

Call for Papers

**ART AND THE CITY: URBAN SPACE, ART AND
SOCIAL CHANGE CONFERENCE**

Columbia Global Centers | Amman

June 11-14, 2023

www.artandthecity.sciencesconf.org



Art Mural in Amman, Jordan (Photo by [sander traq](#))

CONFERENCE SUMMARY

The conference series *Art and the City: Urban Space, Art and Social Change* is an annual event, held since 2019, that serves as a hub for scholars from the social sciences and humanities to engage in trans-regional and trans-disciplinary dialogues and collaborations with a focus on art, the 'right to the city', aesthetics and politics of the urban environment, artistic rebellion on the streets, aesthetics of urban social movements and art activism in the urban space.

The conference brings together a team of international scholars to present a multifaceted, multi-disciplinary, and multi-geographic perspective that articulates and promotes a richer and more integrated understanding of the ideologies, relationships, meanings and practices

that arise from the diverse interactions among three social spheres, namely: urban space, art, and social change.

The role of art in the urban space involves a multitude of spatial and temporal dynamics and constitutes emotional, dialogical, and aesthetic interactions. On the one hand, art assists in the improvement of urban development, tourism, public health, race relations, and even welfare. On the other hand, we observe that art lends its competencies to urban activism and social change from exercising the 'right to the city', anti-gentrification movements to urban social movements with their spatial, ideological, and ecological agenda to the struggles of democracy, civil rights, individual and collective freedoms.

The politico-aesthetic character of these movements has been explored extensively from the perspective of plural resistance against the authoritative government, the struggle over the appropriation and use of public space, structural and social inequalities, and human rights issues. However, these debates lack a specialized framework and language for contemporary art practice, which places urban space and its social urgencies at the center of its production.

Crucially, the recent discussions on the sociality of art emphasize the therapeutic, ethical, unitary, reconciliatory, and functional attributes of art, focusing on how art contributes to easing tensions between communities and city authorities. Although such criticism of socially engaged art stimulating social change is sound, it undermines art's capacities of struggle and agonism, of contestation and re-appropriation that emerge through the creation of common and shared spaces for socialization, mobilization, and political action.

To advance this discussion and widen the debates on art's relationship to the political and social dimensions, the *Art and the City* conference interrogates what it is to aesthetically experience the city from the perspective of social dissensus and democratic citizenship.

The overarching theme "Urban Space, Art and Social Change" envelops this year's conference and follows four tracks (to be covered in nine panels):

1. Art activism in the city against authoritarianism
2. Art, architecture, and the aesthetic struggle for urban commons
3. Public arts, public space and democracy
4. Urban arts and the politics of urban spaces

The conference invites participants from the humanities and social sciences disciplines to analyze and discuss the ways art:

- is used for reclaiming the cities as sites of resistance and change,
- struggles in the increasingly surveilled, designed, aestheticized and otherwise controlled urban contexts,
- confronts and reconstitutes the concept of public space,
- provides citizenry with new and innovative ways to engage,
- activates, captures, and subverts the experience of urban space,
- enables reflexive processes and co-creation of knowledge and worldview,

- empowers marginalized voices and subjects in the city,
- reveals hegemonic and counterhegemonic interactions among city authorities, urban developers and artists,
- produces new narratives of social organization in the gentrified urban space,
- transforms our understanding of the politics of the urban space,
- changes our sensual and perceptual encounters with the city,
- reveals, questions and resists authoritarian thinking and doing,
- constitutes a part of the aesthetics of the urban social movements and their commitment to participative (direct) democracy, and,
- accentuates potentials and disadvantages related to the interaction of eco-activism with urban ecologies.

KEYNOTE

The keynote address will be delivered by Catherine Clover, a multimedia artist and teacher at Swinburne University of Technology (MA Writing), and RMIT University (MA Public Art) in Melbourne Australia. Catherine holds a practice led PhD (Fine Art) through RMIT University.

GUIDE FOR PARTICIPANTS

Contributors are invited to submit abstracts that should be 500 words maximum. Along with the abstract, please include a brief, recent Curriculum Vitae/bio (no longer than one page). To submit your abstract, please send them to the conference convener, **Tijen Tunali**, at tt2928@columbia.edu by **Wednesday, March 15, 2023**.

The 2023 scientific committee consists of the following members:

Eva Branscome, Architectural History, the Bartlett School of Architecture

Anna Dempsey, Visual and Performing Arts, University of Massachusetts

Emre Çetin Gürer, Philosophy, Koç University

Ilaria Hoppe, Art and Philosophy, Katholische Privat-Universität Linz

Friederike Landau, Cultural Geography, Radboud University

John Lennon, English, University of South Florida

Alla Myzelev, Art History, the State University of New York at Geneseo

Robert Nilsson Mohammadi, Society and Culture, Malmö University

Tijen Tunali, Art History, Columbia Global Centers, Columbia University

Josepha Wessels, Arts and Communication, Malmö University

Selected papers will be invited to contribute to an edited volume by Routledge or to a special issue in *Street Art and Urban Creativity Journal*.

Preference will be for in-person attendance, although virtual participation will be made possible. The conference has a modest travel budget to enable the participation of junior scholars (particularly Ph.D. and postdoc researchers). **Please state your need for a travel grant in the body of your email.**

There is no conference fee. Refreshments during coffee breaks, lunch, and a conference welcome dinner will be provided.

IMPORTANT DATES

The conference will be held at the Columbia Global Centers in Amman, Jordan on **June 11-14, 2023**. On the afternoon of June 13, a guided street art tour of Amman is planned for the participants free of charge. The following day on June 14, excursions to Petra and Wadi Rum will be organized for an extra cost.

Deadline for submission of abstract: March 15

Deadline to communicate the evaluation: March 31

Deadline for confirmation of participation: April 30

For any enquiries regarding the conference program, please contact: Tijen Tunali, Conference Convenor and Mellon Fellow at tt2928@columbia.edu.