Translatio Seminar 26/27: The Martyrdom of Images (Paris, 15 Oct 26–13 May 27)

Galerie Colbert, 2 rue Vivienne, Paris IIe, Oct 15, 2026–May 13, 2027

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2026-2027 — The Martyrdom of Images: Bearing Witness, Narrating, Persuading

According to Roland Barthes, every photograph irreducibly attests to a “that-has-been”: something or someone once stood before the lens, left an imprint there, and thus presents itself to view as a trace and, also, as remembrance. The photographic image appears here as the site of a singular form of testimony, at once evidence of a past presence and the survival of that presence in the present of the beholder’s gaze. More broadly, however, what does it mean for an image to bear witness? What do we see when we look at an image as testimony, and what effects and powers does it then possess?

Having previously explored the efficacy of “displaced” images, and subsequently the modalities of believing through and in images, this year the Translatio seminar will turn to the testimonial dimension of images—whether pictorial, photographic, cinematic, parietal, and so forth—approached through the notion of “martyrdom.” Returning to the primary meaning of the Greek term martus, “witness,” the seminar will examine images as agents capable of attesting, narrating, and persuading. Whether they belong to religious, political, historical, or media regimes, images appear as privileged operators in the production of narratives and evidence: they invite us not only to see, but also to believe that an event took place, that an action occurred, that words were spoken, or that a life was lived.

Yet this testimonial power of the image cannot be taken for granted. If an image can serve as evidence, it does so only within apparatuses that, while contributing to the very conditions of its possibility, also shape its legibility and authority. Far from constituting a mere record of reality, the image is embedded within regimes of belief, knowledge, and power that determine what it shows, but also what it conceals and what it leads us to believe. To bear witness, therefore, means not only to attest, but also to construct, orient, influence, and even impose a narrative. Ultimately, the image does not simply point towards a “that-has-been”; it participates in the very production of what, through it, comes to be regarded as a—or the—truth.

The seminar will thus revolve around the dual stakes embodied by the image as “martyr”: the image as witness to an event, a presence, or a history, and the image as an active agent of narration, influence, and persuasion. We will explore the conditions under which images produce conviction, the forms they mobilise in order to attest and narrate, and the social, political, and symbolic uses of their testimonial efficacy. In short, this year’s seminar will present current research on seeing, persuading, and proving through images.

The sessions will take place from October 2026 to May 2027, one Thursday per month, from 6 to 8 p.m., at the Galerie Colbert (6 rue des Petits-Champs / 2 rue Vivienne, 75002 Paris). Admission is free and no registration is required.

Agenda (sessions will be held in French):

15 October 2026, Galerie Colbert, Salle Benjamin. 6–8 p.m.
Pascal Convert (visual artist, author, and filmmaker): Images and/or History/Histories.

26 November 2026, Galerie Colbert, Salle Jullian. 6–8 p.m.
Ada Ackerman (CNRS – UMR THALIM): Counterfactual Images in the Age of Artificial Intelligence.

10 December 2026, Galerie Colbert, Salle Benjamin. 6–8 p.m.
Olivier Belin (Sorbonne Université), Florence Ferran (CY Cergy Paris Université), and Bertrand Tillier (Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne): Illustrated Ephemera: From Indifference to Heritage-Making.

21 January 2027, Galerie Colbert, Salle Benjamin. 6–8 p.m.
Florian Métral (CNRS – Centre André-Chastel): The Public Clock as an Ornament of the City.

4 March 2027, Galerie Colbert, Salle Jullian. 6–8 p.m.
Rémi Labrusse (EHESS – CRAL): Against History: What Do We Expect So-Called “Prehistoric” Images to Bear Witness To?

18 March 2027, Galerie Colbert, Salle Benjamin. 6–8 p.m.
Agnès Devictor (Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne): Mastering the Writing of One’s Own History: Images of War as Testimony.

8 April 2027, Galerie Colbert, Salle Pereisc. 6–8 p.m.
Christian Joschke (Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne): Extinguishing the Fire of Images: On Gerhard Richter’s Cycle 18 October 1977.

29 April 2027, Galerie Colbert, Salle Benjamin. 6–8 p.m.
Sylvie Lindeperg (Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne): “Proof through Images”: Judicial Truth, Historical Truth, Cinematic Truth.

13 May 2027, Galerie Colbert, Salle Benjamin. 6–8 p.m.
Nathan Réra (Université de Poitiers): The Making of Images of the Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda and Their Uses in Creative Processes (Subject to confirmation).

Organizing team: Sébastien Mantegari Bertorelli, Sarra Mezhoud, Anaïs Trevisan

https://imagocv.hypotheses.org/2026-2027-le-martyre-des-images-temoigner-raconter-persuader

Reference:
ANN: Translatio Seminar 26/27: The Martyrdom of Images (Paris, 15 Oct 26-13 May 27). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 17, 2026 (accessed Nov 24, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/54298>.