

Modern Erotica (Washington, D.C., 1–4 Oct 20)

German Studies Association conference, Washington, D.C., Oct 1–04, 2020

Deadline: Jan 24, 2020

Camilla Smith, University of Birmingham

Modern Erotica: Sex, Censorship and German Visual Culture

Article 118 of Germany's first democratic constitution in 1919 stated: "Every German has the right, within the limits of the general laws, to express his opinion freely in word, in writing, in print, in picture form or in any other way. [...] No censorship shall be established." This seemingly liberal legislation opened the door to a wide array of erotica: from luxury print folios, paintings and illustrated bibliophile books, to cheap postcards and mass-circulated images in pulp novels and magazines. The contemporary press published caricatures of touts peddling erotica and stalls piled high with erotic magazines and photographs. However, the reality of this constitutional 'freedom' was more complex and ambivalent. The article continued: "...legal measures are permissible for the suppression of indecent and obscene literature, as well as for the protection of youth at public plays and exhibitions."

This panel seeks to explore how and why erotic visual culture became the source of both fascination and alarm during this period. How did politics and eroticism intersect? How did law making in Weimar – with its new constitutional declarations, and the retention of imperial criminal codes on censorship and sexuality – shape the production and consumption of erotic visual material? What methods were used to peddle and collect erotica and circumvent these censorship laws? What audiences and communities were addressed by erotic texts and images? To what extent did erotica contribute to a 'backlash' and help galvanise support for the right? Or in what ways does the study of erotica challenge typical teleological narratives of Weimar? These are some of the questions we will be asking in this session.

The panel invites proposals for individual papers that probe erotic visual material created in any medium or by any artistic or non-artistic grouping of the Weimar period. Papers exploring erotic advertisements, bookplates and illustrations from novels are welcome. Papers that adopt a *longue durée* approach to Weimar by considering the impact and afterlife of erotica produced 'before' and/or 'after' Weimar are also encouraged. Topics might include (but are not limited to): queer erotica; sexology and sexual citizenship; erotic material and reform movements; erotica and crime; the engagement of erotica with historical or international material; new technologies and erotica

The panel convenor is Camilla Smith, University of Birmingham, UK.

Please send a 400-word proposal for a 20-minute paper to h.c.smith@bham.ac.uk and Nina Lübbren: nina.lubbren@anglia.ac.uk with the subject line 'GSA erotica-2020'. Deadline 24 January

ArtHist.net

2020.

Reference:

CFP: Modern Erotica (Washington, D.C., 1-4 Oct 20). In: ArtHist.net, Dec 16, 2019 (accessed Jul 5, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/22305>>.