

Call for papers, July 2012

**International Interdisciplinary conference:
Art and geography: aesthetics and practices of spatial
knowledges**

11 - 12 - 13 February 2013, University of Lyon (France)

The conference “Art and geography: aesthetics and practices of spatial knowledges” is in connection with a research project funded by the French National Research Agency, Médiagéo (<http://www.e-geo.fr/mediageo/wiki>). Our aim is to explore the contemporary contours of what is “geographical” and question the boundaries between cultural activities (in this case, art and geography). We also seek to examine the latest geographical approaches to and the hybridization of geographical knowledge in contemporary art as part of a broader discussion of their respective contributions. The conference is at the crossroads of contemporary geography and art. With the latest developments in how space, place and environment are viewed in contemporary art, it is necessary to take a critical look at how relevant the geography various responses to this “spatial turn” have been and to unravel the implications – in factual, methodological, theoretical and epistemological terms – of the convergence between contemporary art and geography.

We welcome proposals from geographers and artists from diverse backgrounds and with varying experiences in the field. All liberal arts researchers with similar interests in the spatial or geographical dimensions of art are also welcome to contribute.

Geographical approaches to contemporary art have tried to map the changes that have occurred in how art was being made, materialized and given exposure since the 1960s. We believe that those developments have indeed given a spatial principle to their “contextual” or “relational” (according to P. Ardenne and N. Bourriaud respectively) attributes. Accordingly, we postulate that understanding how artists engage with and “work” space/place has become a fundamental, if not of utmost importance, issue. The contemporary art world has gravitated towards the notions of space and place, with terms such as “in situ”, “outdoor” and “alternative space” becoming ubiquitous in its terminology; art critics and scholars are now looking at issues pertaining to public space, environment and virtual space. We may summarize all these changes under the term “spatial turn”.

Furthermore, engaging with space and with the spatial dimension of societies, art has reached a new political dimension. As a “business model”, it is now a force to be reckoned with in spatial engineering – land development, urban planning and architecture – especially where post-industrial areas and post-keynesian development policies are considered. This poses a new set of challenges for artists who are given incentives to revitalize local communities by breathing life into and re-purposing spaces, but it also opens up new areas for critical research. Contemporary artists have now become key players in creating, improving and restoring land values and meanings because they have been able to do with the multidimensional quality of space. This is true whether you consider American Land Art and its outdoor, in situ and scaling-up strategy against the 1960s-70s art world – through which it secured *in fine* a central role in land reclamation programmes – or the branding of artist districts by artists-as-entrepreneurs – through artist-run-spaces and/or festivalisation, for instance – not to mention local marketing and development policies based on the promotion and clustering of “creative industries”.

With the growing interest of geographers in defining the spatial dimension of art, it is important to make a general review of their explanatory models and examine their theoretical underpinnings and methodological foundations. Here our main concern is how geographers – as social scientists – are currently addressing the “spatial turn” in contemporary art. It is important to understand to what extent this acknowledgement of the spatial dimension of art contributes to a broader intelligibility of art, of its political and social roles, and how these findings compare to the theoretical and conceptual perspectives from better-established fields – aesthetics, art history, art criticism or art sociology. It is equally important to understand how the way art “does with space” helps geography to illuminate or secure theoretical or epistemological angles. There are now at least three easily identifiable directions in the current research: a firmly spatial perspective based on spatial economics (creative industries, cultural districts and clusters), a pragmatist perspective based on the practices of the actors, and an aesthetically and/or phenomenologically inspired perspective that draws upon the artistic experience.

As a correlate to how contemporary art “works” space or spatial dimensions of societies, forms and tools that are originally specific to geography have become a staple medium of contemporary art. One illustration of it is how maps have come to be viewed as artwork, map-making as a creative process unto itself, and fieldwork methodologies as part of artistic practices. Other examples include the use of geolocation, georeferencing and other geographical input in artistic processes, informing the appearance or the significance of the resulting works. The conference will also address how contemporary art is engaged in expanding and representing geographical knowledge – to any degree of methodological,

practical and theoretical hybridization with space-related sciences (geography and spatial engineering). In connection with the issues specific to an artistically-minded geography, we focus on how artists have responded to the needs of contemporary societies to figure the ways of being in or relating to landscapes, spaces and the environments (or the ways of identifying oneself in relation to them). The media-geographical issue is not without epistemological implications: is contemporary art an alternative mode of geographical knowledge making and, more generally, an alternative to the scientific inquiry of the relation to space and place? If so, how – theoretically and methodologically speaking – and how critically relevant is it?

