

Sick girls in European visual art (Aarhus, 7–8 Nov 19)

Aarhus University, Nov 7–08, 2019

Deadline: Jun 15, 2019

Mette Bøgh Jensen, Aarhus University

We're delighted to announce a Call for Papers for the conference

"Sick girls in European visual art, literature, medical science and popular culture in the 19th century"

The motif "sick girl" was dealt with by artists all the way back to the 17th century where especially the Dutch painters made a lot of works with the subject sick girl/young woman, but it was only at the end of the 19th century that this motif became popular among Euro-pean artists. In these works the artists created an individual picture of illness, which con-trasted with the focus on the body as an anatomical research object and the body seen below the skin as in microbiology. The artists literally gave the state of being sick a face at time when there were several pioneering discoveries and inventions in the field of medi-cine, inventions that focused more on the inside of the body than the outside.

Some of the most iconic and renowned works of sick girls are made by Nordic artists like Christian Krohg, Edvard Munch, and Helene Schjerfbeck works that place the sick girls in interiors which are more or less infected by the illness of the young girl. However, the motif "sick girl" is seen all over Europe in the 19th century and the works of the sick girls were made during a period in which there was a huge focus on illness and various diseases. The motifs of the sick girls in visual art reappear in the 1800s at the same time as medical science experiences a huge progress, a discrepancy that can only partly be explained by the fact that despite medical progress a lot of people still died from trivial diseases.

This transdisciplinary international conference seeks to explore how illness in the shape of the images of the sick girls in the 19th century was addressed in visual art, literature, science, and popular culture. In relation to how the sick girl is depicted one of the conference aims is to look at connections and differences between visual art, literature, medical science and popular culture.

The conference language is English and we welcome 20-minute proposals for papers.

Possible paper topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Representations of "the sick girl" in different art forms like 19th century visual art, literature, and popular culture
- The history of the motif "sick girl" in visual art, literature, popular culture and/or medical illustrations

- A comparison between the depictions of sick girls/young women in 17th century Dutch art and 19th century European art
- A discussion of how the motif "sick girl" refers to the art historical tradition of images of disease in visual art
- Comparative studies of descriptions of female illness in medical handbooks, patient journals, literature, and visual art
- Examination of the difference between male and female illness in literature, visual art, and/or popular culture in the 19th century
- Investigation of how degeneration affects literature and visual arts in the 19th century
- Comparison of the connections and/or differences between the depictions of sick girls and the vitalistic figure at the end of the 19th century
- Analysis of the sick room both in terms of interior design and furniture but also figuratively – how does illness affect the (sick) room and how does the (sick) room affect the sick girls?
- Examination of depictions of physical and mental illness with focus on the female figure

Please send proposals of no more than 300-words along with a short curriculum vitae (including email address) by June 15, 2019. Please write your name and affiliated institution (if any) at the top of your proposal.

The proposal and CV should be sent as attachments to Mette Bøgh Jensen mbj@cc.au.dk. Your participation will be confirmed by August 15, 2019.

Confirmed keynote speakers:

Dr. Gemma Blackshaw, Professor, Art history, School of Humanities and Performing Arts, Plymouth University.

Jens Lohfort Jørgensen, Associate professor, Department of Culture and Global Studies, The Faculty of Humanities, Aalborg University.

Dr. Barbara Larson, Associate professor, University of West Florida, Department of Art

Hilary Marland, Principal Investigator on a Wellcome Trust Senior Investigator Award, University of Warwick, Centre for the History of Medicine.

The conference is organised by postdoc Mette Bøgh Jensen (Aarhus University, Art Museums of Skagen, The Hirschsprung Collection)

Reference:

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