

## **CAA**

### **Call for Participation in Sessions Soliciting Contributors for the 2019 Annual Conference**

**Panels below mention Africa in the abstract**

**250-word abstracts must be sent to panel chairs by August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2018**

#### **Africa, Technology, and Visual Cultures**

Arts Council of the African Studies Association

Chair: Amanda Kay Gilvin - Wellesley College Email: [agilvin@gmail.com](mailto:agilvin@gmail.com)

Artist Fatimah Tuggar has observed, “A hammer and a computer are the same kinds of things. Each is a tool for a specific purpose.” Her insistence on their radical parity points to the ways that ideologies around technology have shaped the production and interpretation of art, especially in cross-cultural encounters. This panel specifically examines the meanings of technology in African art and in depictions of Africa. Many African art technologies, such as looms for hand weaving, are associated with the symbolic import of the finished product. Throughout the past several centuries, misunderstandings concerning technology have been central to European and Euro-American representation of African and African Diasporic arts and cultures. Even as primitivist depictions of Africa denigrated diverse aesthetics and skills from across the continent, the artistic and agricultural technological knowledge of enslaved Africans was often explicitly valued in the antebellum United States. Africa continues to be a site of invention, experimentation, and adaptation in both handmade and digital tools for art-making, often combining expert tradition based artisanry with new media like virtual reality. The recent blockbuster film *Black Panther* builds on a long history of science fiction and Afrofuturist explorations of how real and imagined technologies could be differently racialized. This panel invites papers that analyze how artists of Africa and the African Diaspora have invented, used, and interpreted technology, as well as papers considering depictions of Africa’s relationship to technology.

#### **Art and Materiality in the Age of Global Encounters, 1492-1800**

Chair: Maite Alvarez - J Paul Getty Museum

Chair: Charlene Villaseñor Black

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In a royal decree dated 1564, King Philip II of Spain ordered his viceroys in the Americas to “safely bring to the realms gold, silver and cochineal,” an order that heralded profound changes in the global economy and art world. These materials arrived via Spain’s far-reaching trade networks, which by the 1550s extended to Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, Patagonia, the Yucatan Peninsula, and Chesapeake Bay, as well as throughout mainland Europe. The arrival of ships loaded with rich finds such as indigo, cochineal, brazilwood, silver, pearls, and emeralds into European ports presaged innovative artistic developments. New pigments, types of wood, and other unusual materials such as shells and feathers immediately and forever altered the landscape of European art, giving artists and patrons new and varied material choices. How did these finds, the result of European imperialism, impact global artistic developments? How does attention to materiality change understanding of aesthetics? What are the most useful frameworks for theorizing these developments, exchanges, and networks? While this panel investigates the *prima materia*, the very materiality of objects, it also moves beyond aesthetics to technical processes, trade and global exchange, as well as to the multiple societies where these works were created and collected. We welcome various approaches, from research

inspired by conservation science or archival documentation to decolonial methodologies, material semiotics, Renaissance futurism, or thinking through the anthropocene.

### **Bridging Visual Histories: Sculpture and Photography in the Arts of Africa**

Chair: Giulia Paoletti

Chair: Sandrine G.M. Colard

Chair: Yaelle Biro

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In the literature on the arts of Africa, sculptural traditions and photographic images are most often discussed as two separate fields of enquiry with distinct methodologies, aesthetics, and materialities. However, since the late 1970s, pioneering studies have revealed fruitful connections between these two media and their intertwined histories both in Africa and the West. Research has focused on the visible points of connection between these art forms by investigating the transpositions of sculptural traditions to the photographic image—from Yoruba portraiture and ibeji cults (Sprague 1978, Oguibe 1996) to Akan funerary practices (Wendl 2001). Critical scholarship has also unpacked ways in which photographs by Euro-American modernists have contributed to a lasting aestheticized approach of African sculpture (Grossman 2009, Strother 2013). More recently, orality, given its centrality in African cultures, has become an avenue of research in African photography, mixing physicality with immateriality (Küster and Pacquet eds. 2017). This panel seeks to deepen these important contributions, and expand the inquiry to other analysis bridging the histories of African sculpture and photography. How did photographic images overlap, replace or build onto the aesthetics of sculptural practices, whether earlier or contemporary? Have posing sessions in the photographic studio replicated postures commonly expressed in historical sculptures, or have their performative nature borrowed elements from African arts' long traditions of performance? How relevant are historical forms in the photographic practice of contemporary artists? Lastly, how has the symbiotic relation between these two media contributed to shaping the field and the understanding of these traditions?

