

Curatorial Care (Johannesburg, 11–13 Apr 18)

University of Johannesburg, South Africa, Apr 11–13, 2018

Deadline: Jan 31, 2018

James Macdonald

Curatorial Care, Humanising Practices – Past Presences as Present Encounters

Presented by VIAD and Autograph ABP

11–13 April 2018

University of Johannesburg, South Africa

Extended due date for abstracts/proposals: 31 January 2018

Keynote speakers:

Prof Anthony Bogues / Curator, Academic & Director of the Centre for the Study of Slavery and Justice, Brown University

Prof Jay Pather / Curator, Choreographer & Director of the Institute for Creative Arts, University of Cape Town (tbc)

Renée Mussai / Senior Curator and Head of Archive & Research, Autograph ABP, London

Deborah Willis / Artist, Curator & Chair of the Dept of Photography & Imaging, Tisch School of the Arts, New York University

Autograph ABP (London) and the Visual Identities in Art and Design Research Centre (VIAD), (Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture (FADA), University of Johannesburg) are hosting a three-day conference to coincide with the opening of Black Chronicles IV, an exhibition curated by Renée Mussai (Senior Curator and Head of Archive & Research at Autograph ABP) at the FADA Gallery. Centering the visual presence of black figures in Victorian Britain through the prism of studio photography, the exhibition explores politics of subjectivity, representation and agency, and continues Autograph ABP's critical mission of annotating the cultural histories of photography by addressing its 'missing chapters', in tandem with VIAD's focus on historical redress within photographic archives and the role of positionalities in their production and reception. Black Chronicles IV will also feature the sound-image installation The African Choir 1891 Re-Imagined (songs composed by Phillip Miller & Thuthuka Sibisi) and a special display of The Paris Albums 1900, with more than 200 photographic reproductions from W.E.B. Du Bois's groundbreaking exhibit at the 1900 Paris Exposition.

Using the exhibition and photographic portraiture as a departure point, the conference will build upon a critical rethinking of curatorial practice, as traditionally bound to a colonial logic of collection, arrangement, 'safe-keeping' and display. Challenging the authorial custodianship associated with this tradition, and its historic (but lingering) application in the ethnographic/raciogenic arrangement of marginalised bodies, proposed in this reappraisal is an ethical recourse to curato-

rial care – where contemporary practices linked to traditional understandings of curating, as a ‘caring for objects’, are reconstituted in relation to (re)-acknowledged subjectivities.

Implied in this shift is a certain imperative, described by Walter Dignolo and Rolando Vazquez as a political and ethical demand to make decolonial subjectivities visual, and to acknowledge, “those dignities wounded under racial classifications, under the logic of the disposability of human life in the name of civilization and progress”. Necessitating a breakdown in disciplinary-specific academic epistemological thinking this commitment to the human plays out in a range of alternative curatorial practices – as not only curators, but also artists, activists, collectives, heritage groups and cultural practitioners revisit, and reconfigure historically-burdened archives, sites, narratives and traditions in the present, with a view to creatively re-inscribing disavowed subjectivities.

In seeking to engage with such curatorial approaches – as practices through which, as Anthony Bogues suggests, “we may grasp how different acts of humanization occur” – the conference will comprise an interdisciplinary programme of papers, presentations, panel discussions, screenings and performances. Through an engagement with a multiplicity of critical approaches to collection, presentation and display, and the ways in which these practices impact upon audience engagement, participants will reflect on curation as a means to facilitate opportunities for intersubjective encounters, through the re-inscription of voices historically consigned to the objectifying violence and routine silencing of colonial modernity.

We invite curators, archivists, artists and other creative practitioners, activists, collectives and cultural organisations to submit abstracts towards papers presentations, performances, and film screenings that engage with curating as a critical humanising practice in relation, but not limited to, the following themes:

- Decolonial visual practices / Decolonial curatorship
- Photography and the Archive
- Artistic interventions: Refiguring the archive
- Performance, live art and the body
- Curating as a performative practice
- Intimacy and affect in contexts of human absence, loss and erasure
- Recentralising ‘lost narratives’/ Re-inscribing human presences
- Agency as performed within the colonial archive
- Rethinking heritage and historical sites as relational spaces
- Queering gallery spaces, museums and other art /cultural institutions
- Public space / Public art / Site specific interventions.

Academic papers:

Please email an abstract of no more than 450 words towards a 20-minute paper.

Proposals for presentations, performances, film screenings, alternative forms of engagement:

Please provide a single page description of the contribution, outlining its conceptual relation to the platform thematic and technical requirements.

Please include a short bibliographical profile (maximum 100 words) with your submission.

Please submit abstracts and proposals by 31 January 2018 to:
Prof Leora Farber: leoraf@uj.ac.za and Amie Soudien: amies@uj.ac.za
Late submissions will not be considered.

Applicants will be notified of the outcomes within the first two weeks of February 2018.

Selected papers / presentations will be considered for possible publication in a special edition of the journal Critical Arts. South-North Cultural and Media Studies.

Reference:

CFP: Curatorial Care (Johannesburg, 11-13 Apr 18). In: ArtHist.net, Jan 10, 2018 (accessed Dec 15, 2025),
<<https://arthist.net/archive/17043>>.