

## Vision and Knowledge in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

Los Angeles, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, UCLA, Oct 14–15, 2011

Registration deadline: Oct 7, 2011

Ann Jensen Adams

A conference at the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, UCLA, Los Angeles, organized by  
– Lynn Hunt, University of California, Los Angeles, and  
– Ann Jensen Adams, University of California, Santa Barbara

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Registration form: <http://www.c1718cs.ucla.edu/vision11.htm>

“To see is to know”, wrote Aristotle. Even today, “I see” can mean “I understand.” Aristotle understood the connection between sight and knowledge to be physical, however. Before the seventeenth century, the eye was believed to be connected directly to the spirit: an impression of objects seen were understood as physically impressed upon the soul. Sight was, therefore, both the most powerful and the most dangerous of senses. Its perceived power lay behind the explosion of image creation in a wide variety of forms and media in the early modern period; and its perceived danger lay behind the iconoclastic fury of the Protestants who destroyed images in Catholic churches in the Low Countries in 1566. Between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe, in a paradigm shift sometimes referred to by the much discussed term the “Scientific Revolution,” a space was opened between vision and the soul, with new attention to the imperfect ocular apparatus, and such voluntary activities as reflection and reason, articulated memorably by Descartes’ “I think, therefore I am.” Empirical experience, enhanced by the invention of such optical devices as the microscope and telescope, took on new meaning, which in turn had a dramatic impact upon beliefs about the nature of images, their function in knowledge production, and the role of makers in their creation. This conference investigates this moment so crucial to our modern world view through the perspectives of historians of art, of science, and of material culture, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Conference Program:

Friday, October 14th

9:30 a.m. Morning coffee

0:00 a.m. Barbara Fuchs, UCLA, Welcoming and Opening Remarks

Session I: Religious and Scientific Dimensions of Vision

- Stuart Clark, University of Wales, Swansea, The Discernment of Spirits: Vision and Knowledge in a Religious Context

- Jeanette Peterson, University of California, Santa Barbara, The Science of Optics, Materiality and the Visionary in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century New Spain
- Lyle Massey, University of California, Irvine, Against the "statue anatomized": Debates over Representation, Dissection and Vision in Early Modern Anatomy

1:00 p.m. Lunch

2:00 p.m. Session II: Vision and Representation

- Ann Jensen Adams, University of California, Santa Barbara, Painted Surfaces and the Mechanisms of Sight
- Alexander Marr, University of Southern California, 'Broken reflections of shapes in Sleepe': Vision and Knowledge in Richard Haydocke's Oneirologia
- Erica Naginski, Harvard University, Rococo Vision and the "Sonorous Body" of Architecture

5:00 p.m. Reception

Saturday, October 15th

9:30 a.m. Morning Coffee

10:00 a.m. Session III: Vision, the Body, and Experience

- Elmer Kolfin, University of Amsterdam, When Africans Became Black. The Changing Image of Africans in Early Modern Netherlandish Prints (c.1500–1700)
- Bronwen Wilson, University of British Columbia, Inscription, the Horizon and Early-Modern Journeys to Constantinople
- Annemieke Hoogenboom, Utrecht University, The Pictorial Diary of Christiaan Andriessen: the Snapshot View of an Eighteenth-Century Painter

1:00 p.m. Lunch

2.00 p.m. Session IV: Vision and the Political

- Lynn Hunt, University of California, Los Angeles, French Revolutionary Prints and the Discovery of Social Categories
- Richard Taws, University College, London, The Telegraphic Image in Revolutionary France

Reference:

CONF: Vision and Knowledge in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries. In: ArtHist.net, Sep 27, 2011 (accessed Jun 8, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/1918>>.