

## Art and Text

18<sup>th</sup> École de Printemps of the Réseau international de formation en histoire de l'art

Cambridge (UK), 11–15 May 2020

Art history in the twenty-first century has participated in turns toward embodiment, the digital, and the global. Correspondingly there has been greater emphasis on phenomenology, materiality, and translation in studies of art and text. We now concern ourselves not just with questions of iconography, and with the visual and material configurations of art and text, but also with meanings produced by their making, and their place in wider sensory experiences. Analysis of forms and inscriptions across cultures helps us to compare and relativize concepts and categories, and studies of travelling images and objects have shown us that, as things move, material and artistic responses relate in complex and inconsistent ways to language-based forms of interaction.

Digital experiences of pictorial forms and words not only fuel our desire to study objects first-hand, but also affect our ways of thinking about our visual and textual objects of study. On our screens, moving and interactive images are embedded in the bodies of texts; we scroll and swipe, and view windows side by side; and words are read aloud to us as we experience forms visually. Scholarly inquiry into a wider range of past uses of art and text has developed in parallel with these changes in our own viewing and reading practices.

Many twentieth-century approaches—semiotics, structuralism, poststructuralism—spurred art historians to think past iconography toward visual, material, and verbal modes themselves, to the nature of their operations, to their interactions in realms of thought and experience. The idea of a natural relationship between art and text is now not taken for granted. There is as much interest in divergences, tensions, and enigmas—phenomena that resist straightforward modes of interpretation—as there is with matches and resonances. Art historians have developed terms—such as of surface and scape—for analysis of pictorial and formal aspects that stand apart from language.

The École de Printemps, 2020, will be dedicated to reassessing and reimagining art history's investments in art and text. How might we respond to, reactivate, and envision past, current, and future approaches to this fundamental dyad? As scholars from diverse disciplines increasingly contend with visual materials, what do we bring to questions about art and text that is distinctive to art history? Applicants are invited to submit proposals that address one of the following sub-themes (you must indicate which one in your application):

Incantation: Some artworks are the result of a prayer or relayed speech; many experiences of art involve aural sensation. How are invisible texts made present by art or by the voice?

Animation: Many art/text apparatuses need to be flipped, turned around, or otherwise moved to be efficacious or meaningful. How do process and movement relate to aesthetic and social functions?

Gesture: The signature is only one of many possible forms of inscription. A carved *graffito*, for example, has a special tactility and materiality, evoking the presence of a body and its actions through time. What purposes are served by inscriptions as acts?

Labelling: To find and make sense of artworks, we are assisted by labels and metadata. How are the choices made in the textualization of art significant or limiting? How do words relate to frames?

Access: This panel will attend especially to systems of knowledge and questions of difficulty, expertise, and barriers to accessing meaning. Proposals that address intelligibility across cultures and issues of translation are especially welcome.

Materials: Image and text often share a substrate or support which links them with the natural environment, creates its own environment, and produces particular sensual and aesthetic effects. How do properties like weight, texture, solidity, and reflectivity produce or enhance meaning? In what ways are the sources of materials significant?

Retrievability: Things become less intelligible as materials and meaning decay over time. How do these problems inhibit or encourage re-interpretation and remediation? What issues arise in acts of renewal?

Dissonance: Art can resist subordination to or explication with reference to texts. What is it about images that makes them behave differently from texts? How should our methods respond to these considerations?

We welcome proposals on topics from any period from antiquity to the present day.

### **Practical information**

The École brings together doctoral students from eight countries to discuss their thesis research with other students and experienced scholars from the Réseau whose backgrounds and working methods are different from their own. Students will be divided into discussion groups led by members of the Réseau, and will present 15-minute papers to the full group. There will be supplementary activities in Cambridge related to the theme of the École. Participants are expected to attend for the full five days.

### **Application procedure**

Doctoral students who wish to participate should submit a proposal, of no more than 300 words, and a short CV, to [edp2020cambridge@gmail.com](mailto:edp2020cambridge@gmail.com) by **Monday, February 17, 2020**. The proposals may be written in English, French, German, or Italian. Candidates should have proficiency in at least two of these languages, and the CV should contain a section on language abilities. The proposal must indicate which of the eight sub-themes will be addressed by the paper, and include the applicant's e-mail address, institutional affiliation, and place of residence. The proposal and CV should be sent as a single document, with title formatted as follows: 'Proposal\_FirstName\_LastName\_Institution' (e.g. Chloé\_Miron\_UdM). The subject line of your e-mail must contain your name and your country of application (e.g. Chloé Miron Canada). Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application in March 2020. Updates will be published on the website of the Réseau, <https://www.proartibus.org/>.

**N.B.** Successful applicants will be asked to submit their abstract in another of the four official languages of the Réseau in the two weeks following acceptance of their proposal.

### **Organization**

The 18<sup>th</sup> École de Printemps is organized by Andrew Chen (Research Fellow, St John's College, University of Cambridge) in collaboration with Todd Porterfield and Bronwen Wilson (USA), Lucie Grandjean and Ségolène Le Men (France), and Bruno Grimm (Germany). Support is generously provided by St John's College and the Institut national d'histoire de l'art, Paris.