

HAA Graduate Symposium: Virtual Matters (online, 25 Mar 22)

online / University of Pittsburgh, Mar 25, 2022

Deadline: Jan 10, 2022

Ellen Larson

2022 HAA Graduate Symposium

Virtual Matters: Rethinking Image and Reality in Art History

Keynote Speaker: Barbara London, curator and founder of video exhibition and collection programs at the Museum of Modern Art

Since early 2020, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically changed our relationship with the moving image, as screens have become the interface for our social, educational, professional, even medical interactions. Platforms such as Zoom and VooV have been added to our cultural vernacular, along with increased rates of engagement with screen-based entertainment. COVID has accelerated the use of virtual media, raising the question for us of what virtual reality in fact is: What are its modes? Its scope? Its effects? Furthermore, how do we tow the increasingly indistinguishable boundaries between what is real and what is imagined? In this symposium, we use the notion of “virtual matters” to both suggest the importance of the virtual and to assert its various materialities, i.e. it has content and presence via various modes of online interface. Within this context, we ask, what is virtual reality?

There is a long history of finding refuge in the virtual as means to escape, challenge, or overcome realities of one’s lived experiences. Reflecting on how the virtual traverses the relationship between image and reality in our current moment causes us to reexamine how, why, and to what effect this relationship has been explored across time. We therefore seek contributions that contemplate, or reimagine how the efforts of artists, curators, and other cultural producers mediate the relationship between the image world and the real world. From utopian realms imagined by Chinese literati painters to the dynamism of 20th century Futurism, the fiery fury of Japanese Hell Scrolls, Cubist multidimensional representations of movements and spaces, global Surrealist dreamscapes, and experiments with video and new media art, representations of virtual realities and the moving image persist across time and geographies.

Topics might include (but are not limited to) themes concerning:

- The legacy of historical utopias
- Indigenous Futurisms
- The history of cartographic images and mapping practices
- Web and new media art
- Time-based media conservation practices

- Collecting practices
- Representations of death and the afterlife
- (pandemic) virtual curatorial practices
- Art and technology
- Agency of artists, writers, and cultural agents as virtual intermediaries

Presentations from all historical periods as well as fields outside of Art History but grounded in visual culture are highly encouraged. We especially invite proposals for non-traditional presentations.

To apply, please submit an abstract of up to 300 words to pittgradsymposium@gmail.com by January 10, 2022. In your application, indicate your current institutional affiliation. Applicants will be notified of their acceptance by mid-January.

Presentations will take place on March 25, 2022 (EST) and will be limited to 15-20 minutes each, with additional time for discussion.

For further information or with any questions, contact pittgradsymposium@gmail.com.

Accessibility arrangements:

The Symposium has traditionally been an in-person event, giving participants the opportunity to connect with their peers. However, academic travel presented a challenge to graduate students of all abilities long before the COVID-19 related restrictions emerged. Considering the uncertainty of US COVID-conditions as we head into winter, we have decided to hold a virtual Symposium. This means that papers will be delivered through synchronous Zoom presentations. In addition to mitigating the spread of COVID-19, we hope that this online format will make the symposium more accessible and equitable for participants and audience members alike.

Reference:

CFP: HAA Graduate Symposium: Virtual Matters (online, 25 Mar 22). In: Arthist.net, Dec 1, 2021 (accessed Jan 19, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/35445>>.