-28, 2019 / Providence, Rhode Island

CFP: The Spatial, Visual, & Social Effects of Surface in Architecture

Session Chairs: Kristin Schroeder, University of Virginia
Alice Isabella Sullivan, Lawrence University

This panel seeks to consider, through a variety of case studies spanning from the early modern period through the present, and from diverse geographic regions, the relationships between structures and their surfaces. Built forms announce their material presence or become dematerialized as a result of different cladding techniques. From textiles to stone ornaments, and from stained glass to painted exteriors, these various treatments inflect the way we interpret spatial and visual constructs in our built environment.

The history of architecture is rife with striking examples. In Central Asia, decorative brickwork techniques created the illusion that the facades of mosques, palaces, and tombs were intricately woven, as if cloaked in fossilized textiles. The painted and/or carved surfaces of medieval buildings called into question the architectonic structures beneath. Features such as flying buttresses, rib vaults, and colorful stained-glass clerestory windows complicate the physicality of Gothic cathedrals, giving way to impressions of lightness. In the modern period, the architect Gottfried Semper made cladding central to his theory of spatial enclosures, a concept that would later inspire the thin-skinned glass and steel skyscrapers of Mies van der Rohe. Most recently, the flammable cladding that exacerbated the fire at London's Grenfell Tower provides an instructive case on the connections between surface, inequality, and the failing accountability of both private and public agencies.

Whether functional or aesthetic, cladding can reveal or hide the tectonic and representational realities of built forms. We invite speakers to propose work through which they explore the theoretical, practical, and/or social implications of surface in architecture around the globe and throughout history from critical perspectives. Of interest for this session are projects that work across media and disciplines to expand, challenge, or provide new insights into the relationships between architecture and its surfaces.

The 72nd Annual International Conference of the Society of Architectural Historians will take

place on April 24-28, 2019 in Providence, Rhode Island. Submission of abstracts begins on April 3, 2018. Applicants will submit a 300-word abstract and CV through the online portal of the Society of Architectural Historians. Please do not send these materials directly to the panel co-chairs. Submission of proposals to the SAH online portal closes at 11:59 on June 5, 2018.

Reference:

CFP: Spatial, Visual, & Social Effects of Surface (Providence, 24-28 Apr 2019). In: Arthist.net, Apr 8, 2018 (accessed Sep 19, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/17770>>.