

## Touch and Tactility in Art (St. Louis, 28–29 Feb 20)

Washington University in St. Louis, Feb 28–29, 2020

Deadline: Nov 25, 2019

Julie James

Close at Hand: Touch and Tactility in Art

Third Biennial Graduate Student Art History Symposium  
Washington University in St. Louis

Keynote Address by Roland Betancourt  
Associate Professor, University of California, Irvine

Inevitably every museumgoer is bound to encounter the all-too-familiar refrain: “Do not touch the art.” How does this “hands-off” attitude transform our engagement with art meant to be handled? What does it mean to take such works out of their original contexts and isolate them behind glass? How does physical contact with art objects affect our understanding of them? This symposium aims to explore the notions of touch and tactility as they relate to art, architecture, and art history. Despite the overarching designation “visual arts,” many objects that are today categorized as such were originally created in order to be held, worn, or used, not merely viewed. Artists’ touch and how they leave their mark, visible or otherwise, also carries profound implications. These issues are especially relevant today, whether it be artists who create works meant to be touched, or institutions that develop resources for the visually impaired. This symposium seeks submissions across chronological and geographic areas. We especially welcome cross-cultural, interdisciplinary, and inter-medial topics related to touch and tactility that include but are not limited to:

- Touch as discovery, as communication, or as experience
- The creative or destructive potential of touch
- The intimacy of tactile encounters with art
- Craft, decorative arts, ritual art, and art that we handle
- Fashion, textiles, and objects that we wear
- The added “value” of contact with historical figures or an object’s provenance
- Marks of the artist’s touch or erasure of the artist’s hand
- The museum context and curating tactile art
- Conservation efforts and ethics, physical interventions in art
- Impact of new technology on experiencing art, e.g. digital imaging, 3D printing

Current graduate students are invited to submit a 250-word abstract for a 20-minute paper as well as a current CV by November 15, 2019. In your email, please include your full name, academic affiliation, level of graduate study, presentation title, and a very brief statement on why your proposal is a good fit for this symposium theme.

Deadline extended to November 25, 2019.

Please email materials to [GSAHS@wustl.edu](mailto:GSAHS@wustl.edu).

Selected speakers will be notified by December 15, 2019. Please be prepared to share your completed papers with the committee by February 10, 2020.

Reference:

CFP: Touch and Tactility in Art (St. Louis, 28-29 Feb 20). In: Arthist.net, Oct 11, 2019 (accessed Jul 13, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/21803>>.