

Visual arts, narrative and social class (Turku, 24–25 Apr 25)

Turku, Finland, Apr 24–25, 2025

Deadline: Dec 31, 2024

Tilo Reifenstein

Visual arts, narrative and social class.

Art and society are deeply entangled, and visual arts offer a crucial window into historical, social and economic conditions. But art does not only reflect the existing world; art is a catalyst for change, propelling transformation and provoking unrest and dispute. Art allows us to understand, imagine, engage with, participate in and potentially transform the world through lasting historical-political and socio-economic change.

This conference is interested in the role of social class in the production, circulation and stories of the visual arts. Social class is difficult to define, and individuals live their social class through everyday experiences, opportunities and limitations. The invisible structures and processes that define and shape the experiences of social class are felt, rather than seen. Visual art is thus an exciting angle from which to explore the phenomenology of social class, translating invisible hierarchies and experiences into visual, physical and material forms.

During a two-day conference at the University of Turku, artists and researchers are invited to discuss the intersections between the visual arts, narrative and social class in Finland and across the world. It asks how visual art creates and changes understanding of social class. What stories are and are not told by artists, in art and in exhibition spaces? How might visual art effect change? And what are the benefits and/or dangers of this change? How do the visual arts reflect intersectional and interstitial differences (Dotson 2014; Sheth 2014)? How might these differences be transformed in and through the visual arts? How are groups like the “underclass” (Bauman 2007), the “precariat” (Standing 2011) or the “transclass” (Jaquet 2014) shaped in and by visual arts?

Presentations of up to 20 minutes are invited from researchers and artists working in any area connected to the arts, narrative and social class that explore, among other things:

- The role and representation of class in literature and art
- The role of visual and material art and narrative in society
- Visual art and the representation, understanding and experience of social class
- Embodiment and experience
- Precarity
- Race, gender, age and belonging
- Visibility and invisibility

- Multiculturalism
- Visual arts and social class in Finland / the Nordic countries

Presentation abstracts of 250 words, in English or Finnish, should be sent to Avril Tynan (avril.tynan[at]utu.fi) by December 31, 2024.

The conference will take place at the University of Turku on April 24, 2025 and at Life on a Leaf on April 25, 2025. On Thursday, hybrid sessions will enable participation in person and online.

The conference will be held in English and in Finnish.

The conference is organized with funding from the Niilo Helander Foundation and the Research Council of Finland.

Confirmed speakers for this event are:

Vanessa Corby, Professor of the Theory, History and Practice of Fine Art, York St John University, UK

Tilo Reifenstein, Senior Lecturer in Critical Studies, York St John University, UK

Milja-Liina Moilanen, Artist and Director

References

Dotson, Kristie. 2014. "Thinking Familiar with the Interstitial": An Introduction." *Hypatia* 29(1): 1-17.

Sheth, Falguni. 2014. "Interstitiality: Making Space for Migration, Diaspora, and Racial Complexity." *Hypatia* 29(1): 75-93.

Bauman, Zygmunt. 2007. *Consuming Life*. Cambridge: Polity.

Standing, Guy. 2011. *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. London: Bloomsbury.

Jaquet, Chantal. 2014. *Transclasses ou la non-reproduction*. Paris: PUF.

Jaquet, Chantal. 2023. *Transclasses: A Theory of Social Non-Reproduction [2014]*. Tr. Gregory Elliott. London and New York: Verso.

Reference:

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