# Images re-vues no. 13: Images/Surfaces

Deadline: Jul 15, 2015

Bénédicte Duvernay

Call for papers: Images re-vues no. 13 — Images/Surfaces

In the social sciences, we can rightly talk about a “material turn” by which we refer to a renewed interest in recent decades for objects and their material, tangible dimension. Now is a good time to take a detailed look at the consequences this has on the study of images through a multi-disciplinary exploration of what we can learn or relearn about images if we consider their surfaces or mediums. Rather than turning us away from the study of their material existence, the supposed “dematerialization” of images should, on the contrary, encourage us to focus our attention more closely on this area. Indeed, it brings to light — perhaps once again — that images can be defined by their capacity to migrate from one medium to another, one surface to another. We therefore need to conceptualize them at that point of articulation, in their relationship to those surfaces. If, like Hans Belting, we consider images to be the “result of individual and collective symbolization” (An Anthropology of Images, 2014 [2001]), and if in addition we note the variations of substrates or mediums over time and over space, then we need to question the meeting points, the intersections, analyzing both the role the surfaces play in the process of forming and transforming images, and the role images play in the history of their forms and their mediums. A non-exhaustive list of suggested areas of exploration can be found below.

- Meyer Schapiro highlighted so well in his text “On some problems in the semiotics of visual art” (First published in Semiotics 1, 1969, p. 223-42) that the material medium did not arise straightaway as a “field,” and even less as a “foundation,” and a slow anthropological movement was needed for the surfaces we know today to be established. This implies that the relationship people have to image surfaces/mediums can be placed in history and recaptured from an anthropological perspective. How does the study of choice, processing, and shaping of the mediums/surfaces enlighten the interpretation of images for a given culture, time period or type of practice?

- Consider an object as complex as a prehistoric painting as a demonstration of the path travelled from an unqualified surface that is the wall of a cave to conventional medium established later. Judging from the congruence that exists between asperities on the wall and the images that took shape, does that suggest that certain surfaces have served for projection from the dawn of human history? How can we understand the apparent transhistoriocity of this “imaging attitude” that seems to take root in observing the surfaces themselves? How can we understand the figurative suggestion that has stemmed from certain surfaces since prehistoric times?

- The visual/non-visual relationship, which varies—that is what makes it interesting—in time and in space, is another area of exploration. Contrary to what the long-standing myth of “white Greece”

led us to believe, antique marble works were entirely covered with paint. Under what conditions were the surfaces masked or unmasked? In European artistic culture, paintings by Monet or Cézanne or poetry by Mallarmé underwent a small revolution at the end of the nineteenth century, which brought to the surface a canvas that had until then been hidden in the figurative space "between the lines." Can we envision these contemporary events as a whole? Furthermore, wouldn't the specific nature of these artistic transgressions be enhanced if they were connected to other objects and other spaces where the medium, the surface, what was underneath, was uncovered? Take the graphic arts, for example, or the earlier constructivists and Bauhaus, the German Plakatstil that gave the "reserve" a role it had never held before, or even the museum, where in the nineteenth century, paintings were crowded together on the walls, only to give progressively way to a white cube, and to the necessary space between the works that is associated with it, as Brian O'Doherty demonstrated so well (Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space, 2000)?

Articles (95,000 characters [15,800 words] total, including spaces, at most) should be sent before July 15, 2015, to
benedicte.duvernay@ehess.fr and doinaelenacraciun@gmail.com,
along with an abstract in French and in English (10 to 15 lines) and 3 to 5 keywords in French and in English. Proposals will be considered if they are 10000 to 12000 characters (including spaces) (1600 to 2000 words) long and are send before June 1, 2015 (NB: acceptance of a proposal does not preclude having to submit the final article to the scientific committee).

http://imagesrevues.revues.org/

Reference:

CFP: Images re-vues no. 13: Images/Surfaces. In: ArtHist.net, Jan 31, 2015 (accessed Nov 19, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/9380>.