

DSI Lecture Series Presents

The “Great White Way”: Photography and America’s White Imaginary

The "Great White Way"

Photography and America's White Imaginary: Carolyn Kane in Conversation with Lida Zeitlin-Wu

Carolyn Kane zeros in on the "White City" at Chicago's 1893 Columbian World's Fair, and New York City's "Great White Way" in the 1910s-1930s, to argue that a new training ground was forged for the American subject, engendering a unique brand of spectatorship rooted in visual possession by way of spectacle-based consumption.



ID: The details of this event are set within a collage of rainbow gradient boxes and black and white images of Chicago's 1893 World's Fair.

EVENT ABSTRACT

In the twenty-first century, large-scale media spectacles are ubiquitous in metropolises around the world. These polychromatic spectacles offer a diversity of colors and scintillating delights, though they fail to

April 2023

6

4:00pm - 5:30pm EST

of chromophobia. This talk responds to this odd contradiction by leaping backwards in time, to analyze the tensions and power struggles in the history of illuminated light in the American city in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries. The polemic between old world (European) whiteness and the explosive colors that mark America's twentieth-century "white imaginary" are charted through an archaeological critique of early advertising, photography, and the development of electric palettes for large-scale illuminated signs. By zeroing in on the "White City" at Chicago's 1893 Columbian World's Fair, and New York City's "Great White Way" in the 1910s-1930s, I argue that a new training ground was forged for the American subject, engendering a unique brand of spectatorship rooted in visual possession by way of spectacle-based consumption.

Carolyn L. Kane is the author of "High-Tech Trash: Glitch, Noise, and Aesthetic Failure" (University of California Press, 2019) and "Chromatic Algorithms: Synthetic Color, Computer Art, and Aesthetics After Code" (University of Chicago Press, 2014). Her current monograph, "Electrographic Architecture: New York Color, Las Vegas Light, and America's White Imaginary" is forthcoming from the University of California Press in 2023. More information can be found here: <https://www.torontomu.ca/kane/>

Lida Zeitlin-Wu is a DISCO Network Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of Michigan. She is a scholar of screen-based media and visual culture whose research focuses on the commodification and

Virtual
Registration

In-person
Registration

project, "Seeing By Numbers" traces how color systems—diagrams and models that attempt to encompass the full range of human color vision—came to play a key role in engineering perception over the course of the 20th century.

We want to make our events accessible to all participants. This event will be a hybrid event with both a physical meeting space and an online meeting space. Please register in advance for the online Zoom Webinar here: <https://bit.ly/3CvImyq>

Please register for the physical meeting space at the University of Michigan's Central Campus: <https://myumi.ch/qG1VX>

CART will be provided. If you anticipate needing accommodations to participate, please email Eric Mancini at dsi-administration@umich.edu. Please note that some accommodations must be arranged in advance and we encourage you to contact us as soon as possible.



Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

Subscribe

Past Issues

Translate ▼

[why did I get this?](#) [unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)

DISCO Network · 419 S State St · G333 Mason Hall · Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1027 · USA

