

Image and Knowledge

Visual creation and scientific research

Exchanging viewpoints on and from the Indian Ocean

International conference organized by

College of Art of Reunion Island and the University of Reunion Island

1st to 3rd December 2016

Call for Papers

The history of science has shown that from antiquity to the present day, science and art have travelled along the same road, sharing means of expression and modes of operation: Leonardo da Vinci was both an inventor of genius and an artist, while writers such as Jules Verne imagined and forged modern science, as shaman practices brought together medicine, religion and magic. Who will deny that the Encyclopaedia is a veritable “atlas” of knowledge, a repository of information and images that simply lays bare the utter complexity of our world?

The construction of knowledge is comparable to the model of the work of art (as well as to all other forms of creation), with its variations, its tremors and errors, its fantasies and accidents, replete with that inevitable share of subjectivity. More than ever, artists and scientists move together. Their work is considered convergent and mutually regenerative giving rise to what Edward O. Wilson qualified as “consilience”, creating new lattices, which in turn revitalize the intelligence of research, stimulate the imagination and invigorate creativity and invention. Thus, Jean Clair’s once pertinent observation that “science and art take care of the world” retains its relevance today.

Further, as one well knows, works of art exist and come alive through the eye of the observer (didn’t Marcel Duchamp once posit that “it is the viewer who makes the work”?) and as such, the dialogue between the world’s images is formed of interpenetrations: from rejection to empathy, through misunderstanding and mimetism...

Framed within such considerations, **Image and Knowledge : visual creation and scientific research** is a transdisciplinary conference that offers the opportunity to explore the intricate relationship between seeing and knowing: what are the linkages and forces that bring together the visual arts and scientific knowledge? How far do these connections still speak to us in an age split between those who believe they control the image, and those who strive to master its mysteries as and when they appear with a click of the button at a bewildering rate? The organizers of this conference, the University of La Réunion and the College of Art of Reunion Island aim to encourage reflexion and exchange on these questions through the analysis of the images irrigating the rhizomes of communication that hold the “tout-monde” (Edouard Glissant) and our “global village” (Marshall McLuhan) together.

In the light of new and not-so-new technologies which have demolished the classical notions of centre and periphery, it also seems appropriate to place the Indian Ocean at the heart of our reflexion while we rethink the history of the distribution of images, - and thence the distribution of knowledge. Be they imaginary, real or symbolical, all forms of heritage will be considered that are historical, anthropological, social, scientific, technological, linguistic, literary, artistic, cinematographic and religious, *from and of the Indian Ocean zone, in its rich and diverse entirety.*

This conference likewise falls within the scope of research conducted by academics from the Observatory of Indian Ocean Societies (Observatoire des Sociétés de l’Océan Indien - OSOI) of the University of Reunion Island. As it happens, seen from the specific geographical vantage point of Reunion Island, and as understood by scholars of the University of La Réunion, the Indian Ocean presents itself as a set of concentric circles. The first circle is the “insular world”, comprising countries in the southern part of the Indian Ocean: France (Reunion Island, Mayotte), Madagascar, Mauritius and the archipelagos of the Comoros and the Seychelles. The second circle is made up of countries bordering the Indian Ocean, in particular, those located in the southern and eastern coasts of the African continent (South Africa, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zanzibar), extending to India and Sri Lanka. The islands scattered in the Indian Ocean (Diego Garcia and the Chagos, the Maldives, and so on), together with the French Southern and Antarctic Lands (Crozet, Kerguelen, Saint-Paul and Amsterdam, the Iles Eparses) also belong to this second circle.

Finally, encompassing the rest of the world, the third circle includes countries that today partake of a legacy in common with Reunion Island and the wider Indian Ocean area, by reason of a shared history and contemporaneous experience (former colonial metropolises, or China and India from whence came substantial numbers of immigrants). In this respect, recent migratory patterns and trajectories still make for fascinating study.

Three categories are proposed.

1. Artistic heuristics and scientific creation

When does a work of art become invention? Conversely through what processes does scientific discovery become work of art?

What is the role of the imagination and emotion in science?

Picking up on the term widely used in tertiary level art institutions nowadays, what do “art researchers” seek and find?

What is meant by an artist’s laboratory and what happens when an artist works in a scientific research laboratory?

2. Epistemology and reception of the visual arts

What is knowledge produced by art? And what of the epistemological added value originating in the visual practices of art?

How do the visual arts and scientific knowledge interact within exhibition curatorship?

What of Museography? The humanities and social sciences, and natural sciences? Religions? Educational methodologies?

3. Hybridity and reversibility of image and knowledge

Through what operations does a mental image become a work of art?

At what point does an essay become a work of art?

What are the borders between text and image?

In what way can a documentary be a work of art?

Conference proposals

The conference is open to all scholars, art professionals and non-specialists who engage with the image in their fields of study: artists, architects, anthropologists, researchers in literature or civilisation, art historians, exhibition curators, historians, linguists, jurists, geographers, philosophers of science, biologists, doctors, and so on. Particular attention will be paid to those proposals that focus on the way visual arts confront and interact with knowledge in Indian Ocean spaces and societies. Our aim is likewise to study the rapports and bonds between those societies and the world at large, at the onset of the 21st century.

The committee also welcomes submissions from visual artists. Their proposals may be accompanied by digital files of their work that enable a better understanding and visualizing of the subject. Proposals should contain between 250 and 350 words and be accompanied by a brief curriculum vitae of their authors. They are to be submitted to the following address by end of May 2016: imageetsavoir@esareunion.com Please specify which category you wish to contribute to.

The selection committee will convene **around the 20th of June 2016**.

Scientific committee:

Mounir Allaoui, Patricia Debollivier, Christian Germanaz, Mélanie Mezzapesa, Cédric Mong-Hy, Myriam Omar Awadi, Florence Pellegrin, Yohann Quèland de Saint-Pern, Sandra Saayman, Vilasnee Tampoe-Hautin.

Important dates:

Deadline for submitting proposals: end May 2016

Notification of acceptance: end June 2016

