Visual Practices in Archaeology (online/Fairfield, 15–16 Oct 26)

Online / Dogwood Room, Barone Campus Centre, Fairfield University, Connecticut, Oct 15–16, 2026

Dr Peter A. Thompson, Oxford

Aesthetics, Objectivity, and Interpretation in Archaeological Visual Practices

This one-day interdisciplinary symposium, organized in conjunction with the Fairfield University Art Museum exhibition James Welling: Cento (Walsh Gallery), brings together scholars whose work examines the visual construction of antiquity through archaeology, art history, photography, and digital reconstruction. Inspired by Welling's meditation on fragments, reproductions, and the afterlives of classical objects, the symposium asks how supposedly objective visualizations of the ancient world are themselves shaped through selection, mediation, and artistic intervention. The symposium is supported by the Fairfield University Art Museum, the Fairfield Humanities Institute, the Fairfield Department of Visual and Performing Arts, and the Fairfield Ancient Mediterranean Studies Program.

Before the symposium, on the evening of Thursday, October 15th (5:30pm EDT), Professor Emerita Katherine A. Schwab will deliver a keynote lecture titled "Altered States? The Shifting Impact of Our Visualizations of Antiquity," as part of the Edwin L. Weisl, Jr. Lectureships in Art History.

To register for free to attend the lecture, click here:
(livestream):
https://www.eventbrite.com/e/livestream-keynote-lecture-with-katherine-a-schwab-phd-tickets-1989599361248?aff=ebdsoporgprofile
(in person):
https://www.eventbrite.com/e/keynote-lecture-the-shifting-impact-of-our-visualizations-of-antiquity-tickets-1989405270718?aff=ebdsoporgprofile
Program of the symposium on October 16th

9:00 – 9:20 Opening Remarks: Andrew Ward, Carey Weber, and Jason Smith

9:20 – 10:40 Panel I: The Power of an Image
9:20 – 9:40 A Dangerous Bibliophilia: Critical Analysis of 19th and early 20th Century Egyptological Publishing Practices (Kathryn Howley, Institute of Fine Arts–New York University)
9:40 – 10:00 Le Jupiter Olympien: Quatremère De Quincy's Grounded Guesses (Alexander Ekserdjian, Yale University)
10:00 – 10:20 Archaeological Drawing in (and out of) Perspective (Samuel Holzman, Princeton University)

10:20 – 10:40 Visualizing the Parthenon Metopes: From Objectivity to Interpretation (Marsha McCoy, Southern Methodist University)

10:40 – 11:00 Coffee Break and Discussion

11:00 – 12:00 Panel II: Between Photography and Archaeology
11:00 – 11:20 The Case of the Painted Tombs at Maresha: Reconstruction, Aesthetic Mediation, and the Illusion of Objectivity (Boaz Zissu, Bar Illan University)
11:20 – 11:40 Aesthetics of Destruction: Archaeology in Ariel Varges' First World War Photography (Peter A. Thompson, University of Oxford)
11:40 – 12:00 Documentation, Seriality, and Teleology in the Work of Socratis Mavrommatis and Nora Okka (Eric Driscoll, MIT)

12:00 – 12:20 Discussion

12:20 – 1:20 Lunch Break
Lunch provided for all attendees and presenters in the Diffley Boardroom, Bellarmine Hall

1:20– 2:00 Panel III: The Archaeological in the Fine Arts
1:20 – 1:40 Hellas: George Hoyningen-Huene's "Semi-Archaeological" Photobook (Sasha Whittaker, Harvard Art Museums)
1:40 – 2:00 Against the Grain of Archaeological Poetics: Fateh al-Moudarres and the Incavation of Land (Ivan Mileković, University of Pennsylvania)

2:00 – 2:20 Coffee Break and Discussion

2:20 – 3:40 Panel IV: Visualizations and the Exhibition Space
2:20 – 2:40 Supplying Supplicants: Modern Restorations of Late Canosan Funerary Vessels (Megan Gatton, Institute of Fine Arts–New York University, and Kerry Joyce, Independent Scholar)
2:40 – 3:00 The Subjective Vision: Archaeology and Sociability on Samothrace (Ellen Archie, Washington and Lee University; Rebecca Salem, Kenyon College; and Bonna Wescoat, Emory University)
3:00 – 3:20 Sardis in Record/Art: A Case Study from the Harvard Art Museum's Galleries (Caitlin Chien Clerkin, Harvard Art Museums)
3:20 – 3:40 What Does 'Real' Look Like? Digital Reconstruction and the Problem of Verisimilitude (Matthew Nicholls, University of Oxford)

3:40 – 4:00 Discussion and Concluding Remarks

To register for free to attend the symposium, click here:
(livestream): https://fairfield.zoom.us/meeting/register/G6XUgiCeQLukegpkvkc-Xg#/registration
(in person): https://www.eventbrite.com/e/symposium-archaeological-visual-practices-tickets-199598976612 1?aff=ebdsoporgprofile

Contact the organizers: award@fairfield.edu / peter.thompson@ashmus.ox.ac.uk

https://www.fairfieldvisual.com

Reference:
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