

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The annual meeting affords scholars and practitioners of mimetic theory a once-a-year opportunity for conversation and dialogue. Therefore, we welcome for our concurrent sessions paper proposals related to *any aspect of René Girard's mimetic theory*, and not only those explicating the conference theme. Paper proposals may come from any field of study.

We also welcome proposals on the conference theme which offer participants new opportunities to explore visual culture in light of mimetic theory. Our Loop setting supports especially active engagement with architecture, theatre, and the arts.

The program coordinator for the meeting, Martha Reineke, has prepared an annual meeting bibliography.

About Visual Culture

“Visual culture” has not been the primary theme of a COV&R conference previously. Yet the combination of these two words lends itself to the interdisciplinary features of mimetic theory, suggesting that what humans bring to view are fundamentally cultural phenomena. Although the term is sometimes used narrowly in arts curricula, by “visual culture,” we refer broadly to images and objects which humans engage by sight. These elements play a significant role in our lives. Visual culture is the product of perception, beliefs, and identities. More than a natural ability, our vision attests to the formative power of our desires and our institutions. As a consequence, images and objects become meaningful in “context” in ways not fully captured when they are treated as “texts.” Our visual culture confirms that what humans bring to view is always, already cultural phenomena.

We particularly welcome proposals that develop, critique, or apply mimetic theory in respect to any of the following:

Plays, Art, Architectural History, and Architecture

- **Plays in any time period or cultural setting**—with special attention to their performance. Possible topics: Girard’s *A Theater of Envy*; Girard’s writings on Greek tragedies; or plays with Chicago authors and/or settings (e.g., *A Raisin in the Sun*, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, *Proof*, *Yasmina’s Necklace*, *A Steady Rain*, *The Light*, *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom*).
- **Paintings, photography, sculpture, ceramics in any time period or cultural setting**—with special attention to permanent holdings at the Art Institute of Chicago or its summer 2026 special exhibitions. Consider also works at other Chicago museums, such as the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago and the National Museum of Mexican Art.
- **Architectural history**— including Chicago architectural history; also welcome are proposals about **architectural practice** today.

Visual Culture and Questions of Mimetic Theory

Visual culture elicits important questions from us. The possibilities for engaging this topic are unlimited. This list is a sampling intended to spark your own questions.

- Who or what constrains the visible in visual culture?
- How are seeing and knowing related in human cultural experience, past and present?
- How are artifacts of visual culture commodified?
- What is not permitted to be experienced visually (forbidden desires)?
- What are alternative pathways to visual culture (e.g., reliance on other senses; tactile graphics, inclusive access)?
- How are differences between propaganda and art adjudicated in visual culture?
- What characterizes the visual culture of the sacred? The holy?
- The sacred transcends the visible but remains tethered to it. How does that connection influence what humans perceive as the sacred? In what ways does visual culture attest to the violence of that tethering, per Girard's definition of "the sacred"?

New to Mimetic Theory?

If you are new to mimetic theory and are looking for a sounding board for your initial explorations of René Girard's mimetic theory, a presentation at the COV&R annual meeting sessions will afford you this opportunity. *We welcome mimetic theory novices.* Sessions are conducted in a collegial manner and include significant time for discussion. The annual meeting bibliography is here. [make the word "here" a link]

How to Submit Your Proposal

Proposals should be submitted to Martha Reineke no later than **March 30, 2026** at: covr2026program@gmail.com.

Proposals should contain your name, affiliation, the title of the paper, and a 200-300 word abstract of the planned paper. Panel submissions should be submitted by one person and should contain abstracts for each panelist. All submissions should include a statement at the end of the proposal listing technology needs. If needs are not stated at the time of submission, the conference center may be unable to accommodate them.

Participants will be notified of the status of their proposal within three weeks of submission. After the deadline for submission of proposals, authors of accepted papers will be notified of the length of their session, the time limit on their presentation, and the length of the discussion period for their session. Where possible, accepted papers will be grouped into sessions with similar topics, themes, or methodological approaches.