

The Material Culture of Health Activism (London, 20 Jun 19)

Dana Research Centre, Science Museum, London, Jun 20, 2019

Imogen Clarke

This workshop will explore the histories, strategies and material culture of health activism. Health activism has arisen in response to a range of issues including NHS funding cuts, abortion law reform, the provision of mental health care and abolishing the so-called 'tampon tax'. Campaigning and protesting for and against these issues and others have proliferated a wide variety of material and visual culture including AIDS quilts, pro-choice badges, placards at junior doctor strikes and contemporary artworks. This interdisciplinary conference will explore the histories and strategies of health activism along with the material and visual culture of this activity. We will additionally consider the politics and practices of collecting, curating and interpreting health activism in museums and other institutions.

The day will include a keynote lecture by Manon Parry, Professor of Medical History at the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, and a short ceremony involving the lotus unfolding of Block 3 of the Dutch AIDS Memorial Quilt introduced by Jörn Wolters from the Stichting NAMENproject Nederland.

Programme

09:30-10:00 Registration / coffee

10.00-10.15 Welcome: Imogen Clarke

10.15-11.55 – Session 1: HIV and AIDS Activism

Chair: Katie Dabin (Curator of Medicine, Science Museum)

10.15-11.00 Lotus Unfolding Ceremony, Block 3 of the Dutch AIDS Memorial Quilt introduced by Jörn Wolters from the Stichting NAMENproject Nederland

11.00-11.30 Coffee break

11.30-11:50 Siân Cook (London College of Communication, University of the Arts London), 'Looking at Sex + Death: The Influence of Activism on HIV/AIDS Imagery and the Design of Health Promotion'

11:55-1.15 – Session 2: Museum Health Activism

Chair: Angela Stienne (Medicine Galleries Research Fellow, Science Museum)

11.55-12.15 Jack Davies and Laura Humphreys (Science Museum), 'Tampons to Mooncups and Pads to Period Pants: Modernising Menstruation at the Science Museum'

12.15-12.35 Brenda Malone (National Museum of Ireland), 'Rapid Response collecting the Irish Abortion Referendum – inviting activism into the museum process'

12.35-12.55 Natalie L. Jones (University of Warwick), 'A Lost Museum of the NHS?'

1:15-2:15 Lunch

2:15-3:15 – Session 3: Mental Health, Neurodiversity and Activism

Chair: Isabelle Lawrence (Assistant Curator of Medicine, Science Museum)

2.15-2.35 Mohammed Abouelleil Rashed (Birkbeck), 'From Civil Rights to Identity Politics: Transformations in Mental Health Activism Since the 1970s'

2.35-2.55 Kai Syng Tan (King's College London), 'ILL-DISCIPLINED: Irritating how we see 'illness' and diversifying 'neurodiversity'

2.55-3.15 Patrick Vernon OBE, 'Mental Health Activism: A Case for a National Archive and Resource Centre'

3.30-4.00 Coffee break

4.00-5.15 – Session 4: Health Activism and the Body

Chair: Sarah Wade (Research Manager, Science Museum)

4.00-4.20 Anna Maerker (King's College London), 'Coercion, collaboration and resistance: the ambiguous role of anatomical models in nineteenth-century public health initiatives'

4.20-4.40 Hana Janečková (FAMU, Prague/University of the Arts London), 'Multilogues on the Now: Feminism, Art & Health Now'

4.40-5.00 George Vasey (Wellcome Collection), 'Misbehaving Bodies: On the work of Jo Spence and Oreet Ashery'

5:15-6.00 – Keynote Lecture: Dr Manon Parry (Free University Amsterdam, University of Amsterdam)

6.00-6.45 Wine reception

6.45 End

Booking is now open for The Material Culture of Health Activism, a workshop taking place on Thursday 20th June in the Dana Research Centre at the Science Museum.

You can register to attend online here: <https://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/see-and-do/material-culture-health-activism>. More info below; the full programme will be available soon.

Reference:

CONF: The Material Culture of Health Activism (London, 20 Jun 19). In: ArtHist.net, May 18, 2019 (accessed Jul 5, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/20856>>.