

## Contesting Objects: Sites, Narratives, Contexts (Lima, 4-12 May 24)

Lima, May 4-12, 2024

Deadline: Jun 15, 2023

Lena Bader

5th Transregional Academy on Latin American Art

"Contesting Objects: Sites, Narratives, Contexts".

### Call for Applications

The German Center for Art History (DFK Paris, Max Weber Foundation), the Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max Planck Institute for Art History in Rome (BHMPI), and the Museo de Arte de Lima (MALI) invite doctoral candidates and postdoctoral researchers in the field of art history and allied disciplines to apply for the 5th Transregional Academy on Art and Culture in Latin America, which will convene at the Museo de Arte de Lima from May 4 to May 12, 2024. The Academy is made possible with support from Getty through its Connecting Art Histories Initiative and will be conducted in cooperation with the Forum Transregionale Studien (Berlin).

### Rationale

Viewed from a transregional perspective, the relationship between an object and its discursive embedding is influenced not only by history and institutions but also by culture, society, and the region itself. These interconnections call for a situated research and an interdisciplinary approach so that objects are considered in light of their complex contexts: environment, class, gender, race, economy, religion, academia, museum, etc. The term "objects" includes all expressions of the visual arts; however, viewed through the lens of their objecthood, objects are a stage for exploring transcultural references, negotiations, and impositions, raising important questions for a transregional art history. As in the case of pre-Columbian objects, most artifacts transgress modern conceptual categories of art, showing that received notions of art can be performed, imposed or rejected; in fact, their nomination points to the epistemic violence inherent to every history and instance of instrumentalization (musealization, iconization, scientification, narration etc.). These interwoven layers of possible approaches cannot be studied solely from a regional perspective. They are best analyzed by means of relational studies, using a dialogical approach focusing more on interconnectedness than on comparison. The theme, "Contesting Objects: Sites, Narratives, Contexts", therefore, promotes a transregional exploration of the material and intellectual foundations of art historical research: How do different notions of art history bring different objects to light? How does art history identify itself through specific objects? How do certain objects challenge art historical discourses, and when do their presence demand interdisciplinary approaches? And most importantly: how can a transregional perspective with an emphasis on Latin America expand the scope of understanding the links between the object and its art histories in different social, cultural and ideological constellations?

### Latin America from a Transregional Perspective

The Academy's prism and location is Latin America from a transregional perspective. Working outward from there, artistic processes of exchange within the American continent will be analyzed from a transregional and transcultural perspective against the backdrop of the concurrent international entanglements and connections. Instead of merely describing and comparing artistic tendencies, the interconnectedness and the multitude of cultural and creative processes and strategies of appropriation, including contradictory modalities of translation and analogy or conflicting, nonlinear transfers, will be discussed. Such a transregional perspective can only be viable if research conducted in or on Latin American countries is brought into dialogue with discussions taking place elsewhere, within an international context, and vice-versa. This relational, dialogical approach forms the foundation of the Academy's methodological framework. In that sense, a historiographical perspective is necessary to gauge the extent to which there can be a common conceptual and epistemological basis. This applies not least to terms such as "translocal," "transregional," and "transcultural."

### Contesting objects

Premised on the notion that the question of images also emblemizes important shifts vis-à-vis an art history oriented toward normative concepts of artwork, we ask what the question of objects brings to art history, both in terms of material and intellectual foundations, and especially in view of tangible experiences: How does art history imagine its object and how do objects create different art histories – open or not to transdisciplinary dialogues depending on the diversity of material culture? The historical scope of the Academy's investigation is deliberately not limited to any one era and seeks to avoid all contemporary historical caesurae. Project descriptions should address one of the following thematic fields:

**Sites:** Objects are situated items, in that they also refer to diverse notions of space, place or site. Their scale invites us to consider artistic creations outside of institutional spaces like museums and galleries. For instance, how can we consider the aesthetic experience of urban contexts, both verbally and visually? How can we grasp the fragility of sites? And how do notions of inside and outside vary depending on transregional perspectives?

**Contexts:** While reproductions and presentation of artworks may have accustomed viewers to seeing them depicted without frames or a space surrounding them, the question of objects inevitably brings a complex ecosystem into play – an environment that is more permeable to societies and cultures surrounding them, and thus different from that of the white cube, for example. The focus is, thus, on the social and historical components that are indissolubly part of every object's biography, both with regard to the context of their production and their reception. How do we reflect on these lived situations?

**Display:** Objects can be mobile. While some objects disappear or endure transregional encounters, others are rendered all the more visible. This dynamic engenders narratives that are conditioned both at the regional and transregional levels. How do we engage with these exposed objects? How do we react to the presence and absence of objects and their histories? How do we name them?

**Agency:** Objects are more than mere things: they are linked to narratives and have an agency on their own. Therefore, they may offer a critical counterpoint to abstract concepts and narrations, or

be tamed by them; they may seem suitable for both critical and theoretical inquiries as well as positivist approaches. How can we discuss these different concepts of agency and their historiographic contexts?

