



Caltech-Huntington Program in Visual Culture



SCALING OBSERVATIONS

MONDAY, APRIL 22, 2024

3:00–5:30 PM

Dabney Hall 110 (Treasure Room)

In the nineteenth century a series of technological innovations radically expanded the human compass of observation and exploration—off into the far reaches of the vast heavens, back into the mists of deep time, and down into the smallest corners of the petri dish. The changed scales on which humans could observe, document, and interpret, opened up fundamentally new questions about physical reality and our place within it. More prospectively, they can also be seen to offer a preview of the new challenges our scientific imagination contends with today in the face of new breakthroughs in particle physics and a new reckoning with the timescale of a changing climate. What perceptual challenges occur when we attempt to engage with either the infinitesimal or the infinite? How do we observe, document, and interpret environments that span from the terrestrial to the celestial and what problems and promises span scales and historical moments? This one-day symposium unites scholars of visual culture, the history of science, and literary studies for an interdisciplinary consideration of scale, perspective, and perception in human and natural past and future.

Speakers include Devin Griffiths of USC, Anna Henschman of Boston University, Omar Nasim of the University of Regensburg, and Anne Sullivan of UC Riverside.

The Caltech-Huntington Program in Visual Culture, which is funded by a grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and based in the Division of the Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS), features new undergraduate course offerings, guest lecturers, and other programming to foster conversations between humanists and scientists. Its activities are organized by HSS and other Caltech faculty in collaboration with scholars at The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens.

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