

International Conference  
9–10 December 2022  
German Center for Art History, Paris  
45, Rue des Petits Champs, Hôtel Lully – 75001 PARIS  
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# EMERGENCE

## FROM THE PLACE TO THE SPACE OF IMAGES

### IN FRENCH ART FROM THE 17<sup>TH</sup> TO THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

The question of the emergence of pictorial forms of expression can also be understood as a matter of the place, or – perhaps even better – the space, of images. Even the classical approach to reception aesthetics presupposes that images are constitutively tailored to a viewing subject and that this relation to a recipient is essentially reflected in the inner structures of the image or rather already conceptually based thereupon. Such pictorial dispositions are only comprehensible by taking into account the image's inner spatial configurations in their relationship to the installation space and its features (the exhibition or hanging), i.e. in the experience of the interweaving of pictorial space, viewing context, and recipient.

Gernot Böhme narrowed down this basic relationship between the material object and the viewer in his aesthetic theory of the atmospheric, in which he defined this *relatum* as atmosphere itself and directed our attention to the mutual shaping of two components, embodiment on the one hand and its appearance in perception on the other (Böhme 2001, p. 54). What is described here as a relation recent positions have further characterized in terms of aesthetic interstitiality (Breitenwischer 2018). Expanding on the debates around *Bildakte*, one can speak of a realization of the pictorial in an aesthetic in-between, which itself is only brought forth in the performance of the reception process and in the framework of which pictures and their beholders anticipate each other and dialectically constitute each other as such.

Long before these matters became the subject of theoretical reflection, painters negotiated – in the pictures themselves – the capacity of images to exceed themselves (*Außer-Sich-Sein*) and to reach into an aesthetic in-between, making these criteria an important component, and sometimes even the subject, of their depictions. This raises the question of how this aesthetic interstitiality is reflected in the pictures themselves, to what extent and how it is palpable both on the level of their spatial order and their temporal structures, and how autogenous and exogenous factors behave and interact.

Investigation of the varieties of pictorial emergence also inevitably leads to the phenomenon of an intrinsic interweaving of the pictures with their (in the narrower sense) extra-pictorial fields of reference and their extended aesthetic, cultural, social, and even political contexts. Church interiors, galleries, and private collections, studios, salons, and ephemeral displays of images, on the one hand, and the behaviour of the viewer, on the other, call for different ways of spatiotemporally framing the interdependencies discussed here. Being related to a specific environment implies a mutual modelling of image, architecture, and interior, which can lead to a dissolution of boundaries between media. Images are often part of multi-component object arrangements that unfold in interactions among media, or they are essentially linked to (e.g. liturgical) practices, such that their actual pictorial meaning is only fulfilled in the act of performance. These points of reference do not remain external to the images but rather shape them so fundamentally that the space of the pictorial itself shifts in a significant way. At the same time, the idiosyncrasy of images to emerge and to realize themselves performatively in such an in-between means that the most diverse sensory milieus are diffused in the iconic-visual inventory and such synaesthetic dimensions of perception can feed into representations.

While recent research has attended to the aspect of immersion as manifested in the art literature of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (see e.g. Weisenseel 2017), the question of the emergence of images has hardly been examined or theorized – Emmanuel Alloa has with his recent philosophical reflections on *immersiv* images made a first push in this direction (Alloa 2021). In this context, one must also ask whether and to what extent the phenomena described by the terms ‘immersion’ and ‘emergence’ ought not be considered fundamentally complementary. Moreover, studies on *trompe-l’oeil* can be tied in (for first attempts in this area, see Fürst 2017), though the project outlined here concerns neither solely nor primarily the effects of optical illusion but rather forms of pictorial space, to be further contextualized within the theory and history of images as well as within reception aesthetics.

The scheduled conference proceeds along two methodological axes:

- On the one hand, art-historical case studies should serve to problematize the status of images themselves and shed light on the modalities underpinning their workings. The agentivity of images in the context of the spaces that house them will also be a central theme.
- On the other hand, historical source material should be consulted in order to reflect on the emergence of images and, in particular, to understand contemporary reflections thereupon. Here we wish to concentrate primarily on the role of the viewer and their relationship to the artwork. With the progress of thoughtful work on art theory, which is reflected in texts and public discourse, the early modern period in France is destined to catch up with the

variety of aspects associated with this topic. Numerous interdisciplinary questions also arise, for instance with a view to theories of rhetoric and theatre, which are inflected in essential ways by the *emersive* phenomena of the act of reception.

The targeted period of investigation is the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. Contributions that develop new theoretical positions are especially welcome. Papers dealing with the 19<sup>th</sup> century are also acceptable, provided the subject matter pertains to practices or discourses from earlier centuries.

Individual papers are limited to 30 minutes, and joint papers to 40 minutes. Abstracts (approx. 300 words) may be submitted in the languages of the conference – namely English, French, and German – and should be sent with a short CV in a single PDF file to the following three email addresses: Julia Kloss-Weber ([julia.kloss-weber@uni-hamburg.de](mailto:julia.kloss-weber@uni-hamburg.de)), Valérie Kobi ([valerie.kobi@unine.ch](mailto:valerie.kobi@unine.ch)), and Markus A. Castor ([mcastor@dfk-paris.org](mailto:mcastor@dfk-paris.org)). Deadline for applications: 30.06.2022. Responses will be given in July 2022.