

Refract, Volume 4

Deadline: Feb 22, 2021

Refract Journal

Refract: An Open Access Visual Studies Journal

Call for Content

Volume 4 "Document/ary"

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Refract's fourth volume seeks to explore the entanglements between the document and the documentary as sources of information and forms of visual culture. Etymologically, document/ary derives from the Latin *docere*, to teach. The document is therefore a pedagogical tool. It can also be a disciplinary measure, a literary and legal form that ascribes value to people and property and gives shape to cultural beliefs called laws. And yet, the document defies boundaries—it is at once literary, visual, sociological, scientific, and historical. The aesthetic elements of the document/ary—its materiality, age, iconography, site(s)—are designed to facilitate the recording of information, providing authenticity and legitimacy by appearing to (re)produce, or provide evidence of, "the real."

The document/ary can be read within a longer history of creative expression invested in the representation of reality or "truth." Scientific illustrations, cartography, and portraits all construct and communicate evidence about the world. The invention of photographic technology in the 19th century ushered in the idea that a direct representation of reality was possible, a genre which formalised in the 20th century as the "documentary." Outside of dominant western cultures, methods of truth-telling take on very different forms—such as oral histories and genealogies, non-logographic writing systems and records, and non-human knowledges—which have often been devalued, destroyed or overwritten by imperial epistemologies.

This volume of Refract asks: how has evidence as a material form shifted over time/space? How do we assess what is real and true? What can the document/ary as a visual form teach us about how truth value is constructed? If we must accept that the document/ary is not neutral, how does the perception of "truth" aid in the construction of specific narratives that may uphold or devalue certain histories, empires, or political positions? What do these mediations reveal about the way power/history/narrative is constructed?

Topics might include (but are not limited to):

Scams, fakes, tricks, forgeries

Fictionality, parafiction, autofiction, realism, alternative realisms

Post-truth, "alternative facts," "fake news," journalism, news/social media, citizen journalism

Evidence, ownership, provenance, legal systems, legislation, law, surveillance

The repertoire, body as record, the nonhuman
Un-documented, ephemera, the “non-document”
Indigenous documentary practices

Records and record-keeping, journals/diaries, travel logs, archival collections and objects
Materiality, palimpsests, digitalization, augmented reality, meta-data, PDFs, spreadsheets

Refract invites new approaches to visual, sensorial, and material cultures from diverse histories and geographies. Contributions from graduate students, artists, faculty, and independent scholars across the humanities, including visual studies, art history, anthropology, literature, and history are welcome. Although Refract primarily publishes in English, we invite submissions in other languages. In addition, we encourage media submissions such as film, photography, and audio, as well as collaborations that address the theme.

Submission Guidelines

Please send full-length submissions (up to 10,000 words), an abstract, a bio, and 5 keywords to refractjournal@ucsc.edu by Monday, February 22, 2021. For submission guidelines, visit our website.

Reference:

CFP: Refract, Volume 4. In: ArtHist.net, Nov 19, 2020 (accessed Jul 1, 2025),
<<https://arthist.net/archive/23954>>.