Veiling the Body. Cloth, Skin, Membrane, Paper (Manchester, 11–12 Jun 20)

The John Rylands Research Institute, University of Manchester, Jun 11–12, 2020
Deadline: Jan 20, 2020

Rebecca Whiteley

The word ‘veil’ most commonly connotes a piece of cloth worn on the body not primarily for warmth or protection, but as a symbol, usually of modesty or withdrawing from a public realm. In many cultures, veils have held a contradictory status of concealing the (most often female) body and of heightening the significance of exposure. In Europe, the word ‘veil’ and its cognates have also variously connoted: human skin and bodily membranes; draperies and curtains in religious and secular spaces; relics; and the separations between material and spiritual realms. In all contexts, the word points to secrecy and hiddenness, inflected with the potential for exposure and display.

Veiling the Body will bring together these themes in a cross-disciplinary workshop to explore the themes of secrecy and exposure, as well as the interrelations between the skin and membranes of our bodies, the cloths that cover them, and the materials with which we represent both.

We welcome proposals on themes including, but not limited to:
- Religious veils and relics
- Anatomical and medical images of unveiling
- Spiritual or ethereal veils
- The resonances between skin and cloth
- Clothing, veiling and exposure of the body
- Images that veil, or work in unique ways to represent veils
- The material culture of veils, skin and membranes

The workshop will include conference-style paper sessions as well as collections encounters with historic and contemporary material. The workshop will be held in the Historic Reading Room of the John Rylands Library in Manchester.

With this workshop, we aim to make connections across disciplines, time periods and locations. We invite proposals for 20-minute papers from scholars across the arts and humanities, museum staff, and artists working on the themes of veils and bodies from any place and time.

Proposals of no more than 250 words, along with a short bio, should be sent to veilingthebody2020@gmail.com by 20th January 2020.

Travel and accommodation will be provided for speakers, and conference fee waivers will be available for attendees who do not have research budgets.

Reference:

CFP: Veiling the Body. Cloth, Skin, Membrane, Paper (Manchester, 11-12 Jun 20). In: ArtHist.net, Nov 23, 2019 (accessed Nov 17, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/22144>.