

Call for Papers

Re-narrating History in the Black Diaspora: Contemporary Artists and Visual Arts

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Deadline for proposal submissions: October 1st 2024

Several very recent exhibitions, such as “Afro-Atlantic Histories” (2020, Museu de Arte de São Paulo, before touring the United States from 2021 to 2024), “Ex Africa” (Musée du Quai Branly, Paris, 2022), “In the Black Fantastic” (Hayward Gallery, London, 2022, Kunsthall, Rotterdam, 2023), “When We See US: A Century of Black Figuration Painting” (Zeit Mooca, Cape Town 2022, Kunstmuseum, Basel, 2024), “Black Atlantic: People, Power and Resistance” (The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, 2023), “Afro-Futurist Manifesto: Blackness Reimagined” (The Reginald F. Lewis Museum, Baltimore, 2023) or “Entangled Pasts, 1768–now: Art, Colonialism and Change (Royal Academy of Arts, London, 2024), have brought together objects, archives and creations by Black artists from Africa, the United States, Europe, the Caribbean, South America. This was particularly well illustrated in the “Enduring Blackness: A Decade of Black Portraiture[s]: Paris 2013 – 2023” conference at the Musée du Quai Branly in May 2023, when museum director Emmanuel Kasarhérou underlined the necessity to respect the plurality of narratives and their sovereignty, to make the voices from African diasporas heard and to reflect upon our shared histories. This moment within art institutions throughout the world is also paralleled by a wealth of new critical perspectives on artistic expressions within African diasporic experiences, whether one looks at Africa, the United Kingdom, the Caribbean or the United States. Art critics such as Huey Copeland, Darby English, Anne Lafont, Françoise Vergès, Elvan Zabunyan, Adrienne Edwards or Eddie Chambers have created a dense art historical network, building on such thinkers as Franz Fanon, Edouard Glissant or Achille Mbembe. In the wake of the epistemic turn that Dipesh Chakrabarty named “provincializing Europe”, we can invert the “discovery” paradigm: rather than the legitimization of conquest, discovery can be about a new ethics of relations, on the model of Glissant’s paradigms of the archipelago or the All-World. As Paul Gilroy has pointed out in his definition of the Black Atlantic, enslaved Africans and New World creoles had to create a space to exist in new ways.

This project cuts across the reactive nationalism and resurgent racism that currently roils the West: a defining example of its scandalous power emerged in the crisis in media and among academics over Nikole Hannah-Jones’ *1619 Project*. Significantly, this historical endeavor was turned into an artistic one through the intervention of Adam Pendleton in creating the visual identity of the project, as well as his “Black Dada” flag for the Black Lives Matter movement – two artistic initiatives to look at history with new eyes. It is in this context that a number of artists of the Black Atlantic have seized history as a central subject for their art. Our current moment which Tina Campt has labeled “A Black Artistic Renaissance” calls for a reappraisal of the circulation of Black culture on a global scale with new cultural and artistic figures coming from different countries, backgrounds and using multiple media. Can our present moment be considered as another moment in the sequence moving from the European Renaissance to the Harlem Renaissance and to the current Renaissance? Or is this vision of history too linear? What can the visual arts bring to the way we think about history? In the wake of what Ariella Azoulay has called “unlearning”, to what extent do contemporary visual art

practices invite us to “unlearn” history? Azoulay defines the concept of *Potential History* in the following words: “Unlearning imperial history involves different types of “de-” such as decompressing and decoding; “re-” such as reversing and rewinding; and “un-” such as unlearning and undoing” (*Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism*, 10). Can contemporary art practices, particularly those which experiment with form and destabilize traditional genres of visual representation and reception help shape a new history of unlearning? What can the visual arts bring to a reflection on history in the specific context of the Black Atlantic? How can history archives be a source of inspiration for contemporary artists in their rewriting of history?

This issue of *Angles: New Perspectives on the Anglophone World* (<https://journals.openedition.org/angles/>) seeks to present the very diverse ways artists of the Black diasporic space envision their art practice in close relation to history. Under the paradigm of the archipelago that Edouard Glissant has theorized, these works share a common concern with history which creates between them, despite geographical distance, a deeply relational space. In the flurry of projects unleashed by reconstituting the transnational histories of the Black experience using different pivot points, this issue is aimed at understanding how far we have come, and how far we have to go.

The issue will foster an interdisciplinary dialogue between history, visual arts, museum studies, transatlantic studies, diaspora studies and post-colonial studies. We seek papers in line with the journal’s focus on innovative interdisciplinary research based on a wide range of methodologies. In order to make full use of the possibilities offered by digital publication, we are also planning on integrating artworks and interviews with artists.

This call for papers welcomes different types of proposals:

- a) Written articles dealing with contemporary visual art along the following perspectives:
 - Diasporic artistic experiences
 - Black artistic production and activism
 - Decolonizing and creolizing of visual representations; challenging Euro-American norms of representation
 - Issues of ambivalence and hybridity in new forms of representation merging old and new canons
 - Producing counter-narratives; reclaiming and redressing history
 - International circulations of Black cultures and Black gazes
 - Transformations and new trends in the international art market
 - The role of cultural institutions in impeding or fostering the works of Black artists
 - The racist and racialized perceptions of Diasporic artists’ practices
- b) Written or video interventions by contemporary visual artists commenting on their own practice in relation to the topic of the issue
- c) Contributions related to pedagogical activities based on the classroom study of contemporary artworks and artists of the Black Diaspora

To submit a proposal, send an abstract (250/300 words) and brief biography in English to the following addresses: Anne Claire Faucquez (Université Paris 8) acfaucquez@gmail.com,

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Completed articles (5,000 to 8,500 words) and other contributions are due on March 15, 2025.

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