### **Ceramics and the Global Turn**

Chair: Meghan Jones, NYS College of Ceramics at Alfred University

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Ubiquitous across world cultures, the medium of ceramics is intrinsically global. Well documented is the movement of ceramic objects, materials, and styles that traversed the Silk Road since its inception over 2000 years ago. For centuries, consumers in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa treasured Chinese porcelain for its beauty, status, and even poison detection. Later, Euro-American art potters found design inspiration in ceramics from a myriad of global sources. Contemporary ceramic art and design discourse is enmeshed in globalization, from individual potters' cultural appropriation of value systems to industrial production outsourcing. At the same time, recent discourses of folk pottery and anachronistic studio pottery have tended to promote localism and insularity. What does the global turn mean for ceramic history and theory? How do interdisciplinary perspectives suggest new models for this medium-specific research? This session will consider ceramics and globalization from the early modern period to the present, focusing on ideologies, production systems, and networks of exchange. The study of the global flows of ceramics— as art, craft, and design—provides vivid access to currents of

culture from the distant past to the present era of mass economic, social, and cultural globalization.

### **Contemporary Chinese Presence in Southern Africa: Agency, Process and Petit Récits**

Chair: Ruth Simbao - Rhodes University, South Africa

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Contemporary relationships between China and Africa are critically important to international economics and politics, and they mark the shrinking of northern socio-economic as well as epistemological dominance. Positioned within the reorientations that are being led and enacted by global south scholars, artists and activists, this panel challenges the broad, top-down and northern-driven discourse of “China-Africa” often espoused in the media, and examines the ways in which artists engage with the radically shifting urbanscapes and socio-economic platforms that China’s relationship with the African continent offers. Contextualized against the backdrop of broader African responses to Chinese presence on the continent, this panel pays particular attention to artists (African and Chinese) creating works in Southern Africa. In what ways can the visual arts shift the economically driven discourse that simplistically positions China as either a “curse” or a “cure”? How can this new area of research in the arts engender a meaningful shift from African and Chinese people being objects of a discourse to being active subjects within a discourse? What small narratives are being told by artists, and how does the texture of these narratives challenge prevalent perceptions and stereotypes? How do these artworks operate within southern epistemologies that position the global south not as a uniform territory, but as a contingent, strategic and at times contradictory happening and place-as-process?

### **Global Missions and Artistic Exchange in the Early Modern World**

Chair: Katherine M McAllen - UTRGV

Chair: Cristina C. González - Oklahoma State University

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The movement of missionaries in the Early Modern world played a key role in the circulation of art objects between (and within) the Americas, Asia, Africa, and Europe. While this session welcomes papers that document the spread of European art within a missionary context, we are also interested in the mission as a spiritual, architectural, and geographical space that allowed for the local interpretation, importation, and production of objects. Missions themselves sometimes became distribution centers in a global world. How did the interaction between European and non-European populations give rise to complex artistic relationships within the mission enterprise, and how can we understand missionary art and architecture both within a colonial and global history of art? Proposals that offer compelling case studies or emphasize unexplored geographies and circuits of exchange are encouraged, as are papers that theorize the study of art-and-mission and engage with the historiography and recent scholarship on the subject. While we especially welcome work on the Spanish and Portuguese empires in the Americas, Africa, and Asia, papers exploring the visual culture of Dutch, French, and British missions will also be considered. Clara Bargellini is a Professor and Senior Research Fellow at the Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas at UNAM in Mexico City. She is a preeminent scholar in the field of colonial Latin American art and mission art history. She has agreed to serve as discussant for this session and include reflections related to the exhibition she curated, *The Arts of the Missions of Northern New Spain, 1600-1821*.