Sensual approach: Objects appeal to a variety of senses, oftentimes challenging academic research, as they engage the researcher's bodily experiences. This provides an intriguing counterpoint to the colonial obsession with visibility, for instance, in the context of modernism. How does art history engage with these different domains of the sensible?

History: Each object participates in an intertwining of multiple histories. They allow different approaches stemming from such disciplines as anthropology, political science, history of science, or art history to imagine different takes on how history and objects interact. How can we think of objects in relation to transregional histories without assuming a mere illustration or reflection but without also overestimating the agency of objects in the face of political forces?

Identity: Objects may also be linked to very different conceptions of identity if we think of Amerindian perspectivism, micropolitics or disembodied philosophies. How does art historical research navigate this multitude of concepts? Is it even important or desirable to have a common epistemological basis for how we comprehend objects?

The 5th Transregional Academy on Art and Culture in Latin America will be held as part of the DFK Paris's research area, "Traveling Art Histories: Transregional Networks in Exchange between Latin America and Europe". The four preceding Academies addressed the themes of "Modernism: Concepts, Contexts, and Circulation" (São Paulo, 2016), "Mobility: Objects, Materials, Concepts, and Actors in Art" (Buenos Aires, 2017), "Spaces of Art: Concepts and Impacts in and outside Latin America" (Mexico City, 2019), and "Plural temporalities. Theories and Practices of Time" (Bogotá, 2022).

#### Steering Committee

Luisa Elena Alcalá (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, UAM), Lena Bader (DFK Paris), Peter Geimer (DFK Paris), Anne Lafont (École des hautes études en sciences sociales, EHESS, Paris), Sharon Lerner (MALI Lima), Natalia Majluf (Independent Art Historian), Tristan Weddigen (BHMPI, Rome)

#### Participation Requirements and Application Guidelines

The Transregional Academy is a format of the Berlin-based Forum Transregionale Studien. It promotes intensive peer-to-peer dialogue to generate new perspectives. Participants are actively involved in structuring the program and developing its content. They present their individual research projects and, together, form discussion groups around specific themes. The majority of the findings are expected to result from intensive small-group work and discussion, whereas others will emerge from exchanges with local experts.

We invite applications from emerging and young scholars (with a master's degree and/or Ph.D. within the past five years as well as doctoral candidates and postdoctoral researchers). Up to twenty participants from different countries and academic contexts will be selected and given an opportunity to present and discuss their current research in an international, multidisciplinary setting. Participants will receive a grant to cover their transportation and accommodation costs. The

program is aimed at researchers in art history as well as neighboring disciplines such as postcolonial studies, literary and cultural studies, anthropology, architecture, history, political science, sociology, and media studies. The applicants' research projects should be closely linked to the Academy's themes, exhibit a Latin American focus, and adopt an explicitly transregional perspective.

The working language is English.

Applications must be submitted in English and include the following documents:

- letter of motivation (2,500 characters, incl. spaces) outlining how your project fits into the current research landscape and the Academy's topic
- a short biography (1,000 characters, incl. spaces; running text) that includes information on your country of origin and current residence
- an outline summarizing your current research project (5,000 characters, incl. spaces)
- the names of two academic references (no letter of recommendation required)
- and reading suggestions for a possible thematic session (title and short description of 2-3 sentences detailing why this text is interesting to you)

We kindly ask you to submit your application via the secure online application platform of the Forum Transregionale Studien by June 15, 2023, 23.59h CET: [application.trafo-berlin.de](https://application.trafo-berlin.de)

For inquiries related to program content, please contact: Lena Bader, DFK Paris, 45 rue des Petits Champs, 75001 Paris, [lbader@dfk-paris.org](mailto:lbader@dfk-paris.org).

For inquiries regarding the application process and organization, please contact: Jacqueline Wagner, Forum Transregionale Studien, Wallotstr. 14, 14193 Berlin, +49-30-89001-430, [academies@trafoberlin.de](mailto:academies@trafoberlin.de).

For all questions regarding the application platform, please contact: [support@trafo-berlin.de](mailto:support@trafo-berlin.de).

For further information on the previous academies and the participating institutions, visit:

[www.dfk-paris.org](http://www.dfk-paris.org)

<https://www.biblhertz.it>

<https://mali.pe/>

<https://www.getty.edu/projects/connecting-art-histories/>

[www.forum-transregionale-studien.de](http://www.forum-transregionale-studien.de)

<https://academies.hypotheses.org/>

[www.maxweberstiftung.de](http://www.maxweberstiftung.de)

Reference:

CFP: Contesting Objects: Sites, Narratives, Contexts (Lima, 4-12 May 24). In: ArtHist.net, May 14, 2023

(accessed May 30, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/39281>>.