

Image and Text in Travel Narratives (Split, 11–13 Dec 25)

Split, Dec 11–13, 2025

Deadline: Jul 15, 2025

Ana Sverko, Institute of Art History

A call for papers for an international conference organized as part of a week of events in scholarship and research.

DISCOVERING DALMATIA XI: The Relationship Between Image and Text in Travel Narratives.

Split City Museum – Old City Hall, Split, 11 –13 December 2025;

Keynote Speaker: Heather Hyde Minor, Professor of Art History, Concurrent Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures, University of Notre Dame.

Travelogues take shape through the wide range of travel experiences recorded in books, periodicals, diaries, letters, drawings, paintings, prints, and photographs. They represent invaluable historical and cultural sources in which textual and visual narratives are often intertwined in order to convey complex impressions of places, people, and cultural heritage in as much detail as possible. In forming such responses, artist-authors are engaged in an intense dialogue with place, often leaving behind experiences recorded in both text and image. These documents of experience strongly mark, in turn, the spaces they mediate, often becoming models themselves for future travel writers. Among those regions recorded in travel narratives, Dalmatia occupies a significant place: often depicted in this rich relationship between image and text, these together shape a layered perception of its complex identity.

This year's Discovering Dalmatia conference in Split is specifically dedicated to exploring the ways in which these two forms of representation intertwine within the travel genre. The focus will be on the dynamic relationship between words and images: on the function of visual elements (illustrations, graphics, photographs) within, and alongside, the travel text, and on how – together – they shape the narrative tone of the travelogue and the perception of a particular place. We encourage presenters to think about diachronic perspectives – which follow changes in the relationship between image and text over time – as well as the dialogical nature of this interaction, and how this might raise questions about authorship, credibility, cultural translation, and intermediality in travel literature.

The visual component of the travelogue has often worked to confirm the credibility of the text or to attract a reading audience fascinated by the “exotic” southeastern edge of Europe. At the same time, images bring their own visual rhetoric – sometimes supporting and sometimes replacing the written narrative. Theoretical approaches that consider image and text not as parallel, but as interdependent semiotic systems, are necessary for understanding the specifics of the travel genre.

We therefore invite contributions that offer theoretical reflections on this relationship, or which discuss concrete case studies, particularly those concerning travel accounts about Dalmatia and within the intense period of study trips to the region from the eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century.

The conference aims to bring together scholars from different disciplines – the history of art, architecture, literature, visual culture, anthropology, and media studies – to reflect on how the interrelationship between image and text in travelogues contributes to the construction of meaning, memory, and cultural identity. Dalmatia, with its rich presence in the European travel writing tradition, offers particularly fertile ground for such research.

We ask participants to reflect on two central questions:

- How do visual and textual representations of places, particularly Dalmatia, work together in shaping perceptions of space, heritage, identity, and otherness?
- What historical and conceptual models help us understand the relationship between image and text in travel literature?

We welcome proposals that examine a wide range of travel material that combines text and image. It is our hope that the conference will contribute to a deeper understanding of various aspects of the interplay of image and text, to promote rich reflections on Dalmatia's place in the European cultural imagination, as well as to defining the travelogue as an autonomous, multidisciplinary, and multimedia practice.

We invite professionals of various backgrounds, whose research addresses these topics, to send a 250-word abstract and a short CV to: discoveringdalmatia@gmail.com.

The conference is organized as part of the Croatian Science Foundation project Travelogues Dalmatia IP-2022-10-8676.

Scientific Committee

Joško Belamarić (Institute of Art History – Cvito Fisković Centre Split)

Davide Lacagnina (University of Siena, School of Specialization in Art History)

Tod Marder (Rutgers University, Department of Art History)

Katrina O'Loughlin (Brunel University London)

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Organizing Committee

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Ana Šverko (Institute of Art History – Cvito Fisković Centre Split)
Sanja Žaja Vrbica (University of Dubrovnik, Arts and Restoration Department)

Registration

We welcome proposals for 20-minute papers. Proposals consisting of a 250-word abstract and a short CV in Croatian or English should be sent via email as a pdf attachment to discoveringdalmatia@gmail.com by 15 July 2025.

Important dates

Proposal submission deadline 15/07/2025

Notification of acceptance 31/07/2025

Conference day 11/12/2025

Important Information

Registration will take place on the evening of the 10th of December, the closing address will take place on the 13th of December, and the hosts will organise coffee and refreshments for conference participants during breaks.

No participation fee will be charged for this conference.

The organisers do not cover travel and accommodation costs.

The organisers can help participants to find reasonably-priced accommodation in the historic city centre.

Papers and discussions will be conducted in English.

The duration of a spoken contribution should not exceed 20 minutes.

Presentations will be followed by discussions.

We propose to publish a collection of selected papers from the conference.

Reference:

CFP: Image and Text in Travel Narratives (Split, 11-13 Dec 25). In: ArtHist.net, May 26, 2025 (accessed Apr 3, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/49351>>.