

Art and Invention in the U.S. (Washington, D.C., 3-6 Feb 16)

Washington, DC, Feb 3-06, 2016

Deadline: May 8, 2015

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Call for Papers: Art and Invention in the U.S.

College Art Association Annual Conference, February 3-6, 2016

Washington, DC

A few years after the exhibition of his *Gallery of the Louvre*, painter Samuel F. B. Morse adapted one of his canvas stretchers to create the prototype of a telegraph receiver, literally transforming a tool of his art practice into a medium of technological experimentation and invention. Over the course of the industrializing 19th century, the U.S. government revised and formalized procedures for granting patents and copyright, thereby changing public perceptions about creativity, invention, and intellectual property while creating entirely new careers for artists: patent examiners, model-makers, technical illustrators. Patents proliferated, and inventions were eagerly heralded in the popular press and public demonstrations. The very act of perception was altered by technology as well, via new visual spectacles, environments, and experiences. This session seeks to explore the complex relationships of art and invention in the United States.

Technological developments have profoundly changed all aspects of artistic production, consumption, and display; industrially-produced pigments and supports altered the process and materiality of painting itself, while photography and chromolithography yielded entirely new media, fostering competition and leading to anxieties about the status of art. Furthermore, new technologies such as the telegraph and the steamship-- whose inventors, Samuel Morse and Robert Fulton, were also painters-- allowed for increased transmission of ideas and images around the globe. Innovations such as artificial lighting affected the display of art, and new exhibition formats such as world's fairs and patent museums juxtaposed painting and sculpture with the latest technological developments, from steam engines to X-ray machines. Many of these enterprises were financed by industrialists such as Andrew Carnegie, Henry Clay Frick, Charles Lang Freer, or Henry Marquand, who marketed innovations to global consumers while turning to artists and art institutions via philanthropy for status. Art in turn was used to glorify technological change, as when railroad magnate J.J. Phelps commissioned George Inness's painting *Lackawanna Valley* in 1855.

This session will explore the explosion of inventiveness from art historical perspectives and will consider works of art through the lens of the history of technology. How did new media alter expectations for art and industry? What relationships developed between artists and inventors, and what was at stake in the dialogues between art and invention? How did inventions and patent processes change the look of modernity, and how was American identity shaped by the produc-

tion of art and inventions?

Please send proposals to organizers Ellery Foutch and Helene Valance by May 8, 2015. For more information, please see <http://www.collegeart.org/pdf/2016CallforParticipation.pdf> or contact the organizers: efoutch [at] middlebury.edu; helenevalance [at] gmail.com.

Reference:

CFP: Art and Invention in the U.S. (Washington, D.C., 3-6 Feb 16). In: ArtHist.net, Mar 20, 2015 (accessed Apr 3, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/9789>>.