

**MAKING JUSTICE:
PRACTICAL THEOLOGY, THE ARTS, AND TRANSFORMATION**

The Association of Practical Theology
Biennial Conference, April 13-15, 2018
Yale University Divinity School, New Haven, CT
APTNH2018@gmail.com

CALL FOR PAPERS

**Proposals will be accepted through 10 December 2017.
All notifications to presenters will be made by 19 January 2018.**

Theme Description

The arts have the power to change the way we view reality. The noted philosopher of education, Maxine Greene, considered art an act of “social imagination” that awakens social consciousness by allowing people to “see things as if they could be otherwise.” How are practical theologians engaging the arts, particularly in relation to the work of challenging injustice and envisioning social transformation? What other kinds of change can practical theological engagement with arts generate? The theme for the 2018 Association of Practical Theology’s Biennial Meeting, *Making Justice: Practical Theology, the Arts, and Transformation*, invites explorations of practical theological aesthetics and the work of performing justice through practical theology’s engagement with the arts, including explorations of the role that justice invites and demands in such engagements.

Recent scenes of public protest in the US, from Ferguson (Missouri), to Standing Rock (North Dakota), to Charlottesville (Virginia), have reawakened the performance of protest art and the use of the arts to challenge oppressive systems. For instance, the events of Ferguson gave rise to powerful creative responses from such groups as Artivists STL and the documentary film *Whose Streets?* (<http://www.whosestreets.com/>). Scholars of music, long recognizing music’s crucial role in the Civil Rights Movement of the 20th century, lift up contemporary rappers and spoken word artists as similarly giving voice to 21st century movements toward racial justice. Drama and dance based groups create opportunities for personal transformation as well as working for social justice, in forms such as Theatre of the Oppressed and InterPlay. Music, performance arts, poetics, and material art forms all can give expression to what is otherwise ineffable, offering alternative languages for meanings that refuse more typical forms of narrativity.

The intersections between art and practical theology show up in spaces such as the relatively new discourse on “theopoetics,” and in academic spaces such as religion and literature programs. Recent practical theological writings also give renewed attention to the arts in intersection with practical theology. Illman and Smith (2013) speak of the arts as having a particular kind of wisdom, offering examples of communities’ arts-based practices of as key sites where practical theology is enacted. Graham and Poling (2000) name art as “resistance to evil.”

In this biennial conference, we invite exploration of the intersections between practical theological reflection and art in its varied forms—music, film, poetics, performance arts such as dance and theater, material art forms such as painting, murals, sculpture, and art installations. In what sense might practical theology itself be art that includes performance, rhetoric, and aesthetics? Topics might include practical theological engagement with the following: the arts and anti-racism; populist art forms (graffiti, “street theater,” spoken word) as practical theology; contemporary sound tracks of justice movements; art, worship, and justice; the poetics of protest; the politics of art in urban public spaces; practical theology at the cinema; music in contemporary “worship wars”; photographing/ sculpting/ painting transformation; religious art in new faith communities; practical theology *as* art; the arts transforming practical theology.

Call for Proposals

We invite proposals for presentations that engage any dimension of the conference theme as described above. We welcome proposals that not only advance the research and discourse on practical theology and the arts, but also attend to presentational modalities that highlight the *role* that the arts play in practical theological construction. We encourage researchers/presenters to imagine creative modes of interweaving art forms into their presentations.

There are three possible types of presentation for this biennial conference:

- A. **Research Paper:** A finished paper (5,000-7,000 words) that will be uploaded, read, and discussed among participants in an assigned breakout session. Accepted papers will be paired with one or two others to form a breakout session (1.5-to-3-hrs). Authors of accepted papers will be prepared to facilitate conversation among session participants. We strongly encourage utilization of the creative arts in the paper presentation and discussion.
- B. **Original Collaborative Production or Performance:** An artistic production or performance that represents dynamic collaboration between scholars and artists who seek to advance practical theological reflection and the arts in their varied forms. The production/performance may take different forms (e.g., original film, live performance, visual installation), but must be accompanied by a written interpretive analysis (2,000-3,000 words). Accepted productions/performances (with audience discussion) will be assigned to 1.5-hr sessions.
- C. **Exhibit/Poster:** A print or digital media presentation, or artistic exhibit, which represent emerging or on-going advancement of themes related to practical theological aesthetics. Selected poster presentations/exhibits will be on display during the conference in designated areas. There will be designated times for presenters to engage informally in Q&A with conference participants. (The standard size for print posters is 36in x 48 in, or 3ft x 4 ft. You may request for alternative specifics in the proposal, as needed.)

PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

To submit a proposal for your presentation, please use the following Google Form (<https://goo.gl/forms/pVMJLGLceSjMQ5aU2>). You will be prompted to provide the following information:

1. Author/Presenter information (name, institution, contact information).

2. Proposal information:
 - Title of proposal.
 - Type of proposal.
 - Abstract for proposal (no more than 50 words).
 - Narrative of no more than 500 words (excluding bibliography) that explains the content and format of your intended presentation. Proposals will be selected by a blind peer review process. Therefore, please do not include information that would identify the author/presenter in this narrative.
 - Brief bibliography to situate your proposed topic within relevant research.
3. Specifications about audiovisual equipment and/or space desired for your presentation. We cannot guarantee that all requests will be met, but will do our best to explore options at the venue on your behalf. You will be notified in advance whether your request can be accommodated.

Proposals will be selected by a blind peer review process.

It is not necessary to be a member of the APT to submit a proposal; however, if selected to present, presenters must join membership and register for the conference.

Selected presentations must be given in person by those named in the proposal. No presentations can be made by proxy.

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Research papers must be submitted electronically (in Word format, emailed to APTNH2018@gmail.com) by no later than **2 April 2018** so that they can be uploaded for prior reading by conference participants.