

**Visualizing Theory**  
**An Interdisciplinary Conference on Critical Theory**  
**Keynote Speakers: Anne Carson & Kaja Silverman**

The Critical Theory Certificate Program at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York presents the seventh annual interdisciplinary conference on Critical Theory to be held May 10-11, 2018. This year's conference will be devoted to the role of the visual imagination.

In *Timaeus*, Plato writes “Vision is the cause of the greatest benefit to us...it has given the means of research into the nature of the Universe,” firmly placing vision at the center of critical enquiry. Contemplation and judgment based on sight have therefore been intrinsic to Critical Theory since inception, with the word “theory” literally meaning “things looked at.” A vital component of human experience, sight serves as the basis of education, thought, and persuasion; even non-visual media seek to evoke a visual reaction in audiences through the use of imagery and *ekphrasis*. The visual continued to shape the discipline of Critical Theory as theorists engaged with new forms of visual media in order to investigate altered modes of interpretation and perception. The globalization and technology of the present era makes accessible a greater number of images across larger distances, allowing us to see more than we ever have. The evaluation of what we see continues to permeate all aspects of society: artistic expression, ethical constructs, political institutions, and personal identities.

This conference seeks to employ Critical Theory to examine all aspects of visual perception—its evolution, practice, interpretation, and role in shaping literature, the arts, political discourse, ethics, and identity—in order to interrogate the functions and effects of what we see. We welcome a wide range of disciplines and theoretical approaches, including literary theory, psychoanalysis, identity theory, semiotics, philosophy, social theory, cultural studies, media studies, postcolonialism, gender studies, and political theory. Some of the topics that this conference seeks to address include but are not limited to:

- Aesthetics and concepts of beauty
- The visual, rhetoric, and persuasion
- *Ekphrasis* and image in literature
- The visual and theatre/performance
- Analyses of visual media, including photography and film
- New technology/apparatuses of looking and vision
- Psychoanalytic and cognitive approaches to the visual
- Political uses of images the visual, including propaganda
- Vision and memory
- The relationship between the visual and identity
- The use of image and visual language to explain non-visual ideas
- Sight and the understanding of history
- The visual and its relationship with non-visual media
- Vision and perception of the self
- The gendered gaze
- Commercial and economic effects of the visual
- Absences of the visual and their effects
- The visual and education
- Theoretical approaches and uses of the visual

Please submit a 300-word abstract to [visualizingtheoryconference@gmail.com](mailto:visualizingtheoryconference@gmail.com) by March 1<sup>st</sup>. Proposals should include the title of the paper, the presenter's name, a 75-word bio including institutional and departmental affiliation and rank, and any technology requests. We also welcome panel proposals of three to four papers.