

VISUAL STUDIES RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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

SPRING 2022 EVENTS

Images Out of Time Seminar



MONDAY, FEBRUARY 7

12:30-2pm PST
Zoom

*"They knew no better":
On the Dialectics of Image Removal*

DAVID FREEDBERG

Pierre Matisse Professor of the History of Art and
Director of The Italian Academy for Advanced
Studies in America, Columbia University

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

Recent image removals have generally alarmed conservatives and pleased progressives. Heroes of the past have become villains of the present. The question of the extent to which current moral awareness should be applied to past moral blindness is often invoked. From mostly being thought of in negative terms, iconoclasm is now seen as a positive, indeed essential step in the direction of racial justice. In the light of recent examples in the US, as well as of monuments of Jan van Riebeeck and Cecil Rhodes in South Africa, and Johan Maurits of Nassau in Brazil and The Hague, Professor Freedberg will show how the question is not only that of what to do with the condemned images but also of fundamental aspects of esthetics and historical responsibility that have been overlooked.

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.

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

Image: Statue of Johan Maurits of Nassau as displayed in *Shifting Image - In search of Johan Maurits*, Mauritshuis, The Hague, the Netherlands, 2018.

