

Reparative Frames: Visual Culture after Reconciliation

OCAD University and the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada, December 6-7, 2019

Organized by Gabrielle Moser (OCAD University) and Carol Payne (Carleton University)

This two-day workshop explores the potential of visual culture in and as a practice of reparation. Investigating the political, psychic, economic and symbolic potential of visual culture in redressing relationships of power between subjects and the state, the workshop responds to the increasingly ubiquitous concept of reconciliation, and its attendant critiques. As several Indigenous scholars have noted, when enacted through very public, and often performative, gestures by the state, reconciliation risks maintaining the status quo and becoming mere metaphor. More troubling still, it typically places the onus on marginalized communities to do the work of reconciling.

We ask, what might abandoning the metaphor of reconciliation make possible, with a view towards making reparations, instead? How does a reparative framework enable artists, scholars, designers and curators to better understand the role images play in intervening in asymmetrical systems of power, in undoing the regime-made disasters of state sovereignty, and in imagining an unsettled future?

“Reparative Frames’ centres on the contexts of settler colonialism, Indigenous sovereignty, and the legacy of the transatlantic slave trade as well as drawing out other cross-cultural alliances and transnational points of connection with other places where the struggle to repair plays out.

In its most literal sense, reparations can entail the handing over of land, material goods, or money to acknowledge harm: proposals made recently by both Ta Nehisi Coates and Sashi Tharoor to recognize the lasting impact and unfinished histories of the transatlantic slave trade and of British imperialism (proposals that were met with great public resistance on both sides of the Atlantic). Within material culture and anthropology, reparation has its analogue in repatriation—the return of cultural objects to their communities of origin. Unangax scholar Eve Tuck has suggested that knowledge can also be repatriated, proposing that Indigenous communities rematriate “damage-centred” research by settler scholars and use them for their own purposes, while settler literary theorist Julia Emberley speaks of the disruptive power of Indigenous “reparative testimonial practices.”

Reparation also suggests an emotional reckoning that can be found in strategies of restorative justice and historical redress. Psychoanalytic theory, particularly the work of Melanie Klein, has been preoccupied with the potential for reparative dynamics in intimate relationships of dependence, loss, hatred and rage: processes that take place in personal relationships, but also structure national and transnational relations between Indigenous groups and settler colonial communities, as literary theorist David L. Eng has recently argued. Reparative frames can also describe approaches to practices of looking and reading. Queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, for instance, makes a distinction between (critical) paranoid reading practices and the queerer reparative readings that can restore ambivalence, complexity and wholeness to a text. Pedagogical theorists Deborah Britzman, Mario di Paolantonio and Roger I. Simon attempt to enact reparative modes in the classroom and in the gallery, where the goal in asking students and viewers to engage with difficult knowledge is to come to terms with and learn *from* the troubling histories texts and images offer us.

Repair can also involve a return, as in the return of names to unacknowledged subjects in photographic captions, or the creation of documents and narratives to fill in missing accounts in official state archives. Artists, authors and researchers play a vital role in these processes of return, imagining the lives of the “ditto”s in the archive of transatlantic slavery (as Dionne Brand, Saidiya Hartman, Charmaine Nelson and Christina Sharpe do), creating staged documentary images for moments in which no camera was present (epitomized by the work of Dawoud Bey, Deanna Bowen, Christina de Middel and Stan Douglas), and revisiting the historical record to help develop its latent knowledge, drawing our attention to the figures and places on the periphery of images that speak to how events may have played out otherwise.

This workshop features papers from scholars in several intersecting fields who address the reparative potential of visual culture, considered broadly: from fine art objects, material culture and vernacular photography, to the use of imagery in poetry, films, public art, memorials, and novels. We seek presentations that propose and elaborate upon a key term for thinking through the political potential of reparations. Questions this gathering may address include, but are not limited to, the following:

- What does a reparative visual practice look like? What are the terms that would be needed to engage such a practice?
- What are the aesthetic modes through which reparations are articulated?
- How might we imagine reparations beyond the bounds of the nation state? What does a transnational politics of repair look like?
- How do museums and galleries create spaces for reparative exhibitions, programs and discussions?
- How are distinctions between reconciliation and reparations articulated visually?
- How do we ensure that acts of reparation are not reduced to empty metaphors?
- How are reparations culturally specific? How do various publics define reparation differently?
- Is a national reparations process possible, and if so, what role does visual culture play in it?
- When might reparations require destruction or removal, and what is the role of visual culture that is no longer in circulation?

