

American Futurisms

SANAS Biennial Conference 2024

University of Geneva, November 7-8, 2024

Conference Director: Prof. Deborah Madsen
Assisted by: Ms. Caroline Martin, Ms. Aïcha Bouchelaghem

Call for Papers

Just over a century ago, in the seemingly post-apocalyptic world of 1918, Van Wyck Brooks famously called for the creation of a new American cultural history that would furnish the nation, and the post-war world, with a “usable past.” In the context of current predictions of climate catastrophe and the mass extinction of life on our planet, Brooks' call for a new past provokes reflection on the possibilities for “usable” (and also unusable) futures. A century later, how might we interrogate the utility of our cultural moment? How are artists – now and in the past – responding to the pressures of a future that is imaginable but seemingly unachievable? Equally, how has the past generated the futures that are now our present? How does the past reverberate in the decolonized imaginings of artists working in the Afro- and Indigenous Futurist movements? How is a linear, chronological model of time, which offers the cognitive frame for much future thinking, challenged by alternative understandings of the structure of historical time?

We invite diverse explorations of the futurist configurations of the contemporary North American Studies landscape: digital and technological futures, economic futurism, post-humanist futures, Indigenous and Afro-Futurisms, climate and environmental futures, even the nuclear futures that have come once again to prominence in the contexts of the Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Gaza conflicts. Topics that might be explored include:

- Future sovereignties (food sovereignty, water sovereignty)
- Indigenous vs. colonial structures of time
- Racial/ized futures
- Economic futurism and/or the futures of work
- Environmental Humanities
- Digital Humanities and the Cyber-realm
- Post-humanism
- Human-Animal Studies
- Futurisms in diverse aesthetic genres and media
- Utopias and dystopias
- Futuristic narratives: speculative fiction, time-travel fictions, digital narratives, etc.
- The “American Dream” as futurism; the future of American exceptionalism
- Haunting, memory, trauma, and the future
- Temporality as a mode of representation
- Sonic temporalities
- Apocalypticism(s)

Proposals for both individual papers (20 minutes) and pre-formed panels (90 minutes) are invited. Paper proposals should comprise an abstract of 250 words, 5 keywords, and a 100-word bio. Panel proposals should add a 250-word panel abstract.

To submit a proposal, please send a single file as an email attachment to:

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DEADLINE: Monday 8 April 2024