



University
of Victoria

VIRTUAL VISUAL IMPETUS

THE ART HISTORY AND VISUAL STUDIES GRADUATE CONFERENCE

“Art, Crises and New Possibilities”

January 29-30, 2021

Welcome to Virtual Visual Impetus 2021

The Art History and Visual Studies Graduate Association (AHVSGA) is pleased to welcome you to the 24th annual graduate student conference Visual Impetus (VI). This signature event is a multi-day conference that aims to promote inclusivity and interdisciplinary conversation between academic departments at University of Victoria and beyond. Visual Impetus provides a unique opportunity for graduate candidates and early career researchers to join together and present their ideas to an international audience.

This year we are delighted to introduce a selection of presentations on the theme:

“Art, Crises, and New Possibilities”

As we entered a new decade, the human race was moving forward at a breathtaking pace. The unforeseen COVID-19 pandemic halted this marathon, pausing economic and social activities. The pursuant silence allowed us to hear the voices that had been suppressed underneath the hustle and bustle of 21st century life. The long-muffled protests of underrepresented groups, ecologies and societies became visible. Therefore, this year, the Virtual Visual Impetus conference will focus on ‘Art, Crises and New Possibilities’.

Throughout history, human beings have experienced and continue to face a myriad of crises including conflict, oppression and environmental devastation. This conference aims to revisit those crises in the light of current global conditions, investigating how the practices and perceptions in the arts are altered. In 2021, we invite participants to reflect on the social, economic and ecological crises that the art world faces. How will the consequences of crises continue to resonate in the near and distant future? Can the arts be used as a catalyst for change in difficult times? Some may cause obvious social and cultural disruptions, while others emerge in retrospect and need to be revisited.

On behalf of AHVSGA’s executive board, we would like to thank the Faculty of Fine Arts and the Department of Art History and Visual Studies for their continuing support. We would also like to recognize all those who contributed to Visual Impetus including: the VI committee, volunteers, and our community partners. Lastly, we would like to extend our sincere appreciation to all of the participants and attendees—for the last 24 years, you have made this conference possible.

Azar Mirzaei, Amina Ejaz, Sarah Roberts, Anna O’Meara, *Visual Impetus Co-Chairs*

Acknowledgements

The Committee would like to extend our gratitude to the following individuals and organizations, without whom this event would not be possible:

Dr. Allana Lindgren, Acting Dean of Fine Arts

Dr. Marcus Milwright, Chair, Art History and Visual Studies

Dr. Carolyn Butler Palmer, Associate Professor, Art History and Visual Studies

Dr. Catherine Harding, Associate Chair & Associate Professor, Art History and Visual Studies

Devin Lander, New York State Historian, New York State Museum

Anne-Marie Hayden, Deputy Director, Canadian Museums Association

Sandra Curran, Graduate Secretary

Michael Huston, Senior Scientific Assistant, Fine Arts

The Department of Art History and Visual Studies

The Faculty of Graduate Studies

AHVSGA comprises graduate students in the Department of Art History and Visual Studies. The association provides a voice for all graduate students enrolled in the department, enhancing their academic experience. For more information, please visit:

finearts.uvic.ca/historyinart/graduateassociation/

Conference Schedule

Friday, January 29, 2021

Welcome and Opening Address (9.30)

Dr. Allana Lindgren, Acting Dean of Fine Arts

Panel 1: Crises, conflicts and shaping social identity (9:40 -11.00) (Moderated by Sarah Roberts)

Roopa Kanal, "Nepal's Contemporary Art Community: Building Identity after the 2015 Earthquake"

Shruti Parthasarathy, "1992 And 2020: Two Flashpoints in Contemporary Indian History and Artistic Response"

Anna O'Meara, "Art and Crisis: Herbert Read and Anna Kavan Respond to World War II"

Break (11.00-11.50)

Conversation between Keynote Speakers (11:50 -12:20)

Anne Marie-Hayden (Deputy Director of the Canadian Museums Association)

