

26-27 November 2026

ASYM- METRICAL VIEWS



Art Exhibitions
of the Nineteenth
Century Revisited

Academic Conference Centre
(Institute of Art History, CAS)
Husova 4, Prague, Czech Republic

Organized by the Institute of Art History
of the Czech Academy of Sciences



ÚSTAV DĚJIN UMĚNÍ
AKADEMIE VĚD
ČESKÉ REPUBLIKY, v. v. i.

Asymmetrical Views: Art Exhibitions of the Nineteenth Century Revisited

The 19th century witnessed the rise and transformation of the art exhibition into a powerful modern visual medium. Over the past decades, research on exhibitions has demonstrated how exhibitionary structures, display strategies, and political framing responded to the growing social importance of visual experience and became tools for articulating a wide range of narratives, most notably national ones. During the 19th century, exhibitions acquired an unprecedented communicative force: as visual media, they employed the persuasive power of images to shape collective cultural and political imaginaries.

Since the 1990s, scholarship on exhibitions has largely focused on documenting and interpreting major exhibitionary events. More recently, however, attention has shifted toward previously marginalized actors, practices, and perspectives, revealing how exhibitions simultaneously produced cultural hierarchies, exclusions, and forms of othering. This workshop seeks to revisit 19th-century exhibitions through the lens of asymmetry. We are particularly interested in tensions between centres and peripheries, official and unofficial forms of display, elite and popular audiences, dominant and marginalized narratives, as well as the unequal visibility of artists, curators, audiences, and exhibited objects.

Questions we would like to address include:

- What was the relationship between the elite environment of official or academic exhibitions and the broader culture of popular exhibiting?
- What forms of exclusion emerged at the intersection of professional art, gender, class, ethnicity, or nationalism?
- How did changing concepts of the artwork shape exhibition practices and exhibitionary publics?
- How did exhibitions circulate across borders, and how were visual narratives translated within transnational contexts?

We welcome contributions addressing, but not limited to, the following topics:

The workshop is organized in connection with the research projects of the Institute of Art History of the Czech Academy of Sciences: *Spaces, Objects, Authors: Building a Cultural Public in the Czech Lands 1790–1918* and the database *Art Exhibitions in the Czech Lands 1820–1950*.

1. Exhibitions and the formation of publics

The exhibition format as a catalyst for the formation art publics and public space; exhibitions as sites for creating, consolidating, or disrupting artistic canons; asymmetries in participation and visibility within exhibition culture; emergence of exclusions at the intersection of professional art, gender, class, ethnicity, or nationalism.

2. Transnational exhibition networks

Traveling exhibitions, international circulation, critics' perspectives across borders, and the transnational comprehensibility of visual narratives.

3. Curatorship and exhibition agency in the 19th century

Curatorship as an emerging role, profession, and form of cultural mediation.

4. Methods and perspectives of exhibition histories today

Comparative and interdisciplinary approaches to exhibition histories (round-table discussion format).

Please submit an abstract of max. 250 words together with a short biography and institutional affiliation by 30 June 2026 to: Pavla Machalíková, machalikova@udu.cas.cz

Further information on the related projects:

Spaces, Object, Authors project

<https://www.udu.cas.cz/en/projekty-a-granty/prostory-objekty-autori-a-kuratori-budovani-kulturni-verejnosti-v-ceskych-zemich-1790-1918>

Art Exhibitions in the Czech Lands database