Perspective, no. 2027 – 2: Looking queerly

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Looking Queerly
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This call for papers invites contributions from across the field that engage queer in its multiple dimensions: as a term rooted in histories of sexuality and gender; as a reclaimed and politicized identity; and as a verb – a critical practice that unsettles, reorients, and reimagines art history itself. What does it mean to queer art history today?

Over the last several decades, queer has emerged as one of the most generative, contested, and transformative terms in the humanities. Within art history, queer theory has challenged normative assumptions about identity, desire, authorship, temporality, and visual meaning, all the while exposing the discipline's investments in heterosexuality, gender binaries, and teleological narratives of style and progress.
This issue seeks to highlight the diverse forms, aims, and methods of queer art histories today. How is "queer" a useful mode of analysis for art historians, and how might it unsettle binaries, hierarchies, and disciplinary conventions, including the very ways that art history is written? We welcome contributions across historical periods and geographical contexts: what might it mean to queer ancient Egyptian paintings, a Mesoamerican codex, or eighteenth-century chinoiserie, for instance?
Queer can also be understood expansively and need not be limited to works explicitly addressing sexuality or gender. Indeed, we are especially interested in contributions that mobilize queer theory to rethink objects and archives not typically understood as queer. To read the history of art queerly, as this issue seeks to do, is not simply to trace the emergence of queer art since the late nineteenth century; it is to question the discipline at its core and to re-examine all images with renewed attention.
We also encourage submissions that address the tensions, limits, and exclusions within queer theory itself, including its intersections with race, colonialism, disability, class, and trans and nonbinary studies. Rather than treat "queer art history" as singular and settled, we are interested in papers that actively grapple with the historiography of queer within our discipline as well as what it means to queer art history today.

Historiographical Context

Emerging in the late twentieth century and in dialogue with feminist theory, lesbian and gay studies, and critical theory, queer thought challenged the stability of identity categories and underscored the social construction of sexuality and gender. Foundational works by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Judith Butler introduced theoretical tools that continue to inform scholarship across the humanities (BUTLER, 1990, 1993; SEDGWICK, [1990] 2008). Unlike identity-based categories that seek stability, coherence, or recognition, queer often operates through refusal: it troubles linear histories, rigid identifications, and disciplinary boundaries. But even in its early history, queer was never monolithic and could vary in meaning from one theorist to the next, leading at times to criticism that the term was too capacious. What has this plurality of thought meant for those wishing to practice a "queer art history"? Its early practitioners sought to reconsider normative assumptions about gender, sexuality, embodiment, and historical narrative, as well as the traditions that shaped the field.

In practice, this shift had profound consequences. Early "gay and lesbian art history" focused on recovering overlooked artists, iconographies, and subcultures. While this recuperative work remains crucial, queer theory expanded the field beyond questions of visibility and representation to interrogate the epistemological foundations of art history itself, including its periodizations, methods, and assumptions about spectatorship and normativity. Activism around the AIDS crisis and the critical work on museum and exhibition practices further demonstrated how visual culture, politics, and institutional structures are intertwined. The writings and curatorial work of Douglas Crimp showed how visual culture could be analyzed through the lenses of sexuality, politics, and identity, helping to shape a critical discourse attentive to both cultural production and its institutional frameworks (CRIMP, 2002). Building on these foundations, scholars such as Jonathan D. Katz contributed to articulating queer art history as a field of inquiry (KATZ, 2016), while Amelia Jones advanced key debates on embodiment, performativity, and identity in modern and contemporary art (JONES, 2012, 2014). These approaches extended to other subfields, too, including histories of pre-modern art; medieval art historian Michael Camille, for instance, penned bold new readings of famed works of art like the Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry that considered the manuscript's iconography in relation to the sexuality of the manuscript's patron, Jean de France, duc de Berry (CAMILLE, 2001).