Devin Lander (New York State Historian, New York State Museum)

Moderated by Dr. Carolyn Butler Palmer (Williams Legacy Chair, Associate Professor Art History and Visual Studies)

Audience Q&A (12:20 -12:50)

Saturday, January 30, 2021

Panel 2: Moral values and urban responses to crisis (9:30 -10:20) (Moderated by Azar Mirzaei)

Brian Pollick, “Dealing with Trauma in Late-Medieval Florence: Judgement, Compassion and Redemption”

Esteban Vallejo Toledo, “Performing urban crisis: a legal geography view of the anti-homeless city”

Panel 3: Reimagining the art world (10:30 -11:20)

(Moderated by Amina Ejaz)

Toby Lawrence, “We Can Do Something Else: Reimagined Curatorial Practice”

Scott Lebaron, “One More Way that We are Experiencing Translation”

Break and Optional Networking (11.30-12)

Panel 4: Changing environments (12-12:50)

(Moderated by Anna O’Meara)

Azar Mirzaei, “Persian Architecture and the crisis of Industrialization”

Colton Hash, “Interactive Data Art and the Anthropocene, Environment, Internet, Digital Media”

Closing Remarks (12:50-13)

Dr. Catherine Harding, Associate Chair, Art History and Visual Studies

Panelist Abstracts and Biographies

Panel One

Roopa Kanal, Nepal's Contemporary Art Community: Building Identity after the 2015 Earthquake

Abstract: In 2015, a devastating earthquake hit Nepal, damaging many of the nation's sacred heritage sites integral to the country's national identity. Beyond the material loss, the impact destabilized the community's cultural identity. My project examines work of contemporary Nepali visual artists dealing with quake-related trauma and how they reconstruct and promote Nepali identity, both at home and internationally to move forward from the devastation.

At a local level, the artistic community galvanized to promote street art to raise donations, developed children's art programs to provide relief from the devastation, and has created several art collectives, art fairs, street art events, galleries and exhibitions. I show how by involving the local community, Nepalis are enabled to contribute to the narrative of Nepal's identity post-earthquake, which promotes collective healing.

Work by Nepali artists that reflect on the earthquake has reached international audiences. My research will examine work of visual artists such as Asha Dangol, who blends modern and traditional techniques, photographer Hitman Gurung, and Samundra Man Shrestha's traditional paubha painting on damaged bricks from the earthquake. Their work was presented in The Nepal Art Now exhibit in 2019 – the first ever contemporary Nepali art exhibit held in Europe. I examine what these artists promote as signifiers of 'Nepaliness,' how they draw from their heritage and what socio-cultural messages related to the earthquake are presented in their artwork. I will employ art historical and the anthropological theories of relationality which examine the social contexts under which the art is created and the community practices informing that process.

Biography: Roopa Kanal is an MA student with the Department of Art History focusing on contemporary South Asian art. Her primary interests are South Asian and Himalayan Art at home and in the diaspora. Areas of focus in her work are the religions of South Asia, continuity and adaption of traditions, and conservation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Prior to her MA at the University of Victoria her academic work focused on ancient and medieval art, ritual and religious philosophy of the Buddhist and Hindu traditions. In addition to her academic background Roopa has training in the museum field. She has interned in the South Asian Art Department of the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Shruti Parthasarathy, 1992 And 2020: Two Flashpoints in Contemporary Indian History and Artistic Response

Abstract: The planned destruction by Hindu supremacists of a 15th century mosque, the Babri Masjid, in the temple town of Ayodhya in December 1992 was a veritable body blow to the secular fabric of India – triggering countrywide riots, bombings and sharply delineating the Othering of India’s Muslims. Jolted, many Indian artists responded with works of sharp political critique, and the moment registers an elemental shift in Indian art practice to new modes of artmaking: installation, video/new media and performance art.

