

ICI Lecture Series Models – 3 July 2023, 19:30, In English

This lecture will present the bridge as a structure of interconnectivity by which one passes from one form or familiarity to another. The bridge is a model of communication. By locking two into the space of one, it enables thought and the experience of the social. Interdisciplinarity and transculturality also depend on bridges, approachable with lesser or greater degrees of enthusiasm. Ethics itself depends on a bridge, endorsing, like bridges at their best, reciprocal relationship. Harrison's presentation will articulate several features of bridge-form while examining case studies that range from material history (bridges of trade and war, for example) to the ambitions of religion (binding a here to a transcendent there) and to accomplishments of poetry, music, and philosophy. Some specific exegeses will even aim to exemplify the otherwise theorized bridges between disciplines and the cultures articulated within them. For bridges are built not merely by putting things in contact, but by creating traffic between them.

Thomas Harrison is Professor of European Languages & Transcultural Studies at the University of California at Los Angeles. It is from his most recent study — *Of Bridges: A Poetic and Philosophical Account* (2021) — that this presentation is culled. He is also the author of *1910: The Emancipation of Dissonance*, a study of pan-European expressionism, and of *Essayism: Conrad, Musil and Pirandello*. His *L'arte dell'incompiuto* has appeared in Italian. He has edited *Nietzsche in Italy*, with contributions by Agamben, Serres, and Nancy; *The Favorite Malice: Ontology and Reference in Contemporary Italian Poetry*; and, with Gian Maria Annovi, *The Ends of Poetry*, containing critical studies alongside an anthology of forty contemporary poets. He has written essays on Georg Simmel, Claudio Magris, Carlo Michelstaedter, Gianni Vattimo, Michelangelo Antonioni, and several topics in the comparative arts.

Lecture Series Models: A model can be an object of admiration, a miniature or a prototype, an abstracted phenomenon or applied theory, a literary text — practically anything from a human body on a catwalk to a mathematical description of a system. It can elicit desire, provide understanding, guide action or thought. Despite the polysemy of the term, models across disciplines and fields share a fundamental characteristic: their effect depends on a specific relational quality. A model is always a model of or for something else, and the relation is reductive insofar as it is selective and considers only certain aspects of both object and model. Critical discussions of models often revolve around their restrictive function. And yet models are less prescriptive and more ambiguous than codified rules or norms. What is the critical purchase of models and how does their generative potential relate to their constitutive reduction? What are the stakes in decreasing or increasing, altering or proliferating the reductiveness of models? How can one work with and on models in a creative, productive manner without disavowing power asymmetries and their exclusionary or limiting effects?

Thomas Harrison From Material to Symbol, to Model: The Bridge