Since the early 2000s, queer approaches in art history have also sought to move beyond inherited binaries – male / female, gay / straight, center / margin, human / nonhuman. In the field of Japanese Art History, for instance, the exhibition "A Third Gender: Beautiful Youths in Japanese Edo-period Prints and Paintings (1600-1868)" (Toronto, Royal Ontario Museum, May 7 – Nov. 27, 2016) focused on early modern representation of wakashu, or adolescents who were assigned male at birth but who presented as female (MOSTOW, ASATO, 2016). In a similar vein, Clovis Maillet's and Leah DeVun's work on the representation of animals in bestiaries has shed light on the ways that human and animal categories were deeply entangled, often to prejudicial ends (DEVUN, 2021; MAILLET, 2020). Scholarship has also challenged the hierarchies that have historically organized art historical writing, including those related to medium, geography, coloniality, race, class, and ability. Although not necessarily described by their authors as queer, books like Iris Moon's Melancholy Wedgwood (2024) or Hélène Giannecchini's An Army of Lovers Cannot Fail ([2024] 2026) offer new and at times deeply personalized modes of art historical writing that engage questions of ability, race, and kinship across time. Queer interventions can also resonate with decolonial perspectives that critique Eurocentric narratives and colonial epistemologies, as in the case of Gayatri Gopinath's Unruly Visions (GOPINATH, 2018). In this sense, queering art history involves not

only the study of sexuality and gender but also the transformation of the analytical, historiographic, and narrative frameworks through which art is understood.
As this brief synopsis makes clear, queer can mean so much – indeed, for some critics, too much – and thus we invite contributors to be explicit about how they understand the term in relation to historical and historiographical precedent. We hope this issue of Perspective will invite critical re-thinking of our discipline's own engagement and/or disavowal of "queer" and engage at least one of the following topics:

1. Queering the Canon
Queering art history can, at its most basic, involve re-reading works that have been central to the establishment of the so-called canon of our field. These may include artworks or the writings of prominent art historians and theorists whose work has played a key role in the establishment of our discipline. Queering the canon might involve the inclusion of new archival materials, as in the case of Jennifer Sichel's important work on Andy Warhol (SICHEL, 2018); or it could mean looking more closely at already known sources – such as the writings of Johann Joachim Wincklemann – and attending to the ways he describes the beauty of Greek sculpture in his History of Ancient Art (1764), as art historian Whitney Davis has done (DAVIS, 2010).
Authors might also consider how queer methods can open up our field, namely by making way for new objects and media that have been historically overlooked. We additionally encourage submissions that explore our discipline's (dis)engagement with alternative genealogies, nonlinear or interrupted temporalities, and other methodological possibilities that emerge when reading archives and the discipline's historiography against the grain. What promise do these alternative narratives hold for the future of our discipline?

2. Visual Histories of Gender, Sex, and Sexualities
This area foregrounds histories of sexuality and gender in visual culture, including trans, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming perspectives. Papers might interrogate what methods we use to talk about sexual inclinations, acts, and orientations in the past. When are modern terms useful, and when does such anachronism become harmful? And what are the ethical and political stakes of choosing particular words to describe people of the past? Authors might also consider how artists visually construct gender, how we discuss gender in the past (e.g., when even the most basic terms – like "woman" or "man" – are historically and culturally unstable concepts), and the ways our discipline has been quick to assign a sexed or gendered identity to art historical subjects, a topic taken up by David Getsy in "How to Teach Manet's Olympia After Transgender Art History" (GETSY, 2022).
This section also invites contributions on the history of censorship in art history, including images considered homoerotic, "obscene," or references to such works in the archives. It also invites consideration of ongoing and subtler forms of censorship, including the omission of biographical details of an artist's life, such as Rosa Bonheur, whose "lesbian-like" relationships (to use Judith Bennett's powerful term) are frequently left out of institutional narratives of her life and work. Papers might relatedly take up the politics of visibility, and the ways that art historians have been complicit – or not – in making certain relationships, feelings, and people (in)visible.