In 2020 the covid pandemic national lockdown coming on the heels of a communal pogrom in Feb 2020 against four months of a powerful, nationwide people’s protest against a citizenship bill, has emerged as a similar moment of deep crisis, reviving the memories of 1992 and 2002 riots. The brutal suppression of dissent using draconian security laws under the guise of the lockdown with its deepening of inequities and atmosphere of phobia, are drawing an ongoing response from artists and popular culture.

This presentation will examine the emergence of postmodernist Indian art in direct response to the crisis felt in society in 1992 and the present evolving art, as artistic response to two key flashpoints in contemporary Indian history.

Biography: Shruti Parthasarathy is an art historian, writer and literary translator, with a masters in art history from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She has worked for a number of years as an arts editor and writer, and works on south Asian modern and contemporary art. She is a first year Phd student at AHVS.

Anna O’Meara, Art and Crisis: Herbert Read and Anna Kavan Respond to World War II

Abstract: In 1944, Herbert Read contributed an essay titled “Art and Crisis” to *Horizon*, a British literary magazine. Alongside his article was an essay by artist and painter, Anna Kavan, titled “The Face of My People.” Kavan and Read were close correspondents and they were both conscientious objectors to World War II. Kavan had just recently returned to London from New Zealand, where her longtime friend and colleague, Ian Hamilton, had been imprisoned for his opposition to the war. Believing that her involvement with *Horizon* could assist Hamilton’s cause, Kavan sought political and legal advice from Read. However, ultimately, Kavan worried that Read’s political platform as an anarchist would undermine her attempt to assist in Hamilton’s release. Nevertheless, Kavan’s political stance as an individualist, humanist, egoist, and pacifist with concerns for the environment categorize her among writers like Read as aligned to anarchist tradition.

Herbert Read’s personal archives are housed in the Special Collections of the University of Victoria. Anna Kavan’s archives are housed by the University of Tulsa. In the Fall Semester of 2020, I worked with the University of Tulsa to acquire materials that assisted in a term paper that unpacked Kavan’s paintings and writing in relation to her experiences in Southeast Asia. For the Annual Visual Impetus Conference of 2021, “Art, Crises, and New Possibilities,” I would

like to shift my focus from Kavan's responses to Southeast Asian art and culture, and focus instead on the relationship between Read and Kavan. This focus will help me further investigate the anarchist politics of Read and Kavan, as well as their understandings of how art could act in protest to war, particularly World War II.

Biography: As nominee for the 2021-2022 Jeffery Rubinoff Fellowship, Anna O'Meara is pleased to contribute to the diverse research interests of the Department of Art History & Visual Studies. She is currently the Communications Coordinator for the AVHS Graduate Association. Her research interests investigate international connections between Parisian and North African radical student movements in the late 1960's and early 1970's, particularly in relation to the Situationist International. In the future, she aspires for my dissertation research to contribute to prevailing political discussions both within academia and more broadly. She received an M.Ed. from the Relay Graduate School of Education in 2020 through the New York City Teaching Fellows, and she received an M.A. in Art History from the University of Notre Dame in 2013. In the past, O'Meara taught 11th Grade Global History for the New York City Department of Education, and she served as the Director of Outreach & Development for the Museum Association of New York. She is currently learning Hindi as a visiting student at the University of British Columbia, O'Meara is beginning to learn Arabic, and she is in the process of earning a graduate certificate through UVic's Learning and Teaching in Higher Education program.

Panel 2

Brian Pollick, Dealing With Trauma in Late-Medieval Florence: Judgement, Compassion and Redemption

Abstract: Around 1340, a minor grain merchant in Florence named Domenico Lenzi, produced a unique manuscript in response to periods of severe famine and devastating floods in recent Florentine history. Lenzi believed that these disasters were direct punishments by God for the ingratitude and vice-filled habits of many Florentines. His manuscript, which he wrote out and then had beautifully copied by a professional scribe, is a strange mixture of 15 years of grain prices, detailed narrative descriptions of events connected with the grain shortage of 1329/30, self-composed poems, and aphorisms and other moralizing short verses. He then had an illuminator insert nine beautiful miniatures that included personal self-representation, allegorical images of God blessing or punishing through the availability of grain, and depictions of actual events he described. This manuscript represented a personal mission to convince his fellow citizens to repent of their ways and to demonstrate their gratitude to God through pious acts, especially looking after the poor. In this session Brian will take us through manuscript, with particular focus on the illuminations, as an exploration of a late-medieval response to traumatic events that threatened peoples' social and economic well-being, and jeopardized their very souls. Brian will also demonstrate how Lenzi used his book to broadcast his own moral identity and eschatological worthiness.

