

Southern Modernisms (Porto, 19–21 Feb 15)

Porto, Portugal, Feb 19–21, 2015

Deadline: Oct 19, 2014

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Southern Modernisms: Critical stances through regional appropriations

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The hegemonic definition of Modernism has been subjected to an intense critical revision process that began several decades ago. This process has contributed to the significant broadening of the modernist canon by challenging its primal essentialist assumptions and formalist interpretations in the fields of both the visual arts and architecture.

This conference aims to further expand this revision, as it seeks to discuss the notion of "Southern Modernisms" by considering the hypothesis that regional appropriations, both in Southern Europe and the Southern hemisphere, entailed important critical stances that have remained unseen or poorly explored by art and architectural historians. In association with the Southern Modernisms research project (FCT – EXPL/CPC-HAT/0191/2013), we want to consider the entrenchment of southern modernisms in popular culture (folk art and vernacular architecture) as anticipating some of the premises of what would later become known as critical regionalism.

It is therefore our purpose to explore a research path that runs parallel to key claims on modernism's intertwinement with bourgeois society and mass culture, by questioning the idea that an aesthetically significant regionalism - one that resists to the colonization of international styles and is supported by critical awareness - occurred only in the field of architecture, and can only be represented as a post-modernist turn.

Submissions are invited that engage with all aspects of the title. Papers might include (but are not limited to):

1. the discussion of current definitions of modernism(s), regionalisms, folk art, vernacular architecture, and those of the tangent notions of avant-garde, tradition, nationalisms, rationalism, popular or mass culture and primitivism;
2. the effects of established dichotomies such as centers vs. peripheries; high art vs. low art (including folk art), etc; as well as the challenges raised by north/south and west/east conceptual divides;
3. the impact of modernist approaches on the history of Modernisms; the hegemony of teleological discourses positing abstraction as the necessary historical outcome for the arts (thus neglecting other ongoing interrogations on the means and possibilities of representation), or as far as architecture is concerned instrumental notions of rationalism;

4. the political implications of the above-mentioned interpretations: the impact of fascism's populism on Southern Europe; the potential of regionalism as resistance; the political implications of validating popular and vernacular modes in the realm of high art, and their relation to the avant-garde militant anti-bourgeois positions; the problems raised by the surveys on folk and vernacular cultures through the lens of modernist visual culture (particularly through the use of photography), etc.

We welcome proposals for 20-minute presentations in English, which should include:

- Title of the proposal
- Applicant's identification (name, institution, country, position and email)
- Abstract (up to 300 words)
- Short curriculum vitae (up to 300 words)

Proposals must be sent in Word (.doc format) by email to southernmodernisms@gmail.com

Reference:

CFP: Southern Modernisms (Porto, 19-21 Feb 15). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 19, 2014 (accessed May 30, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/8431>>.