

Approaching the Unapproachable: Beyond Representation (Kingston, Ontario, 14.-16.3.03)

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Call for papers

Approaching the Unapproachable

An international, interdisciplinary bilingual conference

Queen's University

Kingston, Ontario, CANADA

March 14-16, 2003

This conference proposes to open the way for an interdisciplinary discussion taking the following question as its starting point: In our contemporary world which is first and foremost encountered by way of pre-established forms of representation, how does one evoke or address the unapproachable, that which defies or underlies representation?

Disciplines we wish to engage include: anthropology, architecture, aesthetics, art history, classical studies, computer science, film and multi-media, history, linguistics, literature, medicine, philosophy, psychoanalysis, psychology, sociology, visual arts. Independent artists and writers are also encouraged to participate.

According to some, we are currently living in the age of visual representation, that is, in a world where everything is a priori accounted for by images. That which was previously put into words is now, most commonly, first and foremost, transmitted visually. As a result, we live according to a generalized image-repertoire. Thus, according to Roland Barthes, the fact that only images exist, are produced and are consumed "raises the ethical question: not that the image is immoral, irreligious or diabolic, but because, when generalized, it completely de-realizes the human world of conflicts and desires, under the cover of illustrating it"; it creates a world that is "without difference (indifferent), from which can rise, here and there, only the cry of anarchisms, marginalisms, and individualisms."

This is also true of non-visual forms of representation. Put

differently, then, while imposing a fragmented view of reality, the various forms of representation which account for our everyday most often abolish the imperceptible portion of reality. Incapable of grasping the full reality of the present, they moreover tend to efface its historical dimension. Indeed, to the questions "why?" and "for how long?" such representations provide little or no answer. Human experience as governed by pre-established forms of representation is despoiled of specificity and nuance. Under the spell of immediacy provided by contemporary forms of representation, we forget that reality cannot be reduced to the tangible and apparent.

Taking the above diagnosis as its starting point, this conference proposes to explore avenues which venture to address the obscured, imperceptible facet of reality underlying the generalized repertoire of representational forms and assumptions which constitute contemporary reality, avenues seeking to change or remedy this picture.

Abstracts should include: name, affiliation, title and outline of proposed paper (max. 250 words)

Please e-mail or send submissions by September 15, 2002 to inappro@qsilver.queensu.ca, Approaching the Unapproachable, Department of French Studies, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, CANADA K7L 3N6, Attention: Agnès Conacher and Catherine Dhavernas (fax: 613-533-6522)

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Reference:

CFP: Approaching the Unapproachable: Beyond Representation (Kingston, Ontario, 14.-16.3.03). In: ArtHist.net, Jul 25, 2002 (accessed Dec 22, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/25097>>.