



One-Day Conference

LOOKING AT A SMALL PLANET: NEW TRAVEL NARRATIVES IN THE POST-COLONIAL ATLANTIC

February 14, 2025

Paris, Institut national d'histoire de l'art (INHA)
Salle Mariette

This conference aims to promote a dialogue among researchers working on travel narratives produced in the second half of the twentieth century across the Atlantic, in a variety of media (literature, tourist guides, photo books, films and television, among others). While travel narratives have been extensively studied as sources for the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, in the context of exploration accounts, scientific exploration reports, testimonies of Europe's colonial expansion, or vehicles for representations of distant places, "the time of the finite world" that Paul Valéry evoked as early as 1931, and the gradual disappearance of the last blank spots on the map, resemanticize the form and content of this literary genre.

In the decades following World War II, a series of technical and geopolitical upheavals occurred that transformed the nature of travel and its connections. On one hand, the rise of civil aviation and mass tourism democratized the experience of traveling to other worlds and led to the emergence of new actors, bringing with them new narratives. On the other hand, the decolonization of Africa and Asia, the emergence of the "Third World" category and Third-Worldism, the questioning of ethnocentrism, and the old dichotomy between "center" and "periphery," as well as the attraction of various political experiences such as the Cuban Revolution, all transformed the meaning of travel, which now aimed to be more authentic but also often more political. By focusing on travel narratives from the second half of the 20th century, this study day seeks to examine the tension between the persistence of a tradition inherited from the 19th century, or even earlier periods, and the renewal of a genre that remains highly codified. Special attention will be given to analyzing tourist practices and their narratives, militant tourism, new formats of travel narratives (country portraits, photography books, films and videos, travel guides, etc.), and the perspectives on a world that is both shrinking and transformed.

This study day is co-organized by the Centre for Cultural History of Contemporary Societies (CHCSC, University of Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines / University Paris-Saclay) with the support of the Jean d'Alembert scholarship program of the Université Paris-Saclay and the International Research Project "Transatlantic Cultures" (CNRS / University of São Paulo).

Deadline for submission of proposals: December 15, 2024

Abstract of 1500 characters and bio-bibliographical presentation of the author (800 characters)

Languages: French, English, Spanish

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