3. Spaces of Queer Art History and Queer's Limits
The third and final theme invites reflection on the ways queer art histories have been historically practiced within and beyond institutions central to the field, including the university and the muse-

um. Contributions might consider the history of the spaces of queer art history (e.g., Jeb's The Dyke Show, Hortense Belhôte's TV show Merci de ne pas Toucher, or the newly formed collective, Cultures et Images lesbiennes), the various ways that it has (or has not) become institutionalized, and how museums have shaped queer art history. Submissions might consider the history of specifically LGBTQIA+ arts institutions, such as the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art in New York, temporary exhibitions like "Over the Rainbow" at the Centre Pompidou (Paris, June 28 – Nov. 13, 2023), the question of how art institutions address an artist's change of name or pronoun in their signage and databases, or new interpretive pathways within a museum's permanent collection galleries (e.g., The Bode Museum's integrated exhibition series "The Second Glance"). Papers could also explore the institutionalization of queer art histories in the form of research labs, postgraduate programs, seminars, and recruitment at the university level.
This theme also invites reflection on the ways that queer is increasingly paired with other methodologies – ecocritical, trans*, de-colonial, and/or critical disability studies, for instance – and to what end. Where and how do these pairings manifest within art history? While some in the field of trans studies have argued that trans and queer studies must remain separate, others have understood queer's remit in much more expansive terms, namely the subversion of all categories. Papers in this area might address how such debates and perspectives have shaped art history and what might be gained and lost when we keep these methodological approaches distinct in our field. They could also ask how expansive queer can become without losing its specificity (or if even such a specificity exists). Finally, we welcome papers that consider differences across subfields in the ways art historians define or use queer methods.
We therefore welcome proposals that illuminate the contributions of queer theory to art history, whether through the study of historical or contemporary figures, better- or lesser-known artists, artistic movements or currents within the discipline of art history. Proposals should align with the journal's editorial orientation, which privileges reflexive, critical, methodological, and historiographical approaches. In short, we seek proposals that fall within the following three areas:

1. Queering the canon: the analytical engagement with major artists and art historians using the tools of queer critique, as well as the opening up toward more marginalized figures and minority narratives.

2. Visual histories of gender, sex, and sexuality: how queer approaches allow for a deconstruction of the cisheterosexism of art history and foster new ways of considering genders and sexualities.

3. The spaces and limits of queer art history: what constitutes a queer museum? What have been the landmark queer exhibitions? But also, in which countries or cultural contexts have queer images and artists flourished – or been censored? And finally, how far does the queer gaze extend, and what are its epistemological limits?

Perspective : actualité en histoire de l'art
Published by the Institut national d'histoire de l'art (INHA) since 2006, Perspective is a biannual journal which aims to bring out the diversity of current research in art history, highly situated and explicitly aware of its own historicity. It bears witness to the historiographic debates within the field without forgetting to engage with images and works of art themselves, updating their interpretations as well as fostering intra- and inter-disciplinary reflection between art history and other fields of research, the humanities in particular. In so doing, it also puts into action the "law of the

good neighbor” as conceived by Aby Warburg. All geographical areas, periods, and media are welcome.

The journal publishes scholarly texts which offer innovative perspectives on a given theme. Its authors contextualize their arguments; using case studies allows them to interrogate the discipline, its methods, its history, and its limits. Moreover, articles that are proposed to the editorial committee should necessarily include a methodological dimension, provide an epistemological contribution, or offer a significant and original historiographic evaluation. Depending on the subject, the wider bibliographical corpus and the geographical area and time period under consideration, two types of contributions are possible:
- FOCUS: an article based on a specific case that permits the examination of a historiographic, theoretical or methodological question of current interest (3,500-4,000 words / 20,000-25,000 characters);
- WIDE ANGLE: an essay or critical assessment addressing a broader question, an art-historical movement or a methodological or theoretical issue that takes into account recent changes in orientation or approaches on the basis of a selective bibliography (7,000 words / 40,000-45,000 characters, excluding the bibliography).

Please send your proposals (a summary of 200-500 words/ 2,000-3,000 characters, a working title, a short bibliography on the subject and a brief biography) to the editors (revue-perspective@inha.fr). Proposal deadline: June 15, 2026.

Proposals will be examined by the editorial board regardless of language (the translation of articles accepted for publication is handled by Perspective).

The authors of the pre-selected projects will be informed of the editorial board’s decision in July 2026. The full articles must be received by December 1st, 2026. The texts submitted (4,000-7,000 words/25,000-45,000 characters, depending on the format chosen) will be accepted in final form after an anonymous peer-review process.

Reference:
CFP: Perspective, no. 2027 – 2: Looking queerly. In: ArtHist.net, May 11, 2026 (accessed Oct 14, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/52430>.