

CALL FOR PAPERS

5th Annual Arts and Medias Symposium of the University of Montreal

[November 16-17, 2017]



The consumed image: excess, limits and transformations

In the introduction to his essay *The Future of the Image* (2007), Jacques Rancière analyzes the contemporary meanings and transformations of images, wondering if “the term ‘image’ [might not] contain several functions whose problematic alignment precisely constitutes the labour of art?”. Faced with the heterogeneity and proliferation of visual forms that cannot be quantified or studied in their totality, the question of “how” becomes imperative: in what ways do we appropriate the images we are looking at? What types of relationships or artistic responses are generated? In the wake of this reflection, the fifth edition of the Arts and Medias Symposium of the University of Montreal invites its participants to question the links between art images and the consumption practices that characterize them in the fields of art history, film and video game studies.

Broadly speaking, consumption of a good or service inevitably leads to its transformation or destruction. However, this is an oversimplification. Today, consumption translates itself in many forms: direct or underlying, conflicting or excessive. This is prominent, for example, in the accumulation of advertisements, extreme cinephilic practices, the reappropriation strategies of video games, or the challenges linked to the archivist and digital devices.

Moreover, the evocation of the word consumption is often linked to the appearance of mass culture in the 1950s and, consequently, to the theorists who studied it, namely those of the Frankfurt School. On the one hand, Walter Benjamin explores the idea that the arrival of new reproductive technologies reduces the aura of works, favoring instead a constant exposure to the serial image. On the other hand, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer focus on the concept of culture industry (*Kulturindustrie*) and on art as a leading actor in emancipation and social movements. Adorno and Horkheimer state that the spirit cannot survive when culture is considered as a good and is destined for consumption.

Consumption, however, does not only apply to objects of mass and popular culture, but also to the social history of art, its various markets and its distribution networks. How should we understand, for example, consumption within a gift economy (Mauss, 1925) or the pre-modern propagation of print culture? If consumption is an integral part of modernity, how should we consider visual consumption before and after this modernity? During this symposium, we want to examine the breaks and continuities of consumer histories in the light of media studies, film studies and art history, in order to determine how they are inseparable from a changing history of the gaze.

In addition to this historiographic study, it is also important for us to discern how rules of consumption govern the social body and what role media play in defining boundaries with respect to visual culture. We therefore wish to investigate the social aspect of consumption to study how consumption operates when it becomes both a system of control and a way to create communities. What social or media discourses are intrinsically linked to the consumption of images? And what are the medial, artistic, and poetic means of staging consumption?

In the early 2000s, the emergence of new digital practices upsets the consumption of art images. While the regulated circulation of works preserved a certain control over them, the new circulation of images facilitates their appropriation outside a legal or commercial framework. At the turn of the 21st century, art,

cinema but also video games and television were imposed as hitherto unseen objects of consumption. They have helped legitimize expressions of popular culture, thus contributing to the renewal and hybridization of cultural forms. “The culture of sharing is a new revenge of the crowds on consumption,” claims André Gunthert (2013). As a result, does the consumer become a producer of works? Will reception be gradually replaced by hijacking? Or do these techniques of reappropriation reveal a new way of receiving art?

Finally, it is necessary to study what postcolonial, feminist and queer studies tell us about the relations between consumption and power. When does looking become a form of consumption? How does the consumer’s gaze engender political power (in landscapes or orientalist art, for example)?

Considering these avenues for reflection around this year’s theme, topics may include, but are not limited to the following:

1) **Consumption practices of images:** theories of the spectator, the reception and the commission of works, regulated art and rules of consumption, copies, cinephilia, bodies altered or modified by art, identity theft and espionage, the repatriation of cultural property, cultural poaching, the future of digital platforms, the development of iconographies.

2) **Overconsumption:** pathologies in art, images of excess, hyperphagia of images, binge watching, superstitious practices, idolatry, spectacle and magic, the carnivalesque.

3) **Waste and refuse:** borderline practices, censorship, mixing of the arts, prohibited, controversial, parasite or indigestible images, disposable art, poor art, superfluous art, art of reuse (recycled images, manipulated or transformed works), the circulation of images (wandering and sharing), mash up, objects out of context, culture jamming.

Graduate students and professors, researchers and museum professionals from all disciplinary backgrounds are invited to submit a paper proposal (approximately 300 words) by Friday, May 26th 2017. To submit your proposal, please fill out the form provided and send it back to colloqueharudem@gmail.com. Please note that there is a possibility for papers to be published in the conference proceedings. If you have any questions about the conference, you can write to us at the address above.

