

SAH-HIG Emerging Scholars Symposium 2026 (online, 25 Sep 26)

Virtual, Sep 25, 2026

Deadline: Jun 10, 2026

Charlotte Rottiers

The Historic Interiors Group (HIG), an Affiliate Group of the Society of Architectural Historians, is seeking proposals for its 6th Annual Emerging Scholars Symposium, *No Fixed Abode: Histories of the Mobile and Itinerant Interior*, on September 25, 2026.

The interior has long been equated with fixity, as the bounded, sheltered, and domesticated space, a stable retreat for the individual against the flux of public life. Yet a significant and underexplored category of interior space has always been designed precisely to move: to carry its occupants across landscapes, routes, and borders while providing functions of comfort, shelter, sociability, intimacy that we associate with domestic life; or to facilitate commerce, scientific enquiry, medical intervention, religious practice, or governmental authority and surveillance. Mobile and itinerant interiors are, in this sense, a limit case for the discipline: spaces that are contained in function but not in location, ephemeral not only in time but in place.

Historians of the interior are well acquainted with temporal ephemerality – the difficulty of capturing spaces continuously transformed by use, reuse, fashion, trends, and the passage of time. Mobile interiors add a geographical dimension to this problem. Upholstered compartments of nineteenth-century railway carriages, folding furniture of military field tents, ocean liner state-rooms, caravans of itinerant and traveling communities, and make-shift spaces for the displaced and houseless people victim to global late-capitalism induced housing and immigration crises and war zones: these spaces resist the research methodologies and archival records on which interior history has traditionally relied. At the same time, they offer a productive vantage point on questions of class, gender, and (inter)cultural encounters. What happens to social hierarchies or domestic spatialities when the interior is lifted from its usual context? Do the structures of settled life, including gendered division of space or the expressions of socio-economic distinction and power structure, reassert themselves in transit, or does mobility temporarily suspend them?

These questions carry renewed urgency in a world where mobility, travel, and tourism have become commodities, and where housing crises, displacement, and precarity make the relationship between domesticity and stability increasingly fraught.

This symposium invites emerging scholars to bring mobile and itinerant interiors into focus as objects of historical inquiry in their own right. Papers might address the full spectrum of mobility from the luxury custom-made presidential train, the commercial cruise liner to the makeshift missionary station and the mobilhome, to the encampments and ad-hoc shelters necessitated by

housing crises. Scholars are encouraged to interrogate the specific methodological challenges these spaces pose. What roles do trade catalogues, passenger diaries, engineering drawings, film, or oral history play in recovering interiors whose very nature resists conventional documentation?

Topics might include, but are not limited to:

- Vehicle interiors designed for domestic or quasi-domestic use (railway carriages, ocean liners, airships, aircraft, coaches, campervans, caravans)
- Temporary and itinerant interiors (field hospitals and military tents, expedition quarters, missionary stations, fairground and circus interiors)
- The relationship between networks, routes, and interior design: how do the geographies and logics of mobility shape spatial and material choices?
- Portability, adaptability, and make-shift materiality
- Social hierarchies in transit: the reproduction or temporary suspension of class, gender, and racial spatial orders
- The mobile interior as a site of (inter)cultural and (trans)national encounters
- Archival and methodological approaches to the study of mobile and itinerant interiors

Graduate students, PhD candidates, and early-career postdocs from diverse disciplinary fields are invited to submit proposals for 20-minute presentations. Submissions addressing any time period or geographical area are welcome; interdisciplinary approaches are especially encouraged. Please send an abstract of no more than 500 words and a 2-page CV by June 10th to sahhigessymposium@gmail.com. Questions to the HIG Emerging Scholars Committee can be addressed to Charlotte Rottiers through the same email address.

All submissions will be reviewed anonymously by the members of the HIG Emerging Scholars Committee. Acceptance mails are scheduled for mid-July.

Reference:

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