



Francis Alys, Paradox of Praxis 1, Mexico-City 1997

Transregional
Academy on Latin
American Art III

Spaces of Art

Concepts and Impacts In and Outside
Latin America

Call for
Applications

October 26th – November 3rd, 2019

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico City

Submission Deadline:
January 31st, 2019



The Forum Transregionale Studien and the German Center for Art History in Paris (Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte, DFK Paris, part of the Max Weber Foundation – German Humanities Institutes Abroad) and Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) invite doctoral candidates and postdoctoral researchers in the field of art history as well as neighboring disciplines to apply to participate in a Transregional Academy that will be convened from October 26 to November 3, 2019, at UNAM, Mexico, on the theme of

Spaces of Art: Concepts and Impacts in and Outside Latin America.

Rationale

Space is a fundamental category within the discipline of art history since its inception in the nineteenth century. The “spatial turn” proclaimed long ago in the humanities once again focused attention on both the spatial positioning of works of art and the determination of space through works of art and, in particular, architecture. In this context, methodological points of orientation taken from geography, sociology, anthropology, psychology, and even mathematics were integrated to facilitate a transdisciplinary approach to the study of space. Today, these approaches must be reconsidered from a transregional perspective. The focus on Latin America and its long history of colonialization raises specific questions about the appropriation of and encounters with space from a postcolonial perspective. The construction of spaces and their perceptions in and outside of Latin America are key themes of this Academy, which seeks to generate new critical approaches from various methodological and geographical vantage points in an effort to better understand the complexity of this category and to productively incorporate it in research.

Latin America from a Transregional Perspective

The Academy’s location and prism is Latin America. Working outward from there, both transregional artistic processes of exchange within the American continent as well as international interrelations will be critically examined. Instead of merely describing artistic tendencies and comparing them with one another, different cultural and creative processes, complex strategies of appropriation, including contradictory modalities of translation and comparison will be discussed from a transregional and transcultural perspective.

The Academy’s goal is to facilitate a transregional exchange on concepts of space. To adopt such a perspective, research being conducted in or on Latin American countries must be juxtaposed with discussions taking place elsewhere and located within a global context. At the same time, the extent to which there is any kind of common definitional and epistemological basis for the construction of a global comparative discourse needs to be considered from a historiographical perspective; this applies not least of all to terms such as “translocal,” “transregional,” and “transcultural.” The variety and complexity of the interpretive concepts will be examined through the lenses of historiography, discourse analysis, and art criticism.

Specifically, applicants invited to participate in the Transregional Academy will discuss the concepts, instruments, and impact of contemporary art historical research on space via illuminating case studies based on the eight topoi highlighted below. Further emphases may also be suggested and developed.

[1] Political Spaces

Space is a political category: knowledge of space is knowledge that gives one power over others, and the image of space is an instrument for both exercising authority and criticizing it. In the political concept of space, buildings and images, landscapes and complexes become ideologically charged constructions, whose long-evolving image schemata and effects are the subject of study of political iconography. Contributions exploring this theme may be rooted in any era or culture. Particularly encouraged are historical cross sections that show how image motifs “travel,” how they are adapted and recoded in various contexts, and the discursive effects they have in “political spaces.”

[2] Spiritual Spaces

Cities and landscapes are not only political spaces but are also shaped by spiritual, religious structures and images. The distinct structural-spatial definition of sacred spheres in both the context of life in cities and villages as well as natural landscapes is a fundamental principle in many religions and cultures. Here, the question arises as to how spiritual encodings are created and received through the design of spaces, structures, and images. Regarding this theme, the host country, Mexico, offers a wealth of illustrative examples and objects of study, including the prehistoric pyramids, colonial Baroque churches, and even Neobaroque shopping malls as spaces of a “religion of consumerism.”

