

VISUAL STUDIES RESEARCH INSTITUTE

RSVP to vsri@usc.edu. See dornsife.usc.edu/vsri/upcoming-events/ for updated information.

FALL 2021 EVENTS

Images Out of Time Seminar



TUESDAY, OCTOBER 19

12:30-2pm PST

Zoom

The Tyranny of Morphology and the Presence of Things

CAROLINE WALKER BYNUM

University Professor Emerita, Medieval Europe, Columbia University

Readings and links for Images Out of Time events will be made available when you RSVP to vsri@usc.edu.

Objects in material culture, especially sacred objects and artistic productions, appear as unique forms in time. But they can also trigger (or seem to invite) recognitions, when they appear to resemble other forms from very different times and places. How do we identify similar and dissimilar forms across time? How are such similitudes memorialized in the present, and how should they be? When should the scholar compare, for example, religious objects between one tradition and another? Caroline Walker Bynum, a leading scholar of late medieval Christianity, meditates on the appeal and the dangers of morphological comparison and the enduring presence of material things, in her new book: *Dissimilar Similitudes: Devotional Objects in Late Medieval Europe* (Zone, 2020).

The Images Out of Time seminar considers how images travel through time, dropping in and out of linear histories and reshaping perception, institutions, and social practices along the way. We will study images and objects that are at odds with the moment of their appearance, whether they outlived their initial function or lost contact with their original cultural contexts. Monuments to unjust pasts; icons manifesting fallen gods; ancient ruins in modern structures; replicas and forgeries; old images restored by new technologies: these images force a paradox into view. While they endure within continuous histories, they also remain stubborn signs of vanished worlds, out of step with the present. Images in the wrong place at the wrong time have justified the civilizing mission of empire and acts of iconoclasm. They continue to structure debates about repatriating artifacts, dismantling monuments and museums, and preserving cultural heritage destroyed by war or exploitation. When “images out of time” suddenly upset our faith in the march of history, they challenge our ability to measure our distance from the past, to understand ourselves, and to imagine collective futures.

Events include speakers, reading groups and writing workshops that intersect art history, religious studies, history, anthropology, literature, and film, and cuts across divisions separating premodern and modern, as well as European, Atlantic, and Pacific spheres.

Open to all interested participants.

The Ascension: Christ ascends into heaven above Mary and the apostles, The Hague, KB, 76 E 7, fol. 219r.

RSVP

to

vsri@usc.edu for
more information
or to be added to
our Slack channel.

