The History of Emotions Seen Through Visual Culture

Deadline: Mar 30, 2026

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Call for contributions for the collective book: "The History of Emotions Seen Through Visual Culture".

Today, emotions are present in every aspect of daily life: think of how joy, sadness, loneliness, and compassion, to name just a few, are emotional axes that underpin the experiences of the 21st century. This premise not only marks the contemporary, but also colours all cultural production created throughout time. To speak of a history of emotions linked to visual culture is to understand that images not only shape or produce emotions and feelings in a viewer, but also act as an active instrument that represents them. See how paintings, engravings, sculptures, films, and digital images themselves participate in the configuration of an emotional language, illustrating what should be felt, how it should be done, and how it is expressed. From this framework, the image must be understood as a located affective element, that is, its emotionality is linked to specific practices, modes of circulation, and reception that mark the entire history. Thus, proposing an examination of visual culture from the history of emotions allows us to establish a dialogue focused on tracing how all these feelings are translated through gestures, attitudes, poses, in short, any visual message, and how these, in turn, operate in processes of power, identity, memory and individual or collective experience.

The aim of this collective volume (book) is to explore how emotions are produced, questioned, circulated and perpetuated through visual practices in any historical context. This volume is intended to form a dialogue between the history of emotions and visual culture.

The suggested thematic areas are as follows – they are not exclusive:

1. Iconography of feeling: gestures, expressions, bodies, pain, grief, fear, desire, shame, pride, tenderness, etc. All those emotions that can be gleaned from the iconographic and iconological study of a work.
2. Emotions and the politics of images: propaganda, iconoclasm, censorship, mobilisation, memory.
3. Tactics of reception: gaze, empathy, identification, and interpretive communities.
4. The materiality of affections: image objects, relics, and transmission in museums.
5. Technologies of affections: visual technologies and affections: photography, cinema, TV, social networks, AI, digital archives.

Focus of the volume:

This volume seeks relevant chapters that deal with specific and broad visual corpora (painting, engraving, illustrated press, photography, cinema, memes, video games, family archives, museography, etc.), open to any period. The interest lies in proposing an argument focused not only on representations, but also on how they were used, circulated or in which practices they were inscribed.

Languages:
Proposals are accepted in Spanish and English.

Submission of proposals:
- Title of the proposal
- Abstract: 300–400 words.
- Brief CV: 100–150 words.
- 5 keywords.

Please submit to: emocionesyculturavisual@hotmail.com
Subject: "CFP – Emotions and visual culture – Surname"

Proposed schedule:
- Abstract deadline: April 30, 2026
- Notification of acceptance: May 15, 2026
- Delivery of complete chapters: September 30, 2026 -extendable-

Reference:
CFP: The History of Emotions Seen Through Visual Culture. In: ArtHist.net, Feb 21, 2026 (accessed Oct 30, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/51741>.