

The Economy of Images in the Sciences (Paris, 28 Oct 21)

Intitut national d'histoire de l'art, 2 rue Vivienne, 75002 Paris, Oct 28, 2021

Deadline: Apr 30, 2021

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Workshop - Call for papers

The Economy of Images in the Sciences (18th-21st centuries)

How does it affect the production and circulation of knowledge?

In early 2020, the Jeu de Paume (Paris) presented an exhibition entitled "The supermarket of images", conceived by Peter Szendy. The philosopher developed there ideas he had outlined in his book *The Supermarket of the Visible: Toward a General Economy of Images* (2017) about the intimate relationship between images and the economy. Basing his approach on Deleuze who was himself inspired by Marx, Szendy reminded us that "money is the flipside of all images". Such an axiom must be read as part of a renewed interest in the financial dimension of art history, of the history of photography, and of visual studies. Yet this approach seems to have been euphemised in the analysis of images connected to scientific practices, though it is currently an active area of research. This is all the more striking as the production of such visual materials can prove to be very costly in terms of time and of human, technical, and financial resources. A good example is the production of the first image of a black hole in 2019, an endeavour which mobilized many research teams, several cubic meters of computer storage space, rare equipment and hours of work, and involved significant financial investment. The cost and value of images weigh heavily on the knowledge that is produced and disseminated, and these therefore deserve to be examined in depth.

This workshop proposes to adopt a materialist perspective to think about the visual dimensions of science, focusing on the economic factors involved in the production and circulation of images in science-related contexts. By examining the financial issues that permeate visual productions in scientific practices and the tools mobilized in their production, dissemination, and management, we seek to shed light on how visual materials impact scientific knowledge. In particular, we examine the emergence and evolution of a differentiated market - or markets - for scientific images, for example through the implementation of commercial strategies and competition. What relationships can be identified between different (market-based, epistemological, aesthetic) value systems in the production and circulation of visual materials in the sciences? Taking images as a site of intersection, this workshop will aim to determine how their economics impacted the production of scientific knowledge, and more broadly how economic interests converged or conflicted with scientific interests.

Adopting a long chronological span, from the 18th century to the present day, will allow us to question the exponential multiplication of images in sciences since the Enlightenment and the indus-

trial revolutions. The proliferation of images entailed a transformation of the economy of their production and circulation, that had deep epistemological implications. We also seek to adopt a broad-ranging disciplinary and geographical framework in order to identify specificities, parallelisms or transfers, both synchronically and diachronically. At the crossroads of disciplines and methods, this workshop promotes an exploratory approach to the economic stakes of the visual arts in the sciences.

The workshop will combine two main lines of inquiry. Particular attention will be paid to the collaborations that scientific actors develop through images, as well as to the power relations that are maintained through these. By scientific actors, we mean institutions, learned societies, scientific communities, scholars, researchers, actors in the public or private sphere involved in publishing, scenography, drawing, cartography and computer graphics, photography, engraving, sculpture, printing, cinema, public relations, the press and media, etc. We also seek to determine whether visual history's economic dimension has to be considered differently depending on the different fields of scientific investigation (natural, formal, human and social sciences) or, conversely, whether a transdisciplinary approach can help identify the development of a global market for images in the sciences.

Proposals may include case studies, provide a comparative analysis, or take a more panoramic approach, for example by means of a thematic synthesis. They may broach one or more of the following topics:

- Funding, production, industries:

What was the role of industrialists or private funding in the development of techniques and instruments for scientific image production and/or circulation? What interactions might have existed between the cultural industry and those used by scientific institutions? On which transaction mechanisms (order, purchase, grant, contract, auction, etc.) were these exchanges based? How were images used to justify or obtain public or private funding in the sciences?

- Producers, specialization and collaborations:

Who made science-related images? How were scientists involved in the production of their own images? How have producing, editing and disseminating scientific images become professionalized and what training have their actors received? How were image-producers recruited, what was the division of labour, and how did they collaborate with scientists?

- Estimation, attribution, and fluctuation of value:

What were the links between the cost of manufacturing a scientific image and its use value? How, why, and according to what criteria does a scientific image acquire economic value? Does this have an effect on the epistemological value of the image, and who is legitimate in determining it? Do mechanisms of scarcity, or conversely of profusion, have an effect on the estimation of these values? What is the role of contexts on the attribution of value, and how are they reconfigured? Do the economic, scientific, symbolic, artistic, and heritage values of images in science tend to be reinforced over time, or, on the contrary, do these different value-systems tend to be exclusive of each other?

- Management and processing:

How was visual documentation in the sciences materially managed, by whom and at what cost?

What role did collections, photo libraries, iconographic departments, scientific image banks play in the conservation, processing, and accessibility of images? On what scale did image-management practices take place, and by what kind of funding was it supported? Who sold images or their reproductions, and what effects did this have on their modes and spaces of circulation?

- Rights, uses and legislations:

What impact(s) did legislative frameworks and the recognition of intellectual property have on the production, circulation, commercial exploitation, and choice of images in science? Do divergent interests give rise to circumventing strategies and conflicts over image ownership and use rights? Does the advent of digital technology contribute to reconfiguring rules, ownership, and uses?

- Parallel economies:

Do some images escape the market economy and following what mechanisms? Which images follow an open access model, and what does this reveal about the place of scientific content in shared cultures? What place do micro-economies, alternative and collective economies - like today's free software movement - occupy within a broader economy of images in science? Is this correlated with the invention of different and marginal ways of legitimizing knowledge through images?

The workshop is planned for October 28, 2021 at the Institut national d'histoire de l'art (INHA, Paris) and will lead to a collective publication. 30 minutes-long presentations may be given in either French or English. Some funds will be available for speakers who need travel support.

Proposals, in French or in English, should take the form of a summary of the issue that will be addressed (3000 signs/500 words), and are to be sent by April 30, 2021 to the organizers:

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Calendar

Deadline for proposals submissions: April 30th, 2021

Response from the organizers: May 20th, 2021

Workshop at INHA (Paris): October 28th, 2021

Reference:

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