4A Laboratory: Art Histories, Archaeologies, Anthropologies, Aesthetics, Berlin

Berlin, Oct 1, 2019–Jul 1, 2020
Application deadline: Apr 15, 2019

Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut

4A Laboratory: Art Histories, Archaeologies, Anthropologies, Aesthetics

The Berlin-based research and fellowship program "4A Laboratory: Art Histories, Archaeologies, Anthropologies, Aesthetics" invites scholars to apply for up to two doctoral and six postdoctoral fellowships for the academic year 2019/2020.

4A LABORATORY is a joint Fellowship Program of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut, a research institute of the Max Planck Society (www.khi.fi.it), and the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (www.preussischer-kulturbesitz.de/) in collaboration with the Humboldt University, Berlin, the Forum Transregional Studies and other partners. The Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz is an internationally outstanding cultural and scientific institution with unique museums, archives, libraries and research facilities; the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz is a globally connected research institute, with a strong agenda in transcultural art histories.

4A Lab connects diverse disciplines, types of collections and multiple institutions in an innovative way. In particular, 4A Lab attempts to foster dialogues and exchanges between art history, archaeology, anthropology and aesthetics, (4 A), as well as other disciplines concerned with objects, practices, environments and narratives (OPEN).

The Fellowship program invites excelling doctoral and postdoctoral researchers from Africa, Asia, the Americas, Australia and Europe to Berlin. The collaboration promotes the close contact with objects, collections and archives. This includes the collections of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (Berlin State Museums), i.e., the Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung (Egyptian Museum and Papyrus Collection), Antikensammlung (Museum of Classical Antiquities), Ethnologisches Museum (Museum of Ethnology), Gemäldegalerie (Picture Gallery), Gipsformerei (Plaster Cast Workshop), Institut für Museumsforschung (Institute for Museum Research), Kunstbibliothek (Art Library), Kunstgewerbemuseum (Museum of Decorative Arts), Kupferstichkabinett (Cabinet of Prints and Drawings), Münzkabinett (Numismatic Collection), Museum Europäischer Kulturen (Museum of European Cultures), Museum für Asiatische Kunst (Museum of Asian Art), Museum für Islamische Kunst (Museum of 'Islamic Art), Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte (Museum of Prehistory and Early History), Nationalgalerie (National Gallery, including Hamburger Bahnhof Museum of Contemporary Art), Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst (Museum for Sculpture and Byzantine Art), Vorderasiatisches Museum (Museum of the Ancient Near East), Zentralarchiv (Central Archive), as well as the unique holdings of the Ibero-American Institute, the

State Institute for Musicology, the Secret State Archives and the State Library.

The program focuses on OPEN (objects, practices, environments, and narratives) in their historical, social and historiographical dimensions, including histories of collecting and display. It invites researchers to study the materiality, mediality, agency, ecology and mobility of objects and related discourses. Under such premises, the program aims to create a space for dialogue for university and museum scholars in order to strengthen transdisciplinary collaboration in the proximity of objects, to transcend the borders of the 4A disciplines, to combine their skills and to foster a conversation between more conceptual and more empirical approaches. The program aspires to promote transversal networking and critical reflections on historical and contemporary languages and terminologies.

The scholarly environment of the program is designed as a laboratory to enable and encourage both fellows and the wider community to experiment and redefine transregional approaches to the histories of visual cultures and aesthetic practices, including close collaboration between the fellows and the researchers of the two main partners, as well as scholars of Humboldt University, the Forum Transregionale Studien, and other international and national academic institutions. The program includes joint activities in Berlin, Florence and additional locations. The dialogue is structured by an annual theme, which will be presented and discussed in seminars, workshops, conferences and the like. The annual theme of the academic year 2019/2020 is Plants (see below).

4A Lab takes an active part in transdisciplinary debates concerning a new understanding of provenance and the postcolonial – or rather post-postcolonial – responsibilities of museums and collections. It therefore investigates historical itineraries, complex topographies and biographies of objects from transregional perspectives. The emphasis is not on the single object "in context" but on historically constituted and constantly shifting environments of objects between stability and mobility, as well as in their social, religious, political or aesthetic dimensions. This includes publics and all kind of actors, and the consideration of museums as an eco-system – with their interconnected formats of temporary exhibition, permanent display and storage, constellations of architecture and design, in relation to a variety of visitors, and finally their extension into digital environments. Distinctions between nature, culture and art, craft or material culture, which have dominated museum structures or were supported by them, are now, at best, the framework for narratives to expose or nullify them. 4A Lab invites outstanding international doctoral and postdoctoral scholars to help to shape these horizons, and to take a lead, as part of a group, in an intercultural dialogue across disciplines.

