

Visual Culture in Crisis: Britain c.1800–Present (York, 10 May 13)

University of York, May 10, 2013

Deadline: Dec 10, 2012

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VISUAL CULTURE IN CRISIS: BRITAIN C.1800-PRESENT – UNIVERSITY OF YORK, HUMANITIES RESEARCH CENTRE, 10 MAY 2013. KEYNOTES: PROFESSOR CHRISTOPHER PINNEY (UCL) AND DR ERIC STRYKER (SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY).

The word ‘crisis’ is frequently invoked to assess Britain’s current place in the world: crises in finance, journalism, politics and geopolitics dominate the media, all of which see the term used both to reflect, and manipulate, a sense of uncertainty and confusion on personal, national, and global levels. Taking its cue from Hardt and Negri’s location of ‘crisis’ as central to European modernity, this conference seeks to explore how visual cultures in Britain during the 19th and 20th centuries have simultaneously responded to – and emerged from – the successive crises that have been deemed to constitute the country’s (post)colonial modernity. Crisis might signify avant-garde break-through and embrace of modernity. It might impel artistic breakdown or flight from modernity, anarchic celebration, or resistance in the form of protest. Crisis in visual culture could above all be emblematic of the contingent nature of personal and political identities. As both a product and a precipitant of the inter-state and inter-subjective networks that have emerged in conjunction with imperialism and economic globalisation, crisis can articulate a disharmony between metropole and colony, centre and periphery, state and individual, working constantly to disrupt the geographical, cultural and class boundaries of ‘Britain’

We welcome submissions from artists and scholars across the humanities and social sciences, but ask that papers address crisis primarily in relation to visual and material cultures. Possible topics include, but are by no means limited to:

- (Post)colonial crises, from the multiple insurgencies against British rule, to the strategic posturing of the ‘Great Game’, the competitive expansionism of the Scramble for Africa, inter-war imperial geopolitics and the post-1945 rhetoric of ‘decline’ associated with events like the 1956 Suez Crisis
- Cultures of protest, including socialist and anti-capitalist resistance; anti-war and anti-nuclear demonstration; feminist and queer challenges to normative constructions of gender and sexuality; and the Blk Art Group’s demand for political and aesthetic recognition
- The experiences, effects and challenges of immigration, emigration and diaspora
- Psychological and philosophical crisis, which could range from crises of faith, epistemology

and perception, to psychoanalytical and existential crisis

- The rise of the illustrated press and its attendant demand for political caricature and satire, photojournalism, war reportage, and military technologies of vision
- Individual responses to environmental crisis (William Blake, Gustav Metzger, Patrick Keiller), social crisis (William Morris, Walter Crane) and (geo)political crisis (Richard Hamilton, Mona Hatoum)
- Avant-garde attitudes to modernity and industrialisation in terms of so-called 'embrace' or 'retreat', as well as at material, conceptual and institutional levels: Pre-Raphaelitism, Aestheticism, Arts and Crafts, The Omega Workshop and Bloomsbury Group, Vorticism, Surrealism, Pop, Signals, London Filmmakers' Cooperative

Please email abstracts of up to 500 words to Sean Willcock and Catherine Spencer at visualcultureincrisis@gmail.com by Monday 10th December 2012. For more information, please see [our website](http://www.york.ac.uk/history-of-art/news-and-events/events/2013/visual-culture-crisis/)

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Reference:

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