

Call for Abstracts for Issue 18 (Spring 2025)

Frames

Frames are ever-present. We read, use, and propagate them in our daily, as well as academic life. Their definition is difficult to put into words, just like it boggles the mind to imagine in how many 'frames' we are entangled ourselves. Frames serve many functions. They reduce the complexity of the world through the art of selection. Be it four pieces of ornamented wood that surround the canvas, an imaginary line on a map dividing one nation from another, or a set of tools used to present an argument, innumerable frames ('models', 'schemas', or 'attitudes') organize our experience.

With the 18th issue of On_Culture, we aim to engage with the concept of frames, and the numerous understandings that this term carries. We welcome contributions from a wide range of fields, including cultural and material studies, architecture and urban planning, social sciences, and literature, among others. This issue is interested in frames in their most literal and material sense, such as the functions performed by book covers or picture frames - as well as their conceptual and theoretical understanding.

We are interested in contributions that discuss frames in their most tangible form, i.e. objects that 'frame' other objects or spaces. The frame around a picture or a painting performs an important aesthetic and cognitive function, as do book covers. Book covers provide readers with the first impression of what they will find inside; their design is also a carefully considered marketing choice by the publisher and contingent on the current trends in the publishing industry. Similarly, the decision to frame a work of art raises a number of questions: What does the frame do when it frames a painting? Was the frame specifically designed for the given work? Is it the original, or has it since been replaced? If works are displayed without a frame, what does its absence say? We wish to engage with the frame as an inherently Eurocentric phenomenon, historically absent from many non-European visual cultures (Mersmann 2021). Moreover, doors, gates, and portals can also be considered as frames in the sense that they frame the space around them. On the one hand, doors, gates and portals such as the Arc de Triomphe often serve a representative role. On the other, such openings function as liminal markers that indicate the crossing over from one space/state in/to another. The "door of no return" at Cape Coast Castle in Ghana, for instance, through which Africans were forced to board the slave ships, represented the threshold into a life in slavery.

In relation to the broader material understanding of the term 'frames,' we would like to create a space for debate on whether buildings or urban structures can be read as frames. If so, who designs those frames and for whom? What has been their purpose throughout times and has it changed significantly? We find the relationship between the material structure and the space it frames, as well as the space that frames it, to be particularly interesting (Bernhart, Wolf 2006). Following the criminological broken windows approach, urban structures can favour or discourage deviant behaviour (Kelling, Wilson 1982). In this sense, run-down places might also function as frames.

Another man-made type of frames are borderlines, again, in their numerous definitions. Benedict Anderson considered the concept of borders as a primarily European invention (Anderson 1983). In Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Shadow Lines*, for example, the narrator's grandmother flies to Calcutta and asks "whether she would be able to see the border between India and East Pakistan from the plane" (Gosh 1988). From a postcolonial perspective, borderlines are fictional frames. Still, throughout history, countless lives have been lost in trying to cross, expand, or preserve borders. Often, bodies of water or mountain chains serve as natural borders. Similarly to their socio-political counterparts, they are in constant flux. As we face the consequences of climate change, melting icecaps, drying rivers and lakes that once sustained societies are forcing many people around the world to migrate and reframe their ways of life (Bergthaller, Mortensen 2018). Small island states face an even greater threat as their borders shrink with the rising waters of the oceans. They face the prospect that these borders, the ocean, will eventually swallow their territories entirely.

Within the more conceptual understanding of frames, cognitive studies and neuroscience have demonstrated the role of frames and framing in the processes in which our minds engage when confronted with various mundane situations. With our issue, we would like to dive deeper into the relationship between frames and the more tangible spheres of culture and society and welcome contributions in the field of social and cultural studies. We regard societies, communities, organisations, and any other types of groups of people as a way of framing or, in other words, defining interpersonal relations (van Dijk 2016). Inevitably, every person is framed within numerous such groups, ranging from those as small as a monogamous partnership to large-scale frames, like nations or the Global North/South. Furthermore, regarding any issue in temporal or spatial dimensions requires framing, which is frequently done in news stories or media coverage, where graphical, typographical, and discursive forms of framing are at work (Schmidt 2014). Finally, the concept of frames is used extensively in scholarly practice. It is employed to research political, cultural, or narrative frames (Carnahm, Hao, Yan 2019). In a similar vein, all conventions, values, and stereotypes are forms of frames. We therefore welcome contributions tackling epistemological framing. What is the strategic use of frames in research and what other forms can they take? How are 'frameworks' created, and how do alternative frameworks counter them?

Possible topics include but are not limited to:

- Frames in art history
- Absence and presence of frames
- Frame and object in relation
- Materiality of frames
- Frames in (digital) media
- Framing space in architecture and urban design
- Borders as frames
- Geographies and geopolitics
- Societal and cultural frames
- Power, knowledges, and (re-)framing
- Narratives in public discourse
- Frames as a concept for the study of culture

If you are interested in having a peer reviewed academic article featured in this issue of *On_Culture*, please submit an abstract of 300 words with the article title, 5–6 keywords, a short biographical note, and your email address to content@on-culture.org (subject line “Abstract Submission”) no later than **May 15, 2024**. You will be notified by **June 1, 2024** whether your paper proposal has been accepted. The final date for full paper submissions is **September 15, 2024** and the issue will be published in **May 2025**.

Please note: *On_Culture* also features *_Perspectives*, a section devoted to shorter, creative pieces pertaining to each issue topic. These can be interviews, essays, opinion pieces, reviews of exhibitions, analyses of cultural artifacts and events, photo galleries, videos, works of art... and more! These contributions are uploaded on a rolling basis and can be connected to every one of *On_Culture's* issues. Interested in contributing? Send your ideas to the Editorial Team at any time: content@on-culture.org

About *On_Culture*: The Open Journal for the Study of Culture

On_Culture: The Open Journal for the Study of Culture (ISSN: 2366-4142) is a biannual, Open Access peer-reviewed scholar-led journal edited by doctoral researchers, postdocs, and professors working at the International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (GCSC) at Justus Liebig University Giessen. It provides a forum for reflecting on the study of culture. It investigates, problematizes, and develops key concepts and methods in the field by means of a collaborative and collective process. *On_Culture* is dedicated to fostering such engagements as well as the cultural dynamics at work in thinking about and reflecting on culture.

The journal consists of three sections: peer-reviewed academic *_Articles*, as well as *_Essays*, and the aforementioned *_Perspectives*. *On_Culture* brings new approaches and emerging topics in the (trans)national study of culture ‘on the line’ and, in so doing, fills the gap__ between ‘on’ and ‘culture.’ There are numerous ways of filling the gap, and a plurality of approaches is something for which the journal strives with each new issue.

Please note: As a commitment to the open access to scholarship, *On_Culture* does not charge any Article Processing Charges (APCs) for the publication of your contribution.

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