



*Trans^{Positions} is an international network formed by three partner institutions in the field of graduate education with the Graduate School of the Humanities at the University of Bern as lead institution and the Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Lucerne and the Department of History and Art History at Utrecht University as partners. Its main goals are to encourage interdisciplinary academic exchange and to establish an international network of doctoral and postdoctoral scholars in the fields of humanities and social sciences. Each event within the network focuses on specific aspects of the overall theme of **TransPositions: Objects, images, persons, cultural formations, and disciplinary positions in motion**. The successful first edition on “Border regimes” was hosted by GSH Bern, the second edition will be hosted by the ERC ARTECHNE project and the Department of History and Art History at Utrecht University, The Netherlands.*

Call for Applications

Application deadline: 22 February 2017

When: August 21-25, 2017 | **Where:** Woudschoten Hotel & Conference Centre near Utrecht, The Netherlands

Language: English | **ECTS:** 6 | **Costs:** 250 Euro (travel and accommodation [double room] covered by organizer)

Trans^{Positions} Summer School:

Sensible Objects, Material Engagement, Skilled Expertise

This edition of the TransPositions Summer School focusses on material culture and the senses. How can we investigate sensory experiences of past material cultures or cultures that are not our own? And how can we reconstruct in our studies the experiential richness of ephemera and material practices “lost in transmission” or only preserved in textual sources? The summer school approaches these questions across different disciplines including art history, archaeology, anthropology, conservation, musicology, performance and media studies, cognitive science, and religion- and science studies.

Today the constitutive and performative nature of material culture has become widely acknowledged and researchers have developed different methodologies and tools to study the complex, dynamic textures and temporalities of material cultures. Scholars have shown, for example, that neither science nor religion can be studied as “immaterial affairs”. Instead, they study the material genesis of immaterial facts and spiritual presence with an integrated and inherently multi-disciplinary approach that does not prioritize mind over matter. At the same time, scholars from and across different disciplines have challenged notions of the senses as discrete and monolithic. Visual anthropologists study sensory perception as situated action that is guided by and sensible to material affordances of the environments; historians of the senses have convincingly shown how sensory notions and experiences change through time; conservators and technical art historians redefined the activity of looking as a learned competency that comes with handling materials and developing sensorial proficiency in assessing their textures and surfaces. These participatory and materially engaged approaches, prompt us to reassess notions of seeing in terms of “sensorial apprenticeship” and “skilled vision”. Moreover, new methods are explored across different disciplines, combining object-based and reconstruction research that train visual acuity and material literacy. In fact, the handling and remaking of cultural artefacts is increasingly understood as a powerful heuristic process. Yet, at the same time, these approaches give rise to ongoing controversies about the nature of material agencies, while the usefulness of embodied, extended and embedded mind theories for the study of past and present material cultures remain open to discussion.

Building on scholarship that brought materials and things to the centre of scholarly attention, we invite participants to contribute to critical interdisciplinary discussions, moving beyond the questions “Why materials?” or “Why things?” and exploring *how* we can become more perceptive to materials and sensible objects, *how* we can foster material engagements in our fields, and *how* we—as humanities and social sciences scholars—can apprentice ourselves (and our students) in sensory proficiency and skilled material expertise relevant to our research. In particular, the following questions will be addressed:

- How can we investigate sensory experiences of past material cultures or cultures that are not our own?
- How are human bodies involved in practices of making visible and palpable?
- How can we educate our senses? How do we build sensory expertise and material literacy?
- In what ways can performative and experiential methodologies help us to study the historical and cultural contingencies of sensory experiences?
- How can we account for sensual and performative aspects of material culture in our own research output—in text, visual forms or in speech?

Invited keynote speakers (confirmed):

Ulinka Rublack ([Faculty of History, Cambridge University](#))

Lambros Malafouris ([Keble College and Institute of Archaeology, Oxford University](#))

Rachel Prentice ([Dept. of Science and Technology Studies, Cornell University](#))

Shigehisa Kuriyama ([Dept. of East Asian Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University](#))

Format

Each morning session begins with a lecture given by one of our four keynote speakers, followed by responses and plenary discussions. These sessions prepare the ground for the parallel workshops in the afternoon, which focus on key concepts and core texts that are particularly relevant for the research projects of the participants. Posters visualize the participants' projects and foster informal exchange throughout the week.

Programme overview

Week	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
MON		Arrival / Welcome	Introduction / Poster Exhibition
TUE	Lecture, response, discussion	Parallel workshops	Hands-on activity (or THU)
WED	Lecture, response, discussion	Hands-on workshop	
THU	Lecture, response, discussion	Parallel workshops	Hands-on activity (or TUE)
FRI	Lecture, response, discussion	Optional: field trip Amsterdam	Departure (afternoon or evening)

Application Procedure

The Summer School offers doctoral and postdoctoral scholars a unique opportunity to contribute to a broader discussion with their own research and ideas. We encourage applications from researchers from the humanities, the social sciences, and related disciplines with a strong interest in material culture and sensory experiences, who are willing to engage in methodological and interdisciplinary debates and hands-on activities.

How to apply?

Please provide us with the following application material:

- a letter of motivation, indicating how you expect to benefit from participating in this Summer School and how you can contribute, in turn, to the discussions (mentioning your specific interest in the topic);
- a CV of max. two pages;
- an abstract (500 words) of your current research project;
- one referee we might contact.

What do we offer?

The hosting institution will cover your travel expenses as well as accommodation and meals at [Woudschoten Hotel and Conference Center](#). You will receive an e-reader with preparatory material and have the opportunity to present your research on the Summer School homepage and [blog](#). Most importantly, you are offered an intellectually stimulating, lively and friendly atmosphere conducive to fruitful exchange with both international senior scholars and peers.

Contact

Please apply electronically (PDF) to Jill Briggeman, who is happy to answer all questions regarding the application: j.briggeman@uu.nl.

We are looking forward to your application, The project team

Prof. dr. Sven Dupré (Director ERC ARTECHNE Project, Professor History of Art, Science and Technology at Utrecht University and University of Amsterdam)

Dr. Jenny Boulboulé (Postdoctoral Researcher ERC ARTECHNE Project & Program Coordinator TransPositions Summer School 2017)

Jill Briggeman MA (Project Manager ERC ARTECHNE & TransPositions Summer School 2017)