

Call for Papers and Artworks:
Outer Limits

The liminal expands across a spatio-temporal divide, limning demarcations between inside and outside, now and then, here and there, and us and them. Reaching for it, we might bump up against, and sometime erode, boundaries between the known and the unfamiliar. Yet, working through liminality engages not only with phenomenological experience but with processes and enactments. What might be necessary indeterminacies challenge 'normative' understandings or standard passages. Its affectual eventuations align with the anxieties of our current moment: an inexorable state of wait, being caught-in-between.

We are all a little on edge these days, and though we may feel trapped, reflecting on liminal conditions might imagine queer and other non-standard or resistant wayfinding in the project of conceptualizing future-bound transformation or roundabout, even unstable, ways of unsettling the false consciousness of the status quo. If edges delineate barriers, such limits can also be productive and goad us into thinking, seeing, and pushing *beyond*. Maybe *Mean Girls* (2004) had it right: suggesting a radical rethinking of liminality by announcing that "the limit does not exist." Or, to reframe, what are the stakes of questioning the very nature of *being limited*? As Luce Irigaray suggested in *This Sex Which is Not One*: "Leave definitiveness to the undecided; we don't need it."

For the inaugural Symposium and Exhibition presented through UCSD's Art and Media History, Theory and Criticism department, we invite contributions that expand between fields and disciplines to consider liminality experientially, methodologically, and/or critically, and which present as zones of both vulnerability and possibility. What might arise when we center or trouble the interstitial in artistic practice? How does attention to instability, the unstable, or the marginal, open new relationalities across art and critical reflection, but also archives and institutions? What are the methodological and aesthetic stakes of working in and on the liminal, between disciplines, genres, or epistemologies? And what are the ontological risks and affordances of liminal discourse?

Though this conference seeks to push the boundaries, or challenge *the limits*, of the academic conference itself we offer these areas of thought as a beginning point to extend from:

- **Edging**, and its potentiality:
Satisfaction and fulfillment, delay and deferrals, or just being on the verge...
- **Limbo**, or lying in wait:
Caught in suspension, uncertainty, and anti-progress
- **Straddling Margins**, and trans identifications:
Border crossings, being between, refusing to fit
- **Bottoming**, and the downward turn:
Bottom-up formations of power, bottoming out, or just being down
- **Passing**, or its inverse of the neither/nor:
Asexual erotics, reveal and conceal strategies, or countering binaries
- **Capacitations**, or reaching the limit:
Blocks, barriers, moving through, and finalities
- **Beyond Bounds**, and its afterlives:
Thresholds, holes, and delimiting

Submissions

This event is organized by graduate students in UCSD's PhD Program in Art and Media History, Theory and Criticism, the PhD Program in Art Practice, and the MFA Program. Through such interdisciplinary exchange we seek to provide space for those just breaking through, and we happily welcome emergent scholars, practices, and practitioners (alongside more established thinkers and makers) to share original research and creative work in this experimental format.

For presenters: We invite abstracts that think with and beyond these areas of interest (approximately 300 words), and also welcome experimental lectures and nontraditional presentations, to be submitted alongside a condensed CV (maximum 5-page PDF).

For artists: We welcome submissions of artworks in any medium for a group show and screening accompanied by a project description (approximately 300 words) and 3-5 images of the work (as .jpgs), to be submitted similarly alongside a condensed CV (maximum 5-page PDF).

We finally ask that all applicants include five keywords that situate the work submitted.

Please send all materials to visartssymposiumucsd@gmail.com by January 31, 2026. Accepted participants will be notified by February 10, 2026.

Don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions about this symposium or the submission process.