## **Immigration and Inclusion in Art Museums**

Association of Art Museum Curators

Chair: Christa Clarke - Newark Museum

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Art museums in the United States, a nation populated by immigrants who settled on indigenous lands, historically played an important role in building citizenship through the formation of national identity. If art museums in the Progressive Era were geared toward assimilating mostly European immigrants, how do they respond today, with increasing public discourse around issues of immigration and inclusivity? In a moderated discussion linked to another panel session, museum curators focus on immigration in the American art museum, addressing questions such as: How has global immigration influenced permanent collections and exhibition programs? How have tensions between top-down/ bottom-up perspectives been mapped onto spatial and collecting hierarchies in our museums? How might established collections be made to tell new stories or reflect on their incapacity to do so? Can we imagine revising narrative structures in our museums whereby settler colonials are recast as immigrants?

## **Photography, Myth, and Architecture**

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The association between architecture and photography has been fundamental since the invention of the medium: photographs documented far away architecture, new constructions, and urban transformations. In its documentary function, photography transformed the object, distant in time and space, into an ever-present one. On the one hand, to the Western eye, photography unveiled the temples of Angkor, the adobe of Timbuktu, or the monuments of India, tempering their mythic aura. Looking at it through the lens of Honoré de Balzac's suggestive theory, photography possibly "removed the layers" of myth from the photographed object (Nadar, 1900). On the other hand, photography reinforced and even created national myths and revivals through the photographic collections of gothic cathedrals, classic architecture, and new constructions and infrastructures. Myths, in the words of Roland Barthes, hide nothing and flaunt nothing: they distort. In this increasing photographic revelation of the world, circulating through popular and academic platforms, how did photography create, maintain, or destroy the mythic quality of architecture? How, from the mid-nineteenth century to today, did the myth of photography distort the reality and the imaginary of the architectural discourse? The session welcomes papers that engage with the relationship between myth and the photography of architecture, broadly defined. Its principal aim is to explore the instrumental agency of photography in the creation and destruction of myths in architectural representation and to understand how such agency shapes the relations among photography, truth, imagination, and architectural narrative.

## **Renaissance Exchanges**

Chair: Joseph R. Monteyne - University of British Columbia

Chair: Ivana Vranic - University of British Columbia

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Central to the discourse of art history, the concept of the Renaissance as a cultural, European or global movement has been contested, revitalized and expanded in recent decades. Despite being highly fraught, the concept remains in use to demarcate art and visual culture produced both in and outside of Italy between roughly 1300 and 1700. The multiplication of one into many renaissances, or Renaissance into Early Modern, in the second half of the twentieth century was based on the desire to exert cultural difference from values identified with the Italian Renaissance since the eighteenth century. Rather than dismiss these differences, the present panel seeks to explore links between renaissances by investigating ways in which art produced in this period was the result of multiple networks of artistic, economic and cultural exchange that had a global reach. In particular, we invite papers that trace multidirectional movements of ideas, forms and technologies of art-making along with artists, patrons and collectors across Europe, the New World, Africa, and Asia. We encourage papers that reframe renaissance art as a process of exchange by examining for example: • How international trade routes, military campaigns, and missionary work contributed to the production, collection and circulation of visual culture; • Import of new materials, technologies and processes of art making from North to South, East to West, or vice a versa; • Role of print in transmission of motifs, sources and theories of art; • Art produced by travelling artists, patrons and workshops.

