

## Technologies of Disability (London, 2–3 Jun 20)

Wellcome Collection & The Warburg Institute, London, Jun 2–03, 2020

Deadline: Apr 3, 2020

Jess Bailey & Felix Jäger

Technologies of Disability: Material Histories of the Premodern Body

A Workshop at Wellcome Collection, London, and the Warburg Institute, School of Advanced Study, University of London, 02-03 June 2020

Organizers: Jess Bailey & Felix Jäger

Born within a decade of each other, pioneering art historian Aby Warburg and pharmaceutical entrepreneur Sir Henry Wellcome had bold visions for the material and visual study of culture and science. While Warburg was exploring alternatives to stylistic accounts of art through his “laboratory” of a growing library and photo archive, Wellcome was amassing one of the most diverse collections devoted to the history of health. Today, their research communities continue to care for these legacies with a critical eye to their conceptual premises and contested histories.

This two-day workshop juxtaposes Warburg’s anthropological thought and his theories on tools or devices (Gerät) developed against the backdrop of the First World War, with Wellcome’s simultaneous collecting of medieval and early modern technologies of disability. Ranging from surgical tools to clappers owned by sufferers of leprosy, from “materia medica” manuscripts to experiments in metal prosthesis, Wellcome conceived of these objects as part of a “universal” history of the human being. We are interested in the roles played by such items in framing disabled persons in the past, as well as their use in recovering marginalized histories for the present. Through considering instruments of medical practice, visual means of social exclusion, and technologies of mobility, we hope to challenge conventional accounts of the history of science and art. Workshop participants are encouraged to explore the intellectual potential alongside the affective and inclusive concerns of the material histories of disability. By engaging hands-on with collection and archive materials, we will ask among other questions: Who had the knowledge to produce instruments or tools of disability? How much did makers, health practitioners, and users collaborate in devising them? How practical were these technologies? Whose aesthetic sensibilities did they serve? In what ways did these objects participate in the cultural construction of disability? What are the ethical stakes of terminology in histories of art and science, as well as in our archiving of historical disability? In what ways are our inquiries today shaped by Warburg and Wellcome’s turn of the century scholarly enterprises?

Participants are invited to join research staff, fellows, and faculty for two days devoted to Wellcome’s rich collections and the Warburg’s intellectual resources in premodern European culture. Due to work with original objects, space is limited. We are seeking researchers from across the

arts, humanities, and social sciences to join programmed speakers. PhD students, postdocs, and other early career scholars are especially encouraged to apply. Please send a 300 word proposal outlining the relevance of the workshop to your research and your motivations for attending along with any accessibility needs and a CV to Jess Bailey (j.bailey@wellcome.ac.uk) by 03 April 2020.

The workshop is generously supported by Wellcome Collection and the Warburg Institute. It is organized by Jess Bailey (Wellcome Trust, University of California at Berkeley) and Felix Jäger (Bilderfahrzeuge, The Warburg Institute, London.)

Reference:

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