



Call for papers

**ENGAGING MARGINS:
FRAMING IMAGERY AS EMBODIMENT OF
COGNITIVE PROCESSES**

Submission deadline: 10 January 2020

The goal of this conference is to assess to what extent images placed in the margins of a main literary or visual work could reflect, encourage or interact with cognitive processes. To date, the influence of early modern developments of knowledge in marginal visual devices has been underestimated in art historical studies. By addressing this issue, two fields of inquiry will be combined: (1) the history of ideas and (2) visual media in early modern Europe.

From the Renaissance onwards, the prevalence and diversity of marginal images increased considerably, thereby covering a wide variety of art forms. Arguably, this phenomenon is intertwined with the shaping and transmitting of knowledge, as frames can function as effective devices to present images that can be in accordance with the main work, but that can also modify or even contradict its meaning. Analogously, fields of knowledge such as dialectic, rhetoric, physics, astronomy, medicine and theology shared an interest in disputation and debate. The importance of inventing, expressing and remembering questions, arguments and examples for or against a given topic was generally acknowledged. The role of visual thinking is particularly manifest in didactic practices (e.g. in materials produced within educational institutions or associated with epistemological discourses), but it is also evident in materials conceived outside pedagogical or scholarly spheres.

The theme of frames and framing borders has constituted a fruitful field of investigation among the humanities and social sciences since Erving Goffman's influential publication *Frame Analysis* (1974). Numerous studies have highlighted their fundamental place in various artistic media, by the treatment of the border and correspondingly that of framing processes and the possible crossing of the threshold. Louis Marin (1988) and Victor Stoichita (1993) analyzed the nature and functions fulfilled by framing devices that promoted painting to the rank of a privileged object of perception. Meyer Schapiro (1994) studied the role of frames as establishing boundaries and defining a space in relationship with a larger environment. Several authors emphasized the paradoxical status of frames oscillating between an indicial purpose and a formal and signifying elaboration, between subordinate property and essential nature (Paul Duro, 1996; Thierry Lenain and Rudy Steinmetz, 2010). Others analyzed frames as 'cognitive guides of interpretation' or as 'orientational aids in perception, experience and communication' (Werner Wolf and Walter Bernhart, 2006).

In this rich scholarly context, this conference intends to further explore the relationship between margins and cognition in early modern visual art. By establishing connections between iconological studies and intellectual history, we seek to revalue marginal imagery not only as a way to visualize knowledge but also as a key factor in the production of meaning and cognitive effects. We welcome proposals that address visual media from various contexts in early modern Europe. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- The production of visual framing devices in didactic, socio-political or religious contexts, such as the collaboration between artists, patrons, scholars, students, merchants, clerics, authors, and printers.
- The influence of marginal representations on the reception of the work: how can they involve the viewer, highlight or clarify the primary message, give additional information or instead divert attention to themselves?
- The contribution of modern art theories: how can theories and methods from semiology, philosophy of art, anthropology of art, history of science, sociology, or other disciplines help us to study the structure of early modern artworks and their relation to knowledge discourses?
- Cross-temporal and cross-geographical explorations of marginal iconography, and comparisons between different artistic genres and visual languages, such as descriptive, allegorical, symbolical, ornamental and scientific languages (e.g. diagrams, tree structures, mathematical signs).
- The relationship between a 'main' work and its 'periphery' (e.g. separation, for instance of real and fictional worlds; or on the contrary, transgression of the limits set by the frame) and the manner in which both framed and framing structures convey information.
- The role of marginal representations in the arts of memory, such as in emblematic literature, allegories and personifications, frontispieces, world maps, commonplace books, architectural structures in public spaces (e.g. sepulchers, arches).
- The playful dimension, delectation, or pleasure implied by those constructions.



The conference will be held in Brussels on 8-9 October 2020. The main language will be English, but we also consider papers in French and Dutch. Please send a 250-word abstract for a 30-minute paper and a CV (1 page max) to Gwendoline.DeMuelenaere@UGent.be and Sophie.Suykens@UGent.be by 10 January 2020. Participants will be notified in the course of February 2020.

Guest speakers: Marisa Bass (Yale University), Volker Remmert (Bergische Universität Wuppertal), Victor Stoichita (Université de Fribourg)

Organizing committee: Gwendoline de Muelenaere (UGent) and Sophie Suykens (UGent)

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