

## Sights/Sites of Spectacle Grad Symp (Vancouver Jan 2010)

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Department of Art History, Visual Art and Theory Graduate Symposium and Exhibition  
Call for Papers: ?Sights/Sites of Spectacle?

The 29th Annual University of British Columbia, Department of Art History, Visual Art and Theory Graduate Symposium and Exhibition - Call for Papers: ?Sights/Sites of Spectacle?

In 2010, the city of Vancouver will become the site of an immense international spectacle. On the eve of the Olympic Games, the 29th Annual UBC Art History, Visual Art and Theory (AHVA) Graduate Symposium and Exhibition will engage with the notion of spectacle as both theoretical concept and historical phenomenon. The symposium will take place in conjunction with an exhibition of artwork that will critically examine the mechanisms of our spectacular culture. Performance, subjectivity, power, agency, and mediation have been central to the theorization of spectacle. In his oft-cited *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967), Guy Debord presents the modern spectacle as hinging on, and being indicative of, issues of economic control, disempowerment, and mass consumerism. Shifting the study of spectacle to contexts beyond those of capitalist consumption, postmodernist and poststructuralist scholars have worked to deconstruct the rhetoric of empire, the symbolic uses of political power, and the ontological categories of race, gender, and sexuality as they relate to various kinds of spectacle. In pre-modern and early-modern contexts, scholars have nuanced our understanding of spectacles by viewing them in conjunction with other concepts ? such as the carnivalesque ? that interrogate the structure and negotiation of power within social relationships.

Spectacle as historical event, object or experience forcefully intersects with modes of perception. From ancient times to the present day, ceremonies, exhibitions, festivals, and rituals have all functioned in accordance with a posited or present spectator, there to witness and respond to the proffered display. Spectacles have taken on diverse and contested forms, including public executions, religious processions, civic pageants, athletic events, international fairs, scientific

demonstrations, urban designs, military conflicts, advertising campaigns, art auctions, and the display of various technologies. Regardless of its manifestation, a spectacle is never neutral. In each case, it engages with its respective publics in the formation of meanings that challenge or support individuals, groups, or institutions pursuing economic and political control. Undeniably, an understanding of spectacle is relevant to scholars, artists, and activists who seek to address current political and social climates or pursue a more critical approach to historical phenomena.

#### The 29th Annual AHVA

Graduate Symposium and Exhibition sets out to explore a range of readings and interpretations of this theme and therefore welcomes proposals from all disciplines. The organizing committee seeks proposals for papers and presentations from emerging scholars, including current and recently graduated Masters, Doctoral students, and Post-Doctoral scholars. Please apply with an abstract of no more than 300 words by November 15, 2009. Include your full name, institutional affiliation, and contact information when you send your abstract and CV to: [gradsymp@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:gradsymp@interchange.ubc.ca), with your first and last name, and the words "Paper Submission" in the subject line of your email.

#### Accepted

academic research-based or theoretical papers are not to exceed 10-12 pages in length. Successful presenters are required to submit an electronic copy of their presentation to conference organizers for review two weeks prior to the start of the conference.

#### The AHVA

Graduate Symposium and Exhibition will take place on January 29th and 30th, 2010 on the Vancouver campus of the University of British Columbia. The symposium will be organized into loosely thematic panels in order to facilitate collegial and constructive dialogue and the investigation of cross-disciplinary connections.

#### For those who

are concerned about accommodations in Vancouver so close to the start of the Olympics, please be advised that the committee has successfully reserved affordable hotel rooms for the conference. The 29th Annual AHVA Graduate Symposium will take place in conjunction with the exhibition *Sights/Sites of Spectacle*. For more information on the symposium and exhibition, please visit the AHVA website at:

<http://ahva.ubc.ca/infoDisplay.cfm?Keyword=Graduate%20Symposium>

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