

CALL FOR PAPERS: Art History and “The Local”
Guest Editors: Julia Silverman and Mary McNeil

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Abstracts due: August 20, 2021

Within the past decade, specific locales—Ferguson, Baltimore, Standing Rock, Unist’ot’en Camp, Mauna Kea, Louisville, and Minneapolis, to name only a few—have emerged as the focal points in national and international discussions of white supremacy and settler colonial violence. Such struggles have often transgressed the boundaries of settler nation-states or have impacted Indigenous nations whose traditional homelands straddle these colonial borders, as in the cases of recent settler violence against Mi’kmaq fishers and ongoing protests against Line 3. This section of *In the Round* seeks to explore art-historical responses to emphases on “the local” from artists, community organizers, and academics, whether through geographically hyper-focused projects, research ethics, community collaboration, or other modes.

The notion of thinking locally is not new to Western academics. In anthropology especially, fieldwork has been an integral part of scholarship since at least the early twentieth century. Yet fieldwork has not always been accompanied by respect for local forms of knowledge, discourse, and desire. In response, scholars in numerous fields, including the adjacent fields of Black Studies and Native American and Indigenous Studies, have attempted to create scholarship that, in its telling of history, is attuned to the particular epistemologies and political needs of those communities. (We build on and acknowledge foundational work by scholars such as Lisa Brooks, Christine DeLucia, Tiffany Lethabo King, Katherine McKittrick, Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Clyde Woods, and several others). Meanwhile, in the broader art world, activist groups such as [Art Against Displacement](#), [Strike MoMA](#), and [Decolonize This Place](#) have forcefully interrogated and resisted art institutions’ ongoing role in processes of gentrification, colonization, and genocide, while organizations like [The Chapter House](#) have created digital spaces for community artmaking over great geographic distances. How can scholars of American art learn from these developments, especially as we seek to correct our discipline’s history of erasing and marginalizing works, especially those created by BIPOC artists?

For this section of *In the Round*, we are conceiving of the local in two broad ways, although we are open to other interpretations of the theme. First, we understand it as the study of aesthetic practices that emerge from specific contexts and social conditions that are tethered to place. Second, we see the local as a methodological impulse that seeks to counter transient, extractivist modes of scholarly production by investing in deep, reciprocal relationships with communities of study and struggle. Above all, we are guided by the assertion that *the local matters*—and not just because it is a site where one can “think globally, [but] act locally.” How might a reversal of the more recent art-historical trajectory toward “the global” prompt new methods and subjects of art-historical interpretation?

We seek proposals for essays, methodological reflections, original works of art, and other written responses on any topic that engages with “the local” as it pertains to the art and visual culture of Turtle Island (North America). Essays should be between 2,500 and 5,000 words, inclusive of endnotes. We especially welcome submissions that address the following questions:

- + How do specific communities understand their own locality and broader notions of the local? How does one determine the bounds of a given community?
- + How might a rigorous focus on the local foreground the relationship between politics and aesthetics?
- + How does the ecology of specific locales inform artistic media and processes?
- + How can we methodologically engage with the local in ways that do not reify problematic historical trends of extraction, fetishization, or the assimilation of knowledge to a Western epistemological frame? What kinds of scholarship are useable and actionable to knowledge bearers and communities beyond the university?
- + Can digital spaces be understood as local, or are other analytics necessary? What role do the internet and/or social media play in understanding, reimagining, or reconfiguring the local?
- + How might a turn to the local offer a corrective to global methodologies?
- + How can scholars who are firmly entrenched within academia reckon with their respective institutions’ relationships to the local, and how might they conceive of their own personal responsibilities to surrounding communities? How do certain exigencies of academia (transience, time, funding) affect the feasibility of methodologies rooted in the local?

For consideration, please fill out this form (<https://forms.gle/oNrGdvL6v9aR9bna9>) with your name, a short biography and a 250-word abstract by August 20, 2021. The deadline for papers will be December 30, 2021.

If you have any questions, feel free to email Mary McNeil (mmcneil@g.harvard.edu) and Julia Silverman (juliasilverman@g.harvard.edu).