Confirmed speakers:

- Dr. Susan Best, Professor, Art Historian, Queensland College of Art, Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia
- Dr. Julie Crooks, Associate Curator of Photography, Art Gallery of Ontario
- Dr. Kimberly Juanita Brown, Chair of Gender Studies, Associate Professor of English and Africana Studies, Mount Holyoke College
- Dr. Julia Emberley, Professor, English Studies, Western University
- Dr. David L. Eng, Professor, Department of English, Comparative Literature and Literary Theory, and the Program in Asian American Studies at the University of Pennsylvania
- Candice Hopkins, Tlingit, Senior Curator of the Toronto Biennial of Art
- Nataleah Hunter-Young, Trudeau Scholar and PhD candidate in Communication and Culture, Ryerson University
- Dr. Heather Igloliorte, Inuk, Assistant Professor, Art History, Concordia University
- Dr. Alice Ming Wai Jim, Professor, Art History, Concordia University
- Dr. Amy Lonetree, Ho-Chunk, Associate Professor, History and Critical Race & Ethnic Studies, University of California Santa Cruz;
- Dr. Charmaine Nelson, Professor, Art History, McGill University
- Dr. Dylan Robinson, Stó:lō, Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Arts, Queen's University
- Dr. Nishant Shahani, Associate Professor, Department of Critical Culture, Gender and Race Studies, Washington State University
- Dr. Sharon Sliwinski, Professor, Faculty of Information and Media Studies, Western University
- Hulleah J. Tsinhnahjinnie, Taskigi/Diné, Professor of Native American Studies and Director of the Gorman Museum, University of California at Davis
- Dr. Eve Tuck, Unangax, Associate Professor, Critical Race and Indigenous Studies, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
- Dr. Dot Tuer, Professor, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences and School of Interdisciplinary Studies, OCAD University

Confirmed emerging scholar participants:

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| • Pansee Atta | • Sefanit Habtom | • Geraldine King |
| • Ashlee Bird | • Marshall Hill | • Kirk Kitzul |
| • Shawn Cheatham | • Adrienne Huard | • Cheryl L'Hirondelle |
| • Sebastian De Line | • Hadley Howes | |

- Tanya Lukin Linklater
- Anthony Lomax
- Victoria Miceli
- Patrick Nickleson
- Jade Nixon
- Alexandra Nordstrom
- Laura Phillips
- Anni Pullagura
- Lisa Ravensbergen
- Raven Spiratos
- Ryan Suvera
- Camille Usher
- Ellyn Walker

Guidelines for emerging scholars:

The inclusion of emerging scholars is a key facet of this workshop. In this way, we hope to foster discussions among generations of scholars and create a platform for new scholars' voices to be heard. Emerging scholars are invited to participate in two important ways:

Panel Respondents: Emerging scholars will serve as respondents for the thematic panels, providing short (10 minute) responses to the panels of speakers to lead off the discussion period. Responses will identify key themes and links among papers while also posing questions to the audience for further discussion.

Breakout Sessions: At the end of the first day, a breakout session will invite emerging scholars to present key terms that are vital to thinking through how we define reparations and how they might be mobilized within art, exhibitions, visual culture and social activism. **If words are tools, what are the tools we will need to do reparative work in and with visual culture?** The goal of this session is to allow all participants—presenters, emerging scholars as well as invited guests—to contribute to definitions for these terms in a casual, conversational format. Our hope is to generate a glossary of terms that will be included in the edited journal volume that results from the workshop, which will be submitted to the *Journal of Visual Culture* in spring 2020.

A list of the key terms to be discussed will be posted at the front of the room. Pairs of emerging scholars will host a discussion about the term they have selected, following the structure of Open Space.

Open Space has Four Rules and One Law (the Law of Two Feet)

The Four Rules state: 1. Whoever come[s] are the right people; 2. Whatever happens is the only thing that could have; 3. Whenever it starts is the right time; 4. When it's over, it's over. The Law of Two Feet states that: "If, during the course of the gathering, any person finds themselves in a situation where they are neither learning nor contributing, they can go to some more productive place."

As hosts for your key term, your job is to:

- Host that discussion;
- Record the conversation or arrange someone else to do it for the benefit of anyone unable to participate (flipchart and post it notes will be available);

At the end of the session, all the notes will be collected and compiled on a wall for day 2 where they can be consulted, added to and used for the final breakout session identifying "New Directions for Reparations."

List of key terms:

- empathy (Anni Pullagura)
- envy (Shawn Cheatham)
- narrative (Alexandra Nordstrom and Ashlee Bird)
- rematriation/repatriation (Pansee Atta and Sefanit Habtom)
- return (Jade Nixon)
- survivance (Victoria Miceli)
- visual sovereignty (Raven Spiratos)