

CONFERENCE WEBSITE:


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## | About the Conference


An Archaeology of the Gaze  
Studying the evolutions of the Iconography of  
Violence and Brutality

Anyone familiar with the war iconography of ancient sovereigns—from the Assyrian palaces and temples of Ramses II to Trajan’s Column—would not be surprised by these powers' claims to legitimate violence. It was entirely endorsed by the sovereign, reducing the victims of the conquering arm to mere foils for the political power asserting itself through force. In stark contrast, the photographs that journalists share from contemporary conflicts are often characterized by a specific focus on the victims, whose suffering has become central to the interpretation of violence.

This long-term evolution, whose clarity is deceptive, leads us to examine the transformations not only in the themes and their meanings within socio-cultural frameworks but especially in the perspectives, both anticipated by the creators of the works and manifested in the contexts of visual experience. This shift, whose

 **Important Dates**

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 **CONFERENCE DATE**  
**May 15-16, 2025**

extremes are more discernible than its intermediate stages and turning points, is evident across various visual arts—both in traditional forms like painting, sculpture, and related techniques, as well as in newer mediums such as photography, comics, and cinema.

Several explanatory frameworks have been proposed to understand this paradigm shift. Although these frameworks sometimes offer valuable heuristic insights, they alone cannot fully explain the complex mechanisms driving these changes in how images are perceived. On the one hand, René Girard's theories have highlighted shifts in the perception of victims and executioners, interpreting them as a critique of scapegoat mechanisms. On the other, Norbert Elias's study of the "civilization of manners" describes a low tolerance for violence, which extends to how violence is visually represented. To grasp this evolution more comprehensively, it is necessary to integrate recent contributions from the social sciences, including new interpretations of violent phenomena and the variations between iconographic regimes.

The conference thus aims to explore these long-term changes and welcomes contributions spanning a wide range of historical periods, from Antiquity to the present day, and diverse geographical contexts. It seeks to gather studies that address all forms of visual representation, going beyond the Western definition of Fine Arts and contemporary image technologies. Additionally, the conference will address various types of violence and brutality, from warfare and

corporal punishment to interpersonal violence and coercion. Contributors are invited to reflect on and discuss the definitions and boundaries of the key concepts at the heart of the conference.

Call for papers at the Young Researchers conference - May 2025

The contributions will be organized along several themes:

- 1) The study of the reception of images, the modes of contact with the image, the socio-cultural categories concerned, the debates about their diffusion and their appropriation.
- 2) A comparative approach, putting into perspective the evolution of a type of violent motif, or the differences between specific cultural and geographical contexts.
- 3) A study of the categories at work in scenes of violence, such as victim, hero, or executioner, either through a chronological approach or focused on their appearance in an iconographic context.
- 4) An interpretation of specific iconographic body

of evidence, in light of political, social, and ideological contexts.

## Submission conditions

Submission deadline: January 8, 2025

Submission format: Word or PDF file including the researcher's presentation (name and surname, institutional affiliation, name of the supervisor(s) for PhD students), as well as the title and abstract of the proposal (350 words maximum). It is possible to attach one or two images as supporting material.

Abstracts in French and English are accepted.

Contact address: colloqueregard2025@gmail.com

The conference will take place over two days, on May 15 and 16, 2025, at the Sorbonne and Serpente campuses (75005 and 75006). It may be the subject of a publication.

Organisers :

Matthieu Hagenmüller, Emma Maurel and Azadeh Yekdaneh

### **TOPICS OF INTEREST**

2 topics

Research papers are invited in, but not limited to, the following areas:

 Uncategorized

 Humanities &  
Cultural Studies

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