[3] Institutional Spaces

Museums, exhibition spaces, galleries, academies, and biennial exhibitions are institutional spaces that play a large role in shaping the artistic and cultural life of a city, region, or country. In Latin America, the majority of these establishments are postcolonial creations based on European models. Their establishment was often guided by a desire on the part of the social elite to promote a national (or even Latin American) art and culture. They are also used—more than is the case in European countries—as a means of exerting influence beyond their specific locations and national borders as well as to further their global interconnectedness. The critical cartography of institutional spaces of art sheds light on the dialogic openness of national artistic production and of often still nationalistically determined art historiography.

[4] Art in Urban Spaces

The artistic design of an urban space, a square, or street is also always an act of appropriation—whether it be in an affirmative sense, such as in the erection of a monument or the placement of (political or commercial) advertisements, or in a subversive sense, as in the case of graffiti. Hence, the typological range stretches from traditional works of art to subcultural image forms. Urban spaces are also seen as those best suited for addressing viewers. This principle of spatially determined visual communication has been and continues to be utilized in politics, but even artists view it as an excellent opportunity to bypass all social and educational limitations and reach a wide audience. Unlike in museums, beholders do not have to cross a threshold; they are not classical viewers of art, entering a room with the goal of looking at an object. In general, people’s motivations to move or stand still in an urban space are different than they are in a museum, which inevitably has an impact on their reception behavior.

[5] Defining and Crossing Boundaries

Spaces imply boundaries; boundaries delimit spaces. This fact shifts the focus to the authority of whoever defines and controls these boundaries as well as to the defiance of those who disregard and cross them. Boundaries are a means of disciplining those who move through a space and behave in accordance with prescribed rules. What follows is not only the question of how art (and images in a broader sense) is used to set boundaries but also which conceptual and discursive boundaries are imposed on artistic and visual worlds. And what happens when they are transgressed, broken, or simply moved? Liminal experiences manifested in spatial images provide interesting insights into the state of societies and cultures.

[6] Genres and Media

Spaces of art are not one-dimensionally, locally, materially, or historically fixed. They are mutable and convers according to social, cultural, and political parameters. With this come transgressions, in particular in the context of avant-garde movements, though other important artistic innovations and spatial experiments, both past and present, exist. The conditions on which this unframing is based are variable and respectively point to specific historical-political contexts that require careful examination. Not least of all, concepts and manifestations of publicness will also be discussed and transregionally communicated with the help of genres and media.

[7] The “Spatial Turn” from a Transregional Perspective

The “spatial turn” offers an interesting counterpart to discussions of the conceptual legacy of Alexander von Humboldt—whose 250th birthday will be celebrated in 2019. Of particular interest in this context is his idea of the “*Totaleindruck einer Landschaft*” (total impression of a landscape), in which natural scientific data, social and political conditions, as well as aesthetic impressions are interrelated to gain a comprehensive understanding of the human habitat and natural spaces. This topos could be used to determine art history’s discursive openness towards a current, politically relevant problem, namely mankind’s destruction of the basis of its own existence on planet Earth in the Anthropocene. Against this background, contemporary questions of aesthetics and ecology could also be addressed and differentiated.

[8] Interdisciplinarity, Transdisciplinarity, Knowledge Transfer

By drawing from approaches used in anthropology and sociology, researchers in art and visual history have managed to productively expand their fields’ own analytical concepts of space. Here, the general question arises as to how disciplines construct their spaces, which prerogatives of interpretation result therefrom, and how these spaces of knowledge are linked and correlate with one another. Above all, however, it remains to be examined how and when knowledge transfer to and from art and visual history can be achieved and what limitations it faces, particularly from a transregional perspective.

The Academy is deliberately not limited to one era and avoids all contemporary historical caesura. In doing so the goal is not least of all to emphasize an opposition to economic explanatory models and those based in media technology. Thus, the historical spectrum has been intentionally left open.

p.5 The Transregional Academy is set in the framework of the German Center for Art History Paris's research focus "Travelling Art Histories: Transregional Networks in Exchange between Latin America and Europe" and is being organized in close cooperation with the Network of Art Historians at Latin American Universities and Museums. It is preceded by two Transregional Academies, one on the theme of "Modernism: Concepts, Contexts, and Circulation" held in São Paulo in 2016 and the other on "Mobility: Objects, Materials, Concepts, and Actors in Art" in Buenos Aires in 2017.

