

## Art and activism (online, 21–22 Jul 22)

Online, Jul 21–22, 2022

Deadline: Jun 1, 2022

Association for Art History's Doctoral and Early Career Research Network, oxford

CFP | ASSOCIATION FOR ART HISTORY | SUMMER SYMPOSIUM | ART AND ACTIVISM

Organised by the Association for Art History's Doctoral and Early Career Research Network.

The Association for Art History's Summer Symposium is a two-day annual conference that highlights current doctoral and early career research from around the world. It is an opportunity for PhD students and ECRs who are engaged with art, art history, or visual culture to present their research and meet other students and academics with similar research interests. Inspired by discourse highlighted at the 2021 Summer Symposium, *Global Britain: Decolonising Art's histories*, this year the symposium theme is *Art and Activism*.

Art often begets social change. A powerful tool for discourse, visibility, and protest, an artwork can help us imagine the world anew or see the contour lines of our own world for what they are. As contemporary artist Bisa Butler remarked in a 2021 interview, "I see how much responsibility you have as an artist. You are the reflection of our times." This year's Summer Symposium explores the symbiosis of art and activism, welcoming papers about artworks made by or about collective action for social and environmental justice. What does art offer in the face of systemic oppression and inequality? What does an intersectional art history of resistance look like? What are the visual cultures of collective action?

In an editorial on visual activism (*Journal of Visual Culture*, 2016), Julia Bryan-Wilson, Jennifer Gonzalez, and Dominic Willsdon define activism in art as the abandonment of neutrality. While no work can be considered neutral, they note, works of visual activism differ in the degrees of intensity and commitment. This symposium likewise encourages thought on the question of art's 'neutrality,' not only its production but also its collection, teaching, and exhibition. How do museums, university departments, and arts institutions hold themselves accountable to the values of the artworks they exhibit or advocate? How do we embed the radicality of art into the structures of the institutions impacting how art is researched? What are different culturally contingent definitions of visual activism?

In honour of the collectivity and community discourse often defining activism, our symposium will not culminate in a single keynote speaker. Rather, established experts in subtopics relevant to art and activism will be chairing our panels. These chairs will be selected in response to your submissions to this CFP so that they can best respond to your research interests. We hope this will foster an environment of useful feedback and lively discussion directly relevant to the work PhDs and ECRs are currently contributing to our fields of visual study.

### How to propose a paper:

The Call for Papers is open to all doctoral and early career researchers whose work intersects with the theme of art and activism and whose research is grounded in the material and visual record. Topics of interest include, but are not limited to:

- The use of art in and by social justice, climate emergency, and grassroots movements
- Art and activism before globalization along with different culturally and temporally contingent definitions of 'activism' and of 'art'
- Instances of iconoclasm, both historical and contemporary
- The stakes of different mediums and contexts from ephemera to graffiti, from public works projects to personal archives of a movement, from community quilts to single artist performances
- Ethical considerations for collecting and displaying protest art, art and institutional critique
- Intersectional research on activism, art, and a myriad of critical inquiries such as but not limited to incarceration and abolition, climate, challenging anthropocentrism, feminism, gender, sexuality, LGBTQAI+, race, Blackness, The Black Lives Matter movement, class, capitalism, Indigeneity, decoloniality, disability studies and crip theory.
- The role of nationalism, anti-nationalism, and anti-imperialism in grassroots movements

We welcome proposals for 20-minute papers. Please email abstracts of no more than 300 words, along with a 150-word biography and the name of a researcher you would ideally want invited to chair a panel inclusive of your paper by 1 June 2022. We can not guarantee that we will be able to invite your preferred respondent, but we would really appreciate hearing who might be useful for your work. Please send your proposals by email to [decr@forarthistory.org.uk](mailto:decr@forarthistory.org.uk) with the email subject line 'Summer Symposium Paper Proposal.'

#### Reference:

CFP: Art and activism (online, 21-22 Jul 22). In: ArtHist.net, May 16, 2022 (accessed Aug 24, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/36708>>.