

esse

Arts +
Opinions

CALL FOR PAPERS

Theme: Abstractions
Esse arts + opinions no. 114
Deadline: January 10, 2025

Send your text in US letter format (1,500 and 2,000 words, doc, docx, or rtf) to redaction@esse.ca before January 10, 2025. Please include a short biography (45 words), an abstract of the text, and postal and email addresses.

Applicants who wish to first submit a statement of intent (250–500 words) are invited to do so before October 1, 2024. We also welcome submissions (reviews, essays, analyses of contemporary art issues) not related to a particular theme. An acknowledgment of receipt will be sent within 7 days of the deadline. If you have not been notified, please contact us to ensure your text has been received.

ABSTRACTIONS

Art, born of the desire to represent the world – or, at least, to try to interpret it – has constantly butted up against the impossibility of achieving this utopian figurative project. From this irreconcilable tension between reality and any attempt to reconstruct it through imitation was born a multitude of strategies, forms, and means that have made art heterogeneous and in constant mutation. Indeed, all artists seem to justify their practices on the basis of their own ability to abstract a specific vision of the world. In this sense, abstraction as an art movement champions the desire to return to the very essence of art.

The official advent of abstract art in the West occurred at the turn of the twentieth century with the work of Wassily Kandinsky, a Russian artist whose subversive pictorial practice earned him exile. Firmly thumbing his nose at the attempts over millennia to reconstruct the visible world through mimetic imitation, Kandinsky advocated an internalized practice of painting guided both by the material, finally freed from the constraints of representation, and by the artist's subjectivity.

So, in the history of Western art, abstraction was generally defined in opposition to pictorial realism – and, incidentally, to figuration – by the use of geometrical

esse

shapes, colour fields, and deconstructed lines to challenge the monopoly of representation. Creation itself was freed from aesthetic and institutional injunctions, consolidating critical foundations laid by avant-gardes. Autonomy of form, colour freed from the age-old grip of drawing, deconstruction of perspective, doing away with the hierarchy of planes, a marked penchant for self-criticism and self-referentiality, granting agency to the material and the support: it's no surprise to see abstraction so vigorously (and variously) resurgent today. Artists' current passion for neomaterialist theories and the expressiveness of matter is, in this sense, highly eloquent.

Indeed, recent years have seen renewed interest in abstraction, recharged with activist energy and an engagement certainly not present at its inception, when it was confined to a meta-critique of the figurative stance of Western art. Although such critical introspection is still as fundamentally relevant as ever to the theorization of art, today the reclaimed concept of abstract art embraces production by a highly diversified art community.

Why the resurgence in interest? Why does abstraction still appeal to artists? What "freedom" does it generate in response to the narrative constraint typical of figuration? Do formalist practices have a place in today's art? Or does the political power of abstraction reside precisely in the dissolution of the figurative? Do we always have to approach abstraction as a dualism with its counterpart, figuration? Must abstraction, as the art historian Clement Greenberg and his emulators proposed, be defined still and only by the irreducibility of art to its means? Or must abstract art be political? Hasn't it always been? *Esse* invites authors to engage with these questions and other related issues through an analysis of contemporary or recent art practices.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Published by Les éditions Esse, *Esse arts + opinions* is a bilingual magazine focused mainly on contemporary art and multidisciplinary practices. Specializing in essays on issues in art today, the magazine publishes critical analyses that address art in relation to its context. Each issue contains a thematic section, portfolios of artworks, articles critiquing the international culture scene, and reviews of exhibitions, events, and publications. The esse.ca platform also offers articles on contemporary art and an archive of previous issues of *Esse*.

Submissions are accepted three times a year: January 10, April 1, and September 1. The texts can be submitted for one of the following 3 sections:

THEMATIC SECTION: essays between 1,500 and 2,000 words. The guideline regarding the theme is available online 4 to 6 months prior to the deadline: <http://esse.ca/en/callforpapers>

Abstracts for the thematic section are requested 3 months before the issue deadline: January 10 (for the April 1 deadline), June 1 (for the September 1 deadline), and October 1 (for the January 10 deadline). Please note that no submissions will be read after these dates; however, authors who have not submitted a note of intent may submit a full text by the deadline date for the issue.

ARTICLES: essays or in-depth articles, between 1,250 and 2,000 words (notes included). Abstracts for the Articles section are requested 3 months before the issue deadline: January 10 (for the April 1 deadline), June 1 (for the September 1 deadline), and October 1 (for the January 10 deadline). Authors who have not submitted a note of intent may submit a full text by the deadline date for the issue.

REVIEWS: reviews of exhibitions, events or publications (maximum 500 words, without footnotes, or 950–1,100 words, with one or two footnotes maximum). Given the short format, final texts are requested for this section.

You can find guidelines here: <https://esse.ca/en/editorial-policy/>

1. Unless otherwise agreed with Les éditions Esse, the author agrees to submit a previously unpublished, original text.
2. All articles are reviewed by the editorial board, which reserves the right to accept or reject a submitted article. Selection criteria are based on the quality of the analysis and the writing, the relevance of the text to the issue's theme, and the relevance of the chosen artworks and artists to the magazine's mandate. Selection of articles may take up to 6 weeks after submission. The editorial board's decision is final. A rejected text will not be re-evaluated.

esse

3. Unless otherwise agreed, the editorial board does not consider articles that may represent a potential conflict of interest between the author and the content of the article (e.g., a text written by the curator of an exhibition).
4. Authors whose pieces are selected agree to format their text according to the typographic standards of *Esse*, following the guidelines sent to them with the publishing contract.
5. With respect to the author's vision and style, the editorial board reserves the right to ask for corrections and modifications to be made to ensure an article's overall clarity and coherence.
6. Conditionally accepted articles will be up for discussion between the author and the editorial board. If changes are requested by the board, the writer will have 15 (fifteen) days to carry these out.
7. All costs of typographical correction of the author's text shall be borne by Les éditions Esse except the author's corrections, if applicable, which shall be borne by the author.