

Craft Practices around Manufactured Pictures (Paris, 31 Mar–1 Apr 26)

Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, Paris, Mar 31–Apr 1, 2026

Deadline: Sep 30, 2025

Helene Valance

International symposium

Cut Along the Dotted Line: Craft Practices around Manufactured Pictures, XVIIIth-XXIst Centuries

Download the full CFP (English and French) here

<https://sharedocs.huma-num.fr/wl/?id=RV8EpTUMeQsdizUTmQW9Oa5wsFDRewrc>

Organizers: Johanna Daniel, Université Lyon 2, Hélène Valance, INHA - InVisu

Paris, Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art

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Cut, folded, pierced, embroidered, glued: a material as fragile as it is ubiquitous, paper is a medium allowing for the expression of multiple skills. These manipulations free the printed image from flatness, while enhancing its materiality. From the plane surfaces of the “constructions” plates marketed by the Pellerin printing house in Epinal at the end of the XIXth century, for instance, emerged three-dimensional models of airplanes, of Noah's Ark, or of the Eiffel Tower, bringing a whole world to life. Shadow and transparency effects used in miniature theaters, paper folding, coloring, or collage activities : all these manipulations multiply the potential of paper as a material and, at the same time, of the image. These pictures are not simply produced as images to be contemplated, but they require their audiences to actively engage in the realization of their full potential.

This symposium will focus on the triangular relationship between image, paper, and manipulation. It will consider pictures manufactured and designed to be handled, constructed, and augmented by their audiences. It will also examine amateur craft practices based on serially or mass-produced pictures, whether or not these are meant for such practices (such as ephemeras turned into scrapbooks, hand-colored prints, or embroidered religious images and postcards).

Although these images and techniques are widespread (Hans Christian Andersen, for example, left a large collection of amateur cut-outs), they have only been the subject of occasional academic research. Art and material culture historians have mostly focused on the works of renowned artists, such as Max Ernst or Pierre Alechinsky. A few recent studies have addressed anonymous works, particularly collage and scrapbooking (Garvey 2012, Sebayashi 2016, Elliott, Gowrley, and Etga 2019, Gowrley 2024). Paper as a material has received a renewed attention (Laroque and Lee 2016, Laroque and Pierrard 2020, De Mayer, Kaminska, and Thibault 2024). However, gestures surrounding pictures have so far been relatively rarely taken into consideration (Kisiel 2021-23).

This conference will explore the practices developed around a variety of pictures produced in

series or on a massive scale, from the XVIIIth to the XXIst centuries. From backlit optical views marketed in Europe in the 1760s to the cutting, folding, and coloring activities circulated in children's magazines today, via religious imagery and advertising materials, we will examine the interactions between paper and other materials (fabric, cardboard, wood), tools (scissors, needles, punches), as well as the physical environment (light, wind, fire). What does the materiality of paper do to the image? We will question the gestures and know-how involved in the production of these works, examining how these techniques were and are acquired and transmitted (school, home), as well as the expectations regarding the users' skills. The conference will analyze the constraints and negotiations imposed by the articulation between mass- or serially-produced pictures, and individual practices. What forms and spaces of autonomy are allowed by these manipulations? What gestures, artistic and social practices, and uses of images are visible here? It will consider the techniques and networks of production and commercialization of these printed images in the general landscape of picture-making: what cultural, ideological, and economic networks are at play here?

Proposals may address one or several of the following questions, without being limited to these suggestions:

Designing printed images to be manipulated

Prints such as cutouts, fashion engravings, or optical views began to be produced specifically to be cut out, glued, and augmented with different materials in the late XVIIth century. With the industrialization of imagery in the XIXth century, this type of production expanded dramatically. How did and do the designers of these images anticipate the future interventions of consumers in their creative process? How does this impact the way they drew and engraved? Do these images allow for free, autonomous uses? From XIXth century scrap sheets to contemporary youth magazines, who are the designers of paper models? What specific skills do they demonstrate?

Feasibility and technical skill

Although small and large constructions from the Pellerin house in Epinal were inexpensive, they were far from being within everyone's reach: they required a great deal of skill, and their production relied on the acquisition of advanced manual competences. How was the expertise surrounding these images passed on? What theories of education or domestic economy accompany them? How have they evolved since the XVIIIth century? How much individual creativity is involved, and conversely, what constraints are imposed by models and instructions?

Circulation and social interactions

Paper crafts are remarkably mobile, crossing socio-cultural and geographical boundaries—and even temporal ones, despite their often ephemeral nature. We will focus on the joint circulation of images and practices related to paper: Who are the actors of these production and circulation networks? What is their general economic environment? Which images circulate in which formats? Which specific audiences do these images address, and are they diverted for other uses? What types of social relationships developed around these practices?

Conservation, transmission, and digitization of images to be manipulated.

Considered as popular productions and classified as ephemera, pictures designed to be manipulated have been imperfectly preserved, because they have been of less interest to fine arts institutions than to collectors. However, there are important collections (the Musée de l'Image in Épinal, the dépôt légal at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, the Papier Museum in Düren) which pose

specific problems of inventory, cataloguing, and public outreach around these collections. We are particularly interested in the challenges of collecting “manipulated” objects alongside printing plates that have not been altered in any way. We would like to interrogate public outreach activities around these productions (print reissuing, pedagogical workshops, contemporary creation). We also invite proposals for papers on digitization issues, which may especially question the relationship between flat images and volume.

This is an international interdisciplinary symposium. We welcome contributions from various fields (art history, education sciences, design, material and cultural history, communication sciences, or literature) and areas of specialization (with no regional restriction, from the XVIIIth century to the present day). The call is also open to curators and conservators, collectors, contemporary creators, publishers and professional users.

Proposals may take several forms:

- Individual 20-minute presentations
- Practical workshops
- Interview or panel discussions.

Proposals, written in French or English and under 450 words, must be submitted by September 30, 2025. They should be accompanied by a brief bio-bibliographical note and sent to the following email addresses:

helene.valance@inha.fr

johanna.p.daniel@gmail.com

Scientific committee

Manuel Charpy, Laboratoire InVisu, CNRS

Pauline Chevalier, Université de Tours

Ariane Fennetaux, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris 3

Marine Kisiel, Palais Galliera

Séverine Montigny, Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris

Aurélié Petiot, Université Paris Nanterre

Reference:

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(accessed Sep 21, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/50467>>.