The conference is not only open to anyone who is interested in the spatial dimension of contemporary art. It is also an event that accommodates any mode of presentation and exhibition as deemed necessary by researchers and artists. Among the wide-ranging options available to prospective speakers: any documentary medium, installations, performances, paper presentations and roundtables...

These are the topics that we would like to explore, although answers which explicitly deal with the title of the conference will be encouraged:

1. the emergence of contemporary art in geographical knowledge; its different theoretical underpinnings and methodological foundations; the types of object that are codependent with it (art venues, the spatial dimension of artistic practice or experience).

2. the forms of “the spatial turn” in contemporary art and, concurrently, the ways in which geography (and its theories of space, place and spatiality) contributes to define the relational or contextual nature of contemporary art. When and how did the conversation between geography and other better-established art disciplines start? How do geographers claim, complement or challenge those different approaches? In other words, what is the legitimacy of their discourses on art?

3. The forms and modalities of geographical knowledge in contemporary art: the use of maps and map-making, fieldwork (observations, interviews) and documentary practices.

4. The strategies used by artists to address social concerns and to respond to incentives from spatial engineering. Artists are tasked with building by the means of their interventions in space or engagements with space new social, ecological and geographical mediations. How do geographers with their diverse academic approaches register and critically reflect those new developments?

5. The relationship between art and geography in the making of knowledge of/about space and place, and the relation to space and place; the current regimes of production of geographical knowledge.

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Abstract

With the latest developments in how space, place and environment are experienced in contemporary art, it is necessary to take a critical look at how relevant the various geography responses to this "spatial turn" have been. The conference "Art and geography: aesthetics and practices of spatial knowledges" aims at exploring the contemporary contours of what is "geographical" and at questioning the boundaries between cultural activities (in this case, art and geography). It also seeks to examine the latest geographical

approaches to and the hybridization of geographical knowledge in contemporary art as part of a broader discussion of their respective contributions. The conference is at the crossroads of contemporary geography and art and ambitions to unravel the implications – in factual, methodological, theoretical and epistemological terms – of the convergence between contemporary art and geography.

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Key words:

Art, Geography, Mediageographie, Geographical knowledge, Epistemology, Spatial turn, Geographic turn, Spatial aesthetics, Representational geography / Non-representational geography, Critical geography, Cultural economy, Art and Politics, Cultural policy, Creative activities, Art and Urban Regeneration, Participation, Public space, Fieldwork, Map, Cartography, Mapping, Landscape, Landscaping, Geolocation, Georeferencing.

Scientific Program Committee:

Anne Volvey, Maître de Conférences, Université d'Artois, UMR 5600

Isabelle Lefort, Professeur des Universités, Vice-President (Research), Université Lumière Lyon 2, UMR 5600

Thierry Joliveau, Professeur des Universités, Université Jean Monnet de Saint-Etienne, UMR 5600

Martine Drozd, Doctorante, UMR5600

Manuel Appert, Maître de Conférences, Université Lumière Lyon 2, UMR 5600

Scientific Committee (being determined)

Practical information:

Conference languages: French and English

Conference Date: 11-12-13th February 2012

Conference Venue: University of Lyon (France)

No tuition fee for participants in the conference programme is required. The IRG (UMR 5600) will organize and finance the conference venue and the dinner taking place on 11th February. Presenters and participants are expected to pay the costs of their flights to and from Lyon (France) and the hotel expenses.

However, a limited number of funding is available for artists to cover travel and hotel expenses, and their performance fees. Candidates must apply for the funding when they answer the call for paper.

The proceedings of the Conference will be published in the form of a book and CD-Rom with ISBN.

Submission schedule:

Answers of

. 400 words (max.) for the papers' abstract / 400 words or 2 pages sketches and documents (max.) for artistic projects

. Key-words matching the Conference's ones

. 1 page CV

to be sent by 30th October 2012 to the following Email address artandgeography2013@gmail.com

Answers will be reviewed by the Scientific Committee before 15th December 2012 and notifications to authors as: Accepted - No Recommendations; Accepted - with Recommendations; Not Accepted, will follow.

For more information please contact us at: artandgeography2013@gmail.com