

## Making Sense of Visual Culture

**Date :** January 10, 2011

An interdisciplinary conference sponsored by the Graduate Program in Visual and Cultural Studies at the University of Rochester

April 1st-3rd, 2011, Rochester, New York

Sound, taste, touch and smell. The institutionalization of the field of Visual Culture has coincided with a proliferation of methods to investigate a range of sensory experience. More than conceiving of Visual Studies as an historical intervention into disciplinary art history, we seek to explore its ongoing development as a clearing house for investigation of what the visual does, and doesn't do. With these concerns in mind, the Graduate Program in Visual and Cultural Studies at the University of Rochester invites scholars from across disciplines to discuss the evolving institutional and methodological contours of our field. From April 1st-3rd, 2011, "Making Sense of Visual Culture" will address large-scale disciplinary questions as well the development of new approaches to an expanded range of sensory objects, phenomena, and practices.

In order to create a space for new voices on these topics, we have decided to eschew the standard figure of the keynote speaker and its implied authority. Instead, we invite innovative work by graduate students and non-tenured faculty for a series of round-tables, workshops, and panels that will address the two major, interlinked concerns of the conference: sensory experience and the future of the field.

To this end, we envision this CFP functioning not just as a traditional call for papers, but also as a call for participation. There are many ways to participate in this discussion, even if you cannot join us in April.

1. We are circulating a questionnaire. All responses will be posted to an open access website to create a broad dialogue. We are asking all scholars with an investment in the future study of visual culture to respond. Select respondents will be invited to participate in a roundtable discussion at the conference.

2. We solicit 300-word abstracts for 20-minute paper presentations on work that exemplifies, challenges and expands the field of visual studies. Possible topics include, but are not limited, to:

- multi-sensory approaches to material culture and memory
- the "hegemony of the visual"
- the practice of visual culture as method, discipline or sensibility
- visualizing sensory experience
- cultural difference and the senses
- epistemology of the senses
- histories of perception
- lending form to affect
- synesthesia
- the interface of vision and touch
- changing practices of visualizing information
- the present and future of medium specificity (in both artistic and scholarly practices)

- the role of technologies in sensory perception

Please include a brief CV with your submissions. Deadline: January 15, 2011. Please email these documents to [submissions@makingsenseconference.com](mailto:submissions@makingsenseconference.com)

To respond to the November Questionnaire, please register at:

<http://makingsenseconference.com/register>.

Once you've registered, please login using the temporary password emailed to you and post your response using the Wordpress editor. If you wish to include any images or videos, please send them to

[submissions@makingsenseconference.com](mailto:submissions@makingsenseconference.com), indicating your username. You can either sign your post with your name and institution affiliation or with just your username.

Please email [help@makingsenseconference.com](mailto:help@makingsenseconference.com) if you require any assistance or if you wish to submit your questionnaire responses via email.

Also, please indicate if you would like to be considered for invitation to present your response in person at a roundtable during the conference. If so, please submit by January 15.

#### THE NOVEMBER QUESTIONNAIRE

In conjunction with "Making Sense of Visual Culture," an interdisciplinary conference sponsored by the Graduate Program in Visual and Cultural Studies at the University of Rochester, April 1st-3rd, 2011, Rochester, New York

How do we reflect on the establishment and institutionalization of Visual Culture and how has our past affected our present position and modes of research? How do we as young Visual Culture practitioners occupy and transform the scholarly structures we've inherited?

Is it possible to engage with images and objects without reproducing the power structures in which they are entangled? How do you ethically engage with modes of production, distribution and consumption?

Can Visual Studies and science have a mutually productive conversation? What is the difference between analyzing the way science is imaged and employing scientific discourses or evidence? Why is this distinction important?

How do you accommodate the aural, the tactile, the olfactory, and the affective in your work in tandem with the visual? What are the difficulties and/or advantages of working on images and objects that intersect with other media and engage multiple senses?

How does Visual Culture Studies as an interdisciplinary field deal with the politics of academic institutions? How do you position your work in relation to institutional frameworks? How is the economic climate affecting interdisciplinarity? What will Visual Culture Studies sound, taste, feel and smell like in the future?