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Panel Proposal: Uncertain Sights: Theories of Seeing Across Visual Media

The panel comprises three papers, each engaging questions of uncertainty and applications of critical theory in the context of a specific visual medium (painting, photography, film). Martin Jay begins his seminal work, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Sight in Twentieth-Century French Thought*, with the assertion that "Even a rapid glance at the language we commonly use will demonstrate the ubiquity of visual metaphors. If we actively focus our attention on them, vigilantly keeping an eye out for those deeply embedded as well as those on the surface, we can gain an illuminating insight into the complex mirroring of perception and language". The panelists apply varied but interconnected and reciprocally referential critical approaches (Derrida, Glissant, Deleuze) to parse the unstable implications of visual metaphor and visual praxis hold for the transformation of the image, the gaze, and the represented body in three different visual mediums.

Uncertainty and Relation: Reading the Unstable Body in the Lithographs of Wifredo Lam

In the paintings and lithographs of Wifredo Lam a complex and evolving relationship to the body and its representation is at work. *Zambezia-Zambezia* (1938), *Les Noces*, (1948), and *La Fiancée* (1950), to mention but a few, demonstrate an evolution of hybridized bodies, which both frame and are framed by multiply deferred lenses of gender, culture, implication and allusion. Like Lam himself, the bodies in his paintings relate thematically and structurally to both Continental surrealism and to a particularly Caribbean hybrid frame of reference theoretically and poetically articulated by Édouard Glissant's *Poétique de la relation*. Visually, these bodies, strongly delineated yet moving toward abstraction, refer back to some other way a body should be, a faint but defined blueprint in the viewer's mind, a phantom referent that allows us to identify them as bodies although they don't resemble any bodies we have ever seen. The body operates as a particular kind of frame that is inextricably linked to the haziness of boundaries corporeal, temporal and geographical, and whose very mutability is a visual opening into unique poetic spaces. Tracing the evolution of bodies and figures in Lam's work provides particular insights into the prismatic trajectories of a monumental artist, and into their implications in the socio-artistic continuum of Caribbean and Continent.