

## 37th CIHA World Congress: Sovereignty

Ciudad de México | Mexico City

June 2029

The national committees for the history of art from Mexico and the United States are thrilled to announce that the next World Congress of the Comité International de l'Histoire de l'Art (CIHA) dedicated to the theme of "Sovereignty" will be held in Mexico City in June 2029. Originally envisioned as a gathering of international scholars in Washington, DC to be hosted by the US National Committee, evolving geopolitical events inspired the decision to co-host the next World Congress in partnership with Mexican colleagues. Together, the two national committees are planning a congress for the international community of art historians that aims to foster collaboration and mutual dialogue. All of this will happen in one of the most dynamic cities on the globe, a city whose built fabric encapsulates more than seven centuries of innovation in architecture and urbanism. Mexico City is also home to spectacular museums and galleries displaying objects dating from antiquity to the present day as well as a contemporary art scene at the vanguard of Latin America and the world at large.

Mexico City's situation in the Global South will allow CIHA 2029 participants to explore sovereignty across space and time from a unique vantage point. The experience of sovereignty can be an individual's claimed self-empowerment or a group's self-rule and rule over others as well. The production and assertion of sovereign power through visual means has been central to the formation of artistic cultures from the construction of burial sites, stamping of currency, forging of metal jewelry, and construction of agrarian and urban settlements. In turn, the rise of "sovereignty" as a term, coined in the fourteenth century and central to the development of international law in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, is essential to the rise of the nation state, the formation of art history as a discipline and its accompanying institutions of the University and the Museum. Sovereign power can be exploited to create states of exception and exclusion while the claiming of sovereignty can also be necessary to reclaim power over self-representation, as demonstrated in Indigenous studies, gender studies, and related political movements.

CIHA 2029 takes up crucial questions of power and its legitimation, visual strategies to create communities of belonging and exclusion, and the central role of visual regimes to normalize concepts of private property, public space, privacy, and dispossession. In calling for papers and sessions that engage with sovereignty (a process that will begin in January 2027), the congress organizers aim to neither celebrate nor denounce but instead powerfully interrogate the long history of power and representation, and its intersection with different codes of law, government, territory, and state across time and space. The theme of "Sovereignty" engages political terms of urgent interest for contemporary debates while simultaneously speaking broadly to historically and geographically diverse periods and cultures. This term is meant as opening up both possibilities but also problems and challenges for the exploration of art historical questions from all eras and geographies. The partnership between Mexico and the United States that drives

this congress exemplifies the spirit of open dialogue that art historians from across the globe are welcome to join whether in relation to individual works of art or formal strategies, theoretically in terms of characterizing movements or groups, or historically as part of the ever-changing dynamic between authority and individual agency. We aim for the political valence of the theme to provide an opportunity for an international community to clarify the many interests at stake historically and globally in sovereignty and its artistic legacies and futures.

The initial call for participation in CIHA 2029 will be forthcoming in January 2027.