4A LAB is a merging, progression and restructuring of the two research and fellowship programs Connecting Art Histories in the Museum (2009–2019) (www.khi.fi.it/CAHIM) and Art Histories and Aesthetic Practices (2013–2019) (www.khi.fi.it/AHAP). It is based on the experience of past collaborations between the partners and numerous other German and international research institutions. For more detailed information, please visit

www.khi.fi.it/4A-Lab

4A LAB Annual theme 2019/2020: Plants

In recent years, human understanding of the biology of plants has significantly changed. Neurobiologists have described vegetal life in new ways to a wider public, stressing the fact that plants not only have a sensorial apparatus, sex, but that they are also mobile – even though their motion is mostly slow – and even react to music. Plants, it would seem, have agency and they are endowed with forms of collective intelligence, a faculty that is located in plant networks, roots and ramifications. Plants, their ecology and the human interactions with plants therefore should be studied in new light, in a planetary perspective, from the beginnings of human history, as part of the Anthropocene. This includes research on the manifold aesthetic and artistic practices related to or based on plants.

While plants are important factors in human history, humans are leaving their imprint on the history and ecology of plants. The absence, presence and temporalities of vegetal life have always had an impact on settlements as well as urbanization processes. Moreover, plants are dominant elements in the human transformation of landscapes and environments. They are central for the history of colonialism, especially in the form of plantations. They are also protagonists in the making of – real and imagined – gardens across cultures. Plants interact with the human body and its sensorial, perceptive and biochemical apparatus, be it by means of drugs or via food and air. Flowers and fruit are significant elements or even agents in a history of smell and perfume. Plants are not only indispensable for the future of nutrition, they also come with a long past of cultivation processes that includes bioengineering.

For all of these reasons, plants and plant life have been a constant field of investigation and knowledge production, be it by practitioners such as farmers, or by scholars and amateurs. The understanding of plants can be gendered or socially and culturally distinctive, with specific knowledge systems relating to certain plant environments. They come together with classification systems, taxonomies, forms of collecting and display, as in the case of botanical gardens. Not only knowledge, but also aesthetic categories have been (and will continue to be) an eminent factor in the processes of the perception, description, cultivation and appreciation of plants. Artistic production and aesthetic practices based on or relating to plants are thus fields that deserve further exploration across time and space, be they historically driven by religious approaches, political interests, romanticizing views, modernist thought or eco-activism.

Artworks can rely on plants via materials like wood, pigments or dyes, textiles and canvases. Plants are protagonists in herbaria, drawings or photographs or in still life painting. They appear on tiles and pots or in architecture and all kinds of decoration. In fact, plant life or plant morphology forms the basis of the theory and the practices of ornament (or ornamentation), and might be discussed also in terms of a theory of beauty. Seeds, germination, growth are only some of the concepts or metaphors induced by plant life. Moreover, plants serve as protagonists in literature, in poetry and music as well as in religious contexts across cultures and geographies, as part of rituals or of religious veneration (bamboo, lotus, maize, pomegranate, yam, vines or sacred trees). These cultural practices can be part of larger social, political and economic developments or constellations. In fact, plants and crops are major components in economies and thus are often at the center of social tensions or transregional conflicts.

The program welcomes projects from a wide range of topics relating to plants that place emphasis on aesthetic processes, history of thought, and material culture, from the 4A disciplines but

also from philosophical or literary studies, in a transregional perspective.

Candidates

Applicants should have obtained their master's degree or their doctorate (within the last seven years prior to their application) in one of the relevant disciplines. We welcome applications from all regions, with various disciplinary formations, such as Art History, Aesthetics, Archaeology, Anthropology/Ethnology, History and neighboring fields dealing with artifacts, artistic production, material culture, and aesthetic practices relating to objects, images, languages and architectures. Applicants should be interested in engaging in reflexive and transdisciplinary research. 4A LAB fellows are given the opportunity to pursue their individual research projects within a transdisciplinary and transregional context. They are expected to engage in the program activities, such as regular seminars, workshops and conferences. In the overall context of the 4A LAB program and the framework of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, the fellows will be part of a creative, intellectually stimulating and discursive environment. The Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz is an equal opportunity employer and particularly encourages applications from women and disabled persons.

Fellowships

The fellowship starts on 1 October 2019 (9 months) or, only for the academic year 2019/2020, on 1 January 2020 (6 months) and ends on 1 July 2020. In particular cases, shorter or longer fellowship terms may be considered. A possible extension of the doctoral fellowships up to an overall maximum of two years can be negotiated. The fellowships (including travel expenses) follow the guidelines of the Max Planck Society. Organizational support regarding visas, insurances, housing, etc. will be provided. Successful applicants become fellows of the program 4A LAB at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz and at the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz and are expected to take up residence in Berlin. The working language is English.

Application Procedure

To apply, please send the following documents exclusively by e-mail as one PDF file (max. 2 MB):

- Curriculum vitae (in English)
- Project description (no longer than five pages, in English)
- Sample of scholarly work (an article, conference paper or dissertation chapter, ca. 20 pages)
- Names and contact information of two referees (including their e-mail addresses)

The complete application should be submitted by

15 April 2019

and sent to transregional.arthistories@khi.fi.it

Successful candidates will be notified by June 2019. Information about the current status of the evaluation process will be published on the website www.art-histories.de and www.khi.fi.it.

Contact

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