

Asymmetrical Views (Prague, 26–27 Nov 26)

Academic Conference Center (Institute of Art History, CAS), Husova 4, Prague, Czech Republic, Nov 26–27, 2026

Deadline: Jun 30, 2026

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Workshop: Asymmetrical Views: Art Exhibitions of the 19th Century Revisited.

Organizer: Institute of Art History, CAS, Prague.

The 19th century saw the rise and transformation of the art exhibition into a powerful modern visual medium. Analysing the structures, display strategies, and political framing of exhibitions during the last decennia has led to demonstrating how exhibitions increasingly responded to the growing social importance of visual experience and became tools for articulating varied – most often nationalised – narratives.

In the course of the 19th century, the format of the exhibition acquired communicative force: as a visual medium, it could employ the persuasive power of images to shape collective cultural and political imaginaries. While critical research on exhibiting has since the 1990s concentrated on documentation and interpretation of major exhibitionary events, some hitherto marginalized aspects have been addressed only recently. Research on exhibitions has shown that while supporting cultural hierarchies, these events caused different groups to be marginalized and othered.

What is the relation between elite environment of the official or academic exhibition and the wider popular culture of picture going? What narratives were marginalized in the shade of the Great Exhibitions of the 19th century? What marginalizations were born at the intersection of professional art as a male activity, and exhibiting as making art public? How did the concept of the artwork define the art exhibition?

The workshop is being organized in connection with research projects of IAH Prague on modern exhibiting, namely Spaces, Objects, Authors: Building a Cultural Public in the Czech Lands 1790–1918

(<https://www.udu.cas.cz/en/projekty-a-granty/prostory-objekty-autori-a-kuratori-budovani-kulturni-verejnosti-v-ceskych-zemich-1790-1918>) and the database Art Exhibitions in the Czech Lands 1820–1950 (<https://databazevystav.udu.cas.cz/en>).

We will focus on:

- 1/ the exhibition format as a catalyst for the emergence of art publics and public space in the 19th century, and in particular the role of exhibitions in creating, consolidating, and disrupting the canon; the asymmetry in the status of exhibition participants in the 19th century; asymmetries in the formation of public space as inclusive for/exclusive of various communities
- 2/ transnational dimensions of exhibition-making (traveling exhibitions, international networks,

critics' perspectives across borders, the question of the comprehensibility of specific visual narratives in a transnational context)

3/ curatorship in the 19th century – curatorship as an emerging role, profession, and agency

4/ possibilities and perspectives of comparative research on exhibitions today (possibly in the form of a round table discussion)

We welcome submissions for papers of 250 words, together with a brief author biography and details of institutional affiliation.

Please address your submissions to: machalikova@udu.cas.cz by 30 June 2026.

Reference:

CFP: Asymmetrical Views (Prague, 26-27 Nov 26). In: ArtHist.net, May 27, 2026 (accessed May 27, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/52573>>.