### **Rethinking Ethnographic Surrealism**

Chair: Rachel Silveri - University of Florida

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Ethnographic surrealism has long been understood as an alternative strand within surrealist practice. Closely associated with Georges Bataille's DOCUMENTS (1929-30), this dissident surrealism combined an interest in the cultures of Africa and Oceania with the practices of anthropology, fieldwork description, and documentary photography to relativize European culture and hence undermine its supposed normalcy. Spurred by the recent global turn in surrealism studies, the purpose of "Rethinking Ethnographic Surrealism" is twofold. First, this panel will investigate the wide array of ethnographic practices beyond the purview of Bataille's journal, examining instances of surrealist fieldwork by artists throughout Australia, North America, Europe, and the trans-Caribbean. Second, this panel aims to reevaluate the criticality associated with ethnographic surrealism by insisting on its disciplinary ties to colonialism, for, as Aimé Césaire wrote, "it is the West that studies the ethnography of the others, not the others who study the ethnography of the West." With this dual approach in mind, this panel welcomes papers on topics including but not limited to: Len Lye's interest in Maori art and his theorization of the "old brain;" counter-primitivism strategies throughout the Caribbean, in works by Wifredo Lam, René Ménil, Suzanne and Aimé Césaire; Nancy Cunard's edited collection Negro: An Anthology (1934); Wolfgang Paalen's work in Mexico; René Mabile's Haitian Bureau of Ethnology; Kurt Seligmann's studies of the Tsimshian tribe in British Colombia; Michel Leiris and the Mission Dakar-Djibouti; Antonin Artaud's writings on the Tarahumara; Matta and Robert Motherwell's trip to Mexico in 1941; and the self-ethnography of Mass Observation.

### **The Production of Public Space: Women Artists in Performance across the Globe**

Chair: Joanna Matuszak - Bucknell University

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Public spaces have been sites for performances by women artists since the early twentieth century. In the 1960s women avant-garde artists navigated urban spaces, merging art and life.

Since the 1970s, inspired by civil rights, ideas of feminist and queer movements, and critiques of colonialism and globalization, women artists have continued to diversify the ethos and praxis of performance art in urban spaces. Four women speakers will discuss the practice of performance art in public spaces and its future development. What strategies and tactics can women artists use to make their voices heard in the public realm, especially in regions with open or covert censorship? With oppression, war, and genocides—aided by natural disasters—rampant in the Middle East, Africa, and South America, and anti-immigratory isolationist politics growing in Europe and United States, how can women’s performance art speak? What voices do women artists express— universal or local—as they travel to perform in cities around the world? In recent decades public spaces across the globe have seen rising activist movements and demonstrations with the vital presence of women protesters. In this volatile city landscape, what is the role of women’s performance art, and what is its relationship to the growing art form of activism? What visual vocabulary is being developed by women artists performing in streets and in squares? The panel discussion will address conditions of and challenges to women’s performance art practice in public spaces and trajectories of future inquiry.

### **When Home Won’t Let You Stay: Art and Migration in the 21st Century**

Chair: Ruth E. Erickson - Institute of Contemporary Art

Chair: Ellen Tani

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This session considers how contemporary artists and curators have responded to the migration, immigration, and displacement of peoples, and how they have uniquely envisioned the sites and experiences of transit. Throughout history, people have moved around the globe for a variety of reasons—fleeing war, religious persecution, and environmental disaster, or seeking better social and economic circumstances. The twenty-first century continues to witness mass migrations of people from the Middle East, North Africa, and Central America within those regions and to Europe and the United States, which has precipitated several “refugee crises.” This session invites papers that address the varied and complicating roles that artists, curators, and artworks play in negotiating space and identity in migration. Convened during a moment of intense focus on migration—as Tania Bruguera notes, “Immigrants are the subject of the twenty-first century”— it seeks to address a series of questions: What is the nature of representation in artwork about migration? (Does it tell stories? Does it document experiences? Does it imagine futures?) What work can aesthetic practices truly carry out in solving the plight of migrants? How have institutions negotiated their own power in concert with exhibitions about migration? And how have art historians and theorists chronicled this phenomenon, from what T.J. Demos sees as the documentary possibilities of “the migrant image” to Ranajit Guha’s understanding of “the migrant’s time”? By bringing together differing perspectives and case studies from throughout the world, this session interrogates the concept of globalized, twenty-first century transience.