Mnemonic Aesthetics: Memory and Trauma in Art (online, 22–23 Apr 21)

online / Rutgers University, New Brunswick, Apr 22–23, 2021
Deadline: Jan 8, 2021

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11th Annual Art History Graduate Student Symposium
Organized by the Rutgers University Art History Graduate Student Organization (AHGSO)
April 22nd & April 23rd, 2021
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey New Brunswick, NJ 08901

“Memory is always transitory, notoriously unreliable, and haunted by forgetting —in short, human and social...If the sense of lived time is being renegotiated in our contemporary cultures of memory, we should not forget that time is not only the past, its preservation and transmission.”
— Andreas Huyssen, Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia, 2000

Memory has been central to the vocabularies of artists and art theorists since its translation from ancient rhetoric to visual arts scholarship in the early modern period. Recently, scholars have addressed the relationship between memory and the history of art, employing diverse methods from memory theory to decolonialism, postcolonialism, and eco-art history. Mnemonic aesthetics – a concept stressed by Cheryl Finley in her book, Committed to Memory: The Art of the Slave Ship Icon – emphasizes a practice of ritualized remembering which sustains cultural possession and collective memory of shared traumas, especially in regards to slavery. Through acts of repetition, visual communication and performance allow memories that would otherwise succumb to cultural amnesia to be preserved. These acts attempt to revitalize and reinvigorate history by strengthening present ties to the past. This symposium will explore how memory, in particular traumatic memory, has informed the visual arts across chronologies.

The Rutgers University Art History Graduate Student Organization seeks submissions that examine questions of trauma and memory in the visual arts. Abstracts are welcome from all historical periods, disciplines, and methodological perspectives. Submissions will be considered for 20-minute presentations in English. After the symposium, one paper will be selected for possible publication in Volume 38 of the Rutgers Art Review, a peer-reviewed, open-access journal produced by graduate students in the Department of Art History.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:
- Forced migration and diaspora studies
- Development, destruction, and dislocation
- Eco-art history, the anthropocene, and environmental humanities
- War and genocide

- Repression and invisibility
- Ruins and fragmentary remnants of the past
- Decolonial and postcolonial studies
- Medical trauma
- Cultural amnesia
- Protests and activism

Please send your abstract and a current CV to rutgersarthistorygradsymposium@gmail.com by January 8. Abstracts should be no more than 300 words. Applicants will be notified of the committee's decision by January 31.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, this year's symposium will be held virtually, via Zoom. If you are interested in attending as an audience member, registration will be required. A link to register along with the symposium schedule will be circulated in the months leading up to the symposium. Please direct all questions to rutgersarthistorygradsymposium@gmail.com.

Reference:

CFP: Mnemonic Aesthetics: Memory and Trauma in Art (online, 22-23 Apr 21). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 30, 2020 (accessed Nov 23, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/23828>.