

## Encounters in Art History & Visual Culture (Haifa, 22-23 May 12)

Haifa, Israel, May 22-23, 2012

Deadline: Jan 31, 2012

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International Symposium, Department of Art History, Haifa University, Haifa, Israel

Encounters: Representations, Performances and Conceptualization of Encounters in Art History and Contemporary Visual Culture

Art represents encounters between the individual and the communal, artists and patrons, different classes, societies and cultures. It stages encounters among dominant groups in society and between the forsaken and the redeemed, the accepted and the refused. It is created by an encounter of the artist and his or her materials, and between his or her artwork and his or her current cultural values. It may represent the encounter of human and fauna, nature and culture, spectator and scenery, the leader and his or her people. Art may also document and reveal violent encounters like wars, social conflicts, terror events and political controversies. Moreover, art does not generate encounters solely by its formation but through its presentation and institutionalization too. The symposium 'Encounters' seeks to examine the encounters that art represents and engenders.

The encounter with the artwork is a meaningful experience in the art discourse; it is shaped by the gaze, the touch and interpretation. Encounter may mean the very moment an idea forms in the creator's mind, or an image appears from the material. Foundational questions about the intersection between figure and ground, body and space, stain and line, or between an object and its environment, are the key to the reading of many artworks. Alongside the artwork's syntax and semantics, the encounter may become the framework of its experience and interpretation. The aesthetic experience as an encounter can be described as harmonic and/or conflictual, it may resemble a lovers' tryst, but it may also document a violent encounter. The encounter is an essential condition in the transformation of a trivial thing into a work of art; the spaces of the artistic installation are also places of encounter between the mundane and the significant. The symposium will

explore the encounters and the ways in which the interface between the viewer and the artwork, the subject and the object, the art discourse and culture, is defined.

The artwork as an encounter compels the artist and the spectator to face the daily routine as well as the question of death. The encounter of the I and the one, the I-Thou and the I-It in Buber's terminology, or the I and the other in Levinas's, allows us to examine how the encounter – as a dialogical or oppositional form, face to face or facing a concealment – becomes a significant and evocative discourse. This sort of encounter, whether the result of events that occurred in reality or are considered reality beyond the reach of discursive language, allows us to survey early and contemporary artistic representations with new perspectives.

Abstracts are invited by 31 January 2012. Please send them to: [encounters2012@gmail.com](mailto:encounters2012@gmail.com).

All abstracts must be in English or Hebrew and should be limited to 300 words.

Please head your abstract with your name, professional affiliation, and the paper's title. Submit with the abstract a curriculum vitae (up to 200 words), work or home address, and email address. Each paper should be limited to a 20-minute presentation, followed by dialogue and questions.

All applicants will be notified of the acceptance or rejection of their proposal by 28 February 2012 (and in special request before). For more information please contact the symposium coordinators: Mrs. Zufit Furst and Mrs. Sharon Melamed-Oron: [encounters2012@gmail.com](mailto:encounters2012@gmail.com)

Partial and non-obligatory list of possible topics is the following:

Possible subjects:

1. Representations of encounters among artists, patrons, common people, classes and cultures.
2. The artwork as a place of encounter.
3. The encounter between the spectator and the observed, particularly between the spectator and the artwork.
4. Places of encounter: the museum, the gallery and the studio.
5. The encounter between subject and object: the thought of encounter as a foundation for appealing the aesthetic subject-object dichotomies or as a tool that helps to deal with artistic or consumption fetishism.
6. Representations of encounters as a means of ethical discussion (for example from a Levinasian viewpoint).
7. Religious encounters of man, God and the sacred.
8. Social and multiple participant encounters: encounters that relate

to ethnicity, gender, linguistic and political representations (religious and secular communities, men and women, colored and white people, straight, asexual and queer identities, etc.)

9. Phenomenological encounters: representations of encounters between the human and the world as represented and discussed in the artwork, from a phenomenological perspective.

10. Digital encounters: the meaning of the encounter and its representations in an age controlled by digitally encoded communication and information.

11. Interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary encounters: the meanings, advantages and the value of the multidisciplinary discourse that relates to creating and interpreting art.

12. Communal encounters: encounters of artists, creators and cooperative groups performing artistic events.

13. Ambivalent encounters: overt and latent encounters of violent and peaceable struggles, representations of ideological, collaborative concepts, as well as representations that relate to values and social protest in art and visual culture.

Reference:

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