Travel Drawing. Islands in Travel Writing (Split, 12–14 Nov 26)

Split City Museum, Split, Croatia, Nov 12–14, 2026
Deadline: Jul 1, 2026

Ana Šverko, Institute of Art History

The Institute of Art History – Cvito Fisković Centre in Split invites you to participate in an international scholarly conference organised as part of a week of events in research and scholarship.

DISCOVERING DALMATIA XII:
Travel Drawing / Islands in Travel Writing.

Travel writing offers a particularly valuable framework for examining how the experience of moving through space is recorded, mediated, and interpreted across different media. Visual language occupies a special place in this context, present in travel writing in various forms, from drawing and printmaking to photography. While travel photography has long been recognised as an autonomous medium with a well-established position in the study of travel and visual culture, drawing, despite its long and continuous presence, has yet to be clearly defined as a distinct category.

Instead, it is most often subsumed under the broader concept of illustration, which obscures its specific possibilities as a medium capable of directly conveying the experience of observing, moving through, and dwelling in space. Taking up this observation as a starting point, this year's conference raises the question of travel drawing as an autonomous category, one which has yet to be theorised sufficiently.

At the centre of our inquiry is the premise that the visual language of drawing can independently articulate the experience of travel – just as photography does – without necessarily relying on textual description. This approach does not deny the importance of the image-text relationship in travel writing, including questions of the image's status within the text and its diachronic and dialogic relations, but seeks to expand the field of inquiry and open up a space for considering drawing as an equally valuable medium for expressing travel experiences. In this sense, travel writing offers a particularly productive framework for examining the historical shift in visual representations of space, from drawing to photography.

Alongside this theme, the conference also focuses on the island as a phenomenon in travel narratives. Islands appear in the travel writing tradition as specific spaces of isolation, transition, and the projection of meaning; spaces that simultaneously function as geographical realities and cultural constructions. Dalmatia, with its distinctly articulated island landscape, thus holds a prominent place in the European cultural imagination. Analysing how islands have been described and inter-

preted through travel writing raises questions about the relationship between space, identity, and perception, as well as the role of travel writing discourse in shaping cultural representations.

Papers may be approached from a theoretical or methodological perspective, as well as through concrete examples and case studies.

Key Questions
- Can travel drawing be established as an autonomous and analytically relevant category within the culture of travel writing?
- How does travel writing shape and transmit representations of islands, particularly in the context of the Dalmatian region?

Thematic Sections

1. Travel Drawing
This section focuses on a theoretical and methodological reconsideration of travel drawing as a possible autonomous category within travel writing and visual culture. The aim is to open a discussion about its status, boundaries, and interpretive potential.
Possible research questions include:
- Can travel drawing be defined as a distinct category, and according to what criteria?
- How does it differ from illustration, landscape drawing, or documentary records?
- To what extent can the visual language of drawing independently convey the experience of travel?
- How do the documentary, aesthetic, and subjective dimensions intertwine within it?
- Can one speak of a specific poetics of travel drawing?
- How does its role change in relation to the development of photography and contemporary visual media?

2. Islands in Travel Writing
This section focuses on the analysis of island spaces as an important motif and concept within the travel writing genre, considering the island as a category that, in the travel writing tradition, exceeds mere geographical definition.
Possible research questions include:
- How are islands constructed in travel writing – as isolated, peripheral, authentic, or imaginary spaces?
- How is the relationship between the island and mainland formed?
- In what ways do islands become sites for the projection of otherness, nostalgia, or refuge?
- How are everyday life and social relations on islands depicted in travel writing?
- How does travel writing participate in shaping representations of the Dalmatian islands over time?
- How does travel writing address movement towards the island (sailing, arrival, distance)?
- Can one speak of a specific poetics of island travel writing?

Although these two thematic sections are conceived as separate, papers that connect them are also encouraged, particularly in the context of the visual recording of island spaces.

The conference aims to bring together scholars from a range of disciplines – history, art and archi-

tectural history, literature, visual culture, ethnology, anthropology, and media studies – to collectively reflect on the spatial and medium-related dimensions of the travel writing genre and contribute to its further theoretical development.

Submissions
Abstracts (up to 250 words) accompanied by a short biographical note in English should be submitted in PDF format to: discoveringdalmatia@gmail.com
Submission deadline: 1 July 2026

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)
Mateo Bratanić (University of Zadar, Department of History)
Katrina O'Loughlin (Brunel University London)
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Elke Katharina Wittich (Leibniz Universität Hannover)
Sanja Žaja Vrbica (University of Dubrovnik, Arts and Restoration Department)

Organizing Committee
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Key Dates
- Submission deadline: 1 July 2026
- Notification of acceptance: 15 July 2026
- Conference dates: 12–14 November 2026

Important Information
- The organisers will host a reception on the evening of 11 November and a closing event on 14 November; coffee and refreshments will be provided during breaks.
- There is no conference fee.
- The organisers do not cover travel or accommodation costs.
- The organisers can assist participants with finding reasonably-priced accommodation in the historical city centre.
- The official language of the conference is English.
- Presentations should be 20 minutes in length.
- Papers will be organised into themed sessions; each session will conclude with a discussion.
- Selected papers will be considered for publication in a peer-reviewed volume.

Reference:
CFP: Travel Drawing. Islands in Travel Writing (Split, 12-14 Nov 26). In: ArtHist.net, Apr 30, 2026 (accessed Nov 12, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/52350>.