Biography: Brian Pollick is a PhD candidate in the Art History and Visual Studies Department at the University of Victoria. His dissertation looks at how the imagery commissioned by merchants in Trecento Italy was used to broadcast their Christian moral identity and to serve their eschatological aspirations. Brian's previous careers, spanning almost half a century, include teaching and various senior management positions in the justice field. Brian received a B.A. from York University (1967) and an M.A. in Art History from the University of Victoria (2011). He is the recipient of several awards including a SSHRC *Bombardier* Fellowship. Brian has presented papers at numerous Conferences in Canada and the United States and has had two peer-reviewed articles published in ARTiculate. He is currently the chief editor for the next issue of *Illumine*, the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society graduate student journal.

Esteban Vallejo Toledo, Performing urban crisis: a legal geography view of the anti-homeless city

Abstract: Development and exclusion are two aspects of the urban crisis affecting the city of Victoria in BC. This city embraced a development model that requires the implementation of policies that not only promote local amenities and revitalized areas to welcome tourists, investors, and customers, but also restrict visual manifestations of urban decline. As a result of those policies, crisis, violence, and exclusion affect the lives of homeless people, who challenge exclusionary policies by engaging with urban space to demand urban inclusion.

In this presentation, I will talk about urban crisis and anti-homeless cities from a legal geography perspective. I will use a performativity-based approach to explain why ideological discourses and reiterated social interaction can cause and challenge urban crisis, anti-homeless cities, and exclusionary understandings of law and space in Victoria and other cities.

Biography: Esteban / 'stebən / is a PhD student in Law & Society at University of Victoria Faculty of Law. He studies the relation between tax policies, development, and spatial inequality in global cities. He is also pursuing the UVic's Learning and Teaching in Higher Education graduate certificate.

He is the founding coordinator of the UVic Graduate Student Law & Society Research Group, an interdisciplinary community that explores the interactions between law, people, and societies. He also serves as a member of the UVic's Human Research Ethics Board.

Esteban is very grateful to the institutions and people who currently contribute to his projects: The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Law Foundation of BC, University of Victoria, and Dr. Julius F. Schleicher. (121/150 words)

Panel 3

Toby Katrine Lawrence, "We Can Do Something Else: Reimagined Curatorial Practice"

Abstract: Pre-existing crises of the art world have been amplified through the covid-19 period, yet the pervasiveness of systemic racism, discrimination, and heteropatriarchy within Canada's art system has been publicly voiced for decades. In our contemporary moment, a number of artists and curators continue this important work to challenge the limitations of superficial solutions or interruptions of existing institutional models by, instead, reimagining the terms altogether.

Replicating pre-existing museological procedures without critical assessment denies opportunity to imagine and develop new strategies towards equitable art spaces. As evidenced in the Vancouver Art Gallery exhibition *Ayumi Goto and Peter Morin: How Do You Carry the Land?* curated by Tarah Hogue, redefinition of what occurs and is normalized within the exhibition space is a matter of testing strategies through action. Equally, this exhibition challenges the fixity of display elements and artist/curator roles. Facilitated by Tania Willard, BUSH gallery places Indigenous artists, ontologies, epistemologies, and the land at the centre.