Steering Committee: Lena Bader and Thomas Kirchner (both DFK Paris), Peter Krieger (UNAM), Margit Kern (Universität Hamburg), Tristan Weddigen (Bibliotheca Hertziana in Rome), Patricia Zalamea (Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá), Jens Baumgarten (UNIFESP, São Paulo), Thierry Dufrêne (Université Paris-Nanterre), and Anne Lafont (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, EHESS).

Requirements for Participation and Application Guidelines

Transregional Academies encourage intensive peer-to-peer debates and foster new perspectives that emerge from small-group discussions. Participants are actively involved in structuring the program and developing its content. They present their individual research projects and, together, assemble thematic discussion groups. The majority of the findings result from intensive small-group work whereas others emerge in exchanges with local experts.

Up to 20 doctoral candidates and postdoctoral researchers (within five years of receiving their PhD) from different countries and various academic contexts will be given an opportunity to introduce and discuss their current research in an international and multidisciplinary setting. Participants will receive a grant to cover transportation and accommodation costs. The program is aimed at researchers in art history as well as neighboring disciplines, such as postcolonial studies, literary and cultural studies, anthropology, architecture, history, political science, sociology, and media studies. The goal of the meeting is to examine on-going projects as they relate to the above-mentioned questions from a comparative perspective. The research projects should be closely linked to the academy's themes, exhibit a Latin American focus, and adopt an explicitly transregional—in other words, transgressive—perspective.

The working language will be English.

Applications in English must include the following documents:

- a letter of motivation (2,500 characters, incl. spaces) that clearly shows how your project fits into the current research landscape and the academy's description,
- a short biography (1,000 characters, incl. spaces, running text) that includes information on your country of origin and current residence,
- an outline that summarizes your current research project (5,000 characters, incl. spaces),
- and the names of two academic references (no letter of recommendation required).

Please email all documents in **one PDF file** to artspaces@trafo-berlin.de by no later than **31 January 2019**.

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The Transregional Academy is a format of the Forum Transregionale Studien and is a part of the strategic cooperation with the Max Weber Foundation - German Humanities Institutes Abroad (DGIA). It is supported by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). The Terra Foundation for American Art is supporting this academy by providing two fellowships.

The Berlin-based Forum Transregionale Studien is a research platform that promotes the internationalization of research in the humanities and social sciences. The Forum provides scope for collaboration among researchers with different regional and disciplinary perspectives and appoints researchers from all over the world as Fellows.

The Max Weber Foundation promotes global research, concentrated around the areas of social sciences, cultural studies, and the humanities. Research is conducted at ten institutes in various countries worldwide with distinctive and independent focal points.

The German Center for Art History Paris (DFK Paris) is an independent art history research institute. French and German intellectual traditions engage here in fruitful dialogue with currents of international thought, creating a starting point for innovative interdisciplinary research on the arts of both countries, viewed in a global context. Founded by Thomas W. Gaehtgens in 1997, the DFK Paris belongs to the Max Weber Foundation - German Humanities Institutes Abroad (DGIA) and has been under the direction of Thomas Kirchner since February 2014. For more information on the institute's Latin American focus, please visit:

<https://dfk-paris.org/de/research-project/travelling-art-histories-1625.html>

The Institute of Aesthetic Research (Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas) of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), since its foundation in 1936, research has been carried out in its installations into the different forms of artistic expression in Mexico; the diversity of studies undertaken by the body of researchers in the fields of criticism, theory and history of art across a horizon that reaches other latitudes. It has thus become a space in which the plastic arts converge with dance, literature, photography, cinema and music.

For further information, visit:

<https://academies.hypotheses.org/>

www.dfk-paris.org

www.forum-transregionale-studien.de

www.maxweberstiftung.de

www.esteticas.unam.mx/