

Color in Circulation (Geneva, 8–10 Dec 25)

University of Geneva and Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva, Dec 8–10, 2025

Deadline: Sep 5, 2025

Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, Université de Genève, CH

Color in Circulation: Transfers, Transformations, Translations.

Final Event of the Visual Contagions Project (SNSF 2021–2025).

Scientific Committee : Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel (Université de Genève), Dominik Remondino (Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Genève), Victor Lopes (Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Genève), Catherine Dossin (Purdue University, USA), Frédéric Elsig (Université de Genève).

Organization Committee : Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, Marie Barras, Angela Allemmand (Université de Genève).

Keynote Speakers: Monika Wagner (Universität Hamburg), Peter Geimer (Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte, Paris).

Conclusive Roundtable: Frédéric Elsig (Université de Genève).

This conference aims to explore what happens to color when objects, images, and what used to be called style circulate across space and time, across cultures, traditions, and diverse conceptions of color and its symbolism, but also across media. The event serves as a celebratory conclusion to the research project Visual Contagions (Swiss National Fund for research, 2021–2025), conducted at the University of Geneva and focused on the global circulation of images, in collaboration with the Artl@s project.

The history of artistic and visual circulation has rarely undertaken a thorough examination of color as a subject in its own right. The history of color has explored the origins of pigments—such as Afghan lapis lazuli ultramarine, cochineal red from Mexico, Prussian blue, or African ochres—from both global and decolonial perspectives (Pastoureau, 2024; Ball, 2002; Finlay, 2002; Paul, 2017; Guichard, Le Ho, and Williams 2023). It has also addressed variations in taste and chromatic palettes across cultural and temporal contexts (Gage, 1993; Geimer, 2022). Some decolonial approaches to art history have further emphasized the decisive role of color in shaping aesthetic hierarchies and critical judgments, particularly in postcolonial contexts where chromatic differences can reactivate dynamics of power and erasure (Mirzoeff, 2011). However, while these approaches have substantially advanced our understanding of the material and symbolic history of color, they have paid comparatively little attention to the ways in which circulation and transfer influence the coloration of artifacts, as well as to the role of color—particularly modes of reproduction, whether in black and white or color—in shaping the circulation of artworks, their reception, and the transmission of artistic practices and styles.

Shaped by the passage of time, the chemistry of materials, spatial circulation, transmediality, and

the diversity of perceptual and cultural traditions, color is far from stable—and even less so when images of objects and artworks circulate across time, space, cultures, and media. Color is therefore not merely a material or symbolic property: it functions as an agent of transmission, transformation, and at times erasure across geographies, temporalities, cultures, and media. To think about color within cultural, spatial, temporal and intermedial circulations is to broaden the inquiry to encompass the epistemology of reproduced images, their technical regimes, and their historical effects.

This conference invites proposals that may address, but are not limited to, the following themes:

- Cultural Codes and Varied Perceptions: Color as a Site of Misunderstanding or Intercultural and Intergenerational Translation

This theme explores symbolic, affective, and perceptual differences in the experience of color across cultures and generations, and the consequences of these differences for global and intergenerational visual communication.

- Chromatic Resistance: Critical, Activist, and Decolonial Uses of Color in Contemporary Creation in a Globalized Context

Contributions may focus on artists, designers, or collectives in a globalized world who challenge normative desaturation, reclaim alternative palettes, or reintegrate color into localized or political narratives

- Color Reproduction Techniques and their Impacts on the Circulation of Artworks, Styles, and Artistic Careers

A historical and critical analysis of how reproduction techniques (engraving, photography, print, cinema...) - and notably black and white reproduction - have influenced aesthetic reception, canon formation, or formal innovation in the visual arts.

- Color, Homogenization, and Visual Standardization in the Age of Globalization

Reflections on globalized palettes, the widespread desaturation of images, and the political, cultural, and economic implications of so-called “neutral” or universal aesthetics.

- From Pigment to Pixel: Transmedial Circulations and the Transformation of Color Perception

Studies of how color changes across media—from painting to photography, film, and digital formats—and the impact of these transformations on the visual regimes and interpretations of objects across different cultural contexts.

The conference is organized by the Digital Humanities Chair at the University of Geneva, as part of the FNS Visual Contagions project directed by Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel. The event will be hosted by the Museum of Art and History of Geneva at GAMMAH (Promenade du Pin 5, 1204 Geneva) and the University of Geneva. It will be paired with a private visit to the museum’s restoration workshops.

Proposals for the conference should be submitted as a PDF document by September 5, 2025 and should include a title, an abstract of up to 250-400 words and a 200-word biography, all in English, in the same document. Submissions should be sent to Ms. Angela Allemmand (angela.allemmand@etu.unige.ch), within one single document titled as follows: LASTNAME_Firstname_ShortTitle.pdf.

References :

- Ball, Philip. *Bright Earth: Art and the Invention of Color*. University of Chicago Press, 2002.
- Finlay, Victoria. *Color: A Natural History of the Palette*. Ballantine Books, 2003.
- Gage, John. *Color and Culture: Practice and Meaning from Antiquity to Abstraction*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.
- Geimer, Peter, *Die Farben der Vergangenheit. Wie Geschichte zu Bildern wird*. C.H. Beck, 2022.
- Guichard, Charlotte – Anne-Solenn Le Hô – Hannah Williams, 'Prussian Blue: Chemistry, Commerce, and Colour in Eighteenth-Century Paris', *Art History*, Volume 46, Issue 1, February 2023, Pages 154–186, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8365.12695>
- Mirzoeff, Nicholas. *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality*. Duke University Press, 2011.
- Pastoureau, Michel. *Bleu, Noir, Vert, Rouge, Blanc, Jaune*. 6 volumes. Paris: Points Editions, 2024.
- Paul, Stella. *Chromaphilia: The Story of Color in Art*. London, New York: Phaidon Press, 2017.
- Wagner, Monika. *Kunstgeschichte in Schwarz-Weiß. Reproduktionstechnik und Methode*, Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2022.

Reference:

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