This collective initiative is sited primarily, but not exclusively, on the Neskonlith Reserve near Chase, BC and hosts artists and creative practitioners for land-based collaborations and dialogue. Finally, Heather Igloliorte's curation of *Ilippunga: The Brousseau Inuit Art Collection* at the Musée des beaux-arts nationale du Québec demonstrates commitment to redressing imbalances within a colonial model, settler-established organization. This research critically examines key initiatives reshaping contemporary curatorial practices that speak to feminist decolonial methodologies through case studies operating as catalysts in the intermediary space between settler-established organizations and Indigenous-led initiatives that centre Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies.

Biography: Toby Katrine Lawrence is a settler-Canadian curator based between Snuneymuwx, Lekwungen, and WSÁNEĆ territories. Her practice centres collaborative, decolonial, and intersectional feminist methodologies. Toby has held curatorial positions with Vancouver Art Gallery, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Nanaimo Art Gallery, and Kelowna Art Gallery. She is currently working with Open Space exploring curatorial hospitality and the AGGV to co-develop Moss Projects, a curatorial learning and research program.

In 2020, she was a contributing curator for the Contingencies of Care Residency hosted by OCADU, Toronto Biennial of Art, and BUSH Gallery, and a 2019 curatorial resident at Otis College of Art & Design Emerging Curators Retreat in Los Angeles. Toby holds a BA Hons in Art History from UVIC, an MA in Art History & Theory from UBC, and is currently a PhD candidate in Interdisciplinary Studies at UBCOkanagan supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Doctoral Fellowship.

Scott Lebaron Moore, One More Way that We Are Experiencing Translation

Abstract: My presentation focuses on our perception of images and videos through zoom, or similar platforms, that utilize the share screen function. How can we, or do we contextualize zoom as a translator of material and how that causes aspects to be lost or gained.

Out of necessity we have been carrying on our schooling through, now not so, novel technologies. Online learning platforms that allow for, or require the use of the share screen function. I am proposing that we need to consider what is lost and gained through these platforms. Our digital lives have become inherently more translated - more media is captured and blasted through the ether at imperceptible speed and created at unfathomable rates.

If we begin to conceptualize the online learning platforms as translators, then what is gained and what is lost through the act of translation? Can the addition of other people within a virtual meeting space, while experiencing share-screened video, change our understanding/perception of the video? And if so, how do we navigate the inherent loss of video or textural quality experienced through online shared learning spaces. Or is the added benefit of simultaneous experience with others an acceptable tradeoff?

Biography: Scott Lebaron Moore is an artist working on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of the Okanagan/Sylix and the Shuswap/ Secwepemc peoples. Scott is a first year interdisciplinary MFA candidate at UBC Okanagan. His thesis project is an intervention challenging and exploring potential and connection in an era where everything is increasingly and often by necessity being mediated digitally.

The project seeks to explore ways to deliver something tangible and physical. The intervention is a mail art project that is tied to place through locally harvested wild mustard that I shape into 'pens' and handmade (blank) postcards, a constellation of old technology practices that overlays past and present communication systems, interweaving spatial and temporal experiences.

Panel 4

Azar Mirzaei, Persian Architecture and the crisis of Industrialization: The Case of Anarak Mines and the town of Anarak, 1935-41.

Abstract: European interventions in Iranian industrialization began in the 19th century. Although they did not lead to the direct colonization of the country these interventions were influential in the economic colonization of Iran. After the 1920s, and during the reign of Reza Shah (1925-41), the advancement of the industrial sector was connected to the efforts at modernization and the creation of a national economy. Among these progressive activities was the mechanization of the industry in Iran, sometimes with the help of European groups. These processes had a significant influence on art and architecture in the Pahlavi period (r.1925-79). In this project, I will critically analyze how the mechanization of the ancient mines of Anarak – dating back to the beginning of the Sasanian dynasty in c. 224 CE – with the help of European

engineers who introduced iron and modern iron technology into this region between 1935 and 1941, affected the architectural features of the town of Anarak. This research explores how modern architectural features created crisis in the architecture of this region of Iran during the first half of the twentieth century.

Biography: Azar Mirzaei is a second year MA student in Art History and Visual Studies at University of Victoria, having received her BA in Architecture from the Azad University and her MA in Conservation of Historical Buildings from the Tehran University in Iran. Her current research focuses on the impacts of industrialization on the architectural features of the buildings in Anarak town in Central Iran between 1935 and 1941.

Colton Hash, Interactive Data Art and the Anthropocene

Abstract: The Anthropocene is the proposed geologic era defined by rapid industrialization. Through the creation of vast resource extraction systems, transportation networks and geographic information systems, industrialized civilizations employ a vast technological framework to dominate nature. To conceptualize the cumulative impacts of anthropogenic activities, creative data visualization can be integrated with conceptual art to stimulate multiple ways of knowing. Amidst our hyper-connected world, online art exhibitions have the potential to enhance widespread engagement with contemporary issues. Interactive internet technologies can be employed to create exploratory artworks that support emergent understandings of complex ecological issues. Through this presentation, I will present my research in creating web-based interactive data visualization artworks that engage with topics related to the Anthropocene. *TerraFire*, *Prevalent Echos*, and *nullTerra* are projects in development that are hosted online as interactive art exhibitions. These works integrate landscape data to depict cumulative impacts from wildfires, transportation networks and resource extraction systems on massive scales. These projects are all developed to visualize regional relationships, but can be extended to depict similar themes across industrialized nations.

Through research creation, I am exploring the intricacies of the mechanistic systems that characterize our cultural relationships with nature. By subverting utilitarian data through aesthetic engagement, my practice forwards intuition and emotional presence as critical ways to understand complex ecological issues. I am developing interactive data art that is widely accessible to engage with public discourse concerning our turbulent future.

Biography: Colton Hash is a multi-disciplinary artist who currently resides as an uninvited guest on Lekwungen territories of Vancouver Island. Hash's practice is inspired by the wild and anthropogenic landscapes that surround him. He integrates scientific understandings, social concerns and intuitive experience through multimedia creation. Hash was the inaugural artist in residence for Ocean Networks Canada and was a finalist for the 2019 *Emerging Digital Artist Award* (EQ Bank). Hash's politically oriented practice has received regional recognition with the 2019 *Witness Legacy Award for Social Purpose and Responsibility Through Art* (ProArt Alliance).

Hash has received a B.Sc. in Computer Science, Visual Arts and Environmental Studies, and is an MFA candidate at the University of Victoria.

Keynote Speakers Biographies

Anne Marie Hayden, Deputy Director, Canadian Museums Association.

Anne Marie Hayden is the Deputy Director at the CMA, focused on public affairs and museum advancement, as well as organizational transformation. Key areas of responsibility include public relations & communications and the Young Canada Works program, delivered on behalf of the Government of Canada.

Devin Lander, New York State Historian, New York State Museum.

The role of the New York State Historian is to provide support and coordination to the historical field, including local historians, academic historians, and historical societies and museums; as well as to conduct research on various topics relevant to New York State history and the New York State Museum. Devin Lander previously served as Executive Director of Museum Association of New York (MANY). Worked for New York State Assembly for the Chair of the Tourism, Arts, Parks and Sports Development Committee.

Dr. Carolyn Butler-Palmer, Williams Legacy Chair, Associate Professor Art History & Visual Studies, University of Victoria.

(BA (Carleton), Dipl. Art History (UBC), M.S. (Utah), MA & PhD (Pittsburgh))

Dr. Butler-Palmer's research is inspired by her family's varied experiences of identity, mobility, and place. Carolyn's research focuses on critically examining how artists and photographers assert, modify, challenge, or deny the idea of the Pacific Northwest. She has published several articles about photographer, painter, and carver David Neel's negotiation of the Pacific Northwest from the 1980s to the present. Carolyn is currently working on a book manuscript, *David Neel: A Cosmopolitan Aesthetic*, an outgrowth of her dissertation.

Carolyn is currently leading the Williams Public Oral History Project as Principle Investigator and is designing an art installation at Cool-Aid Community Health Center, in Victoria, British Columbia.