

## Objects of Affection (Princeton, 4–6 May 12)

219 Aaron Burr Hall, Princeton University, May 4–06, 2012

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Princeton University  
Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies  
Program in Russian and Eurasian Studies

OBJECTS OF AFFECTION: TOWARDS A MATERIOLGY OF EMOTIONS  
Interdisciplinary Conference

<http://objectsofaffection.wordpress.com/>

In the first issue of the journal *Veshch-Objet-Gegenstand*, which appeared 90 years ago in Berlin, the avant-gardist El Lissitsky placed the object at the center of the artistic and social concerns of the day: “We have called our review *Object* because for us art means the creation of new ‘objects.’ ... Every organized work—be it a house, a poem or a picture—is an object with a purpose; it is not meant to lead people away from life but to help them to organize it. ... Abandon declarations and refutations as soon as possible, make objects!”

Ultimately, only three issues of *Veshch-Objet-Gegenstand* would be published, but the journal’s project to cultivate object as a primary tool of social organization clearly touched upon broader concerns of its time. At the end of the 1920s, Sergei Tret’iakov, a leading theorist of Russian production art, similarly insisted on abandoning the traditional fascination with individual trials and tribulations and to concentrate instead on the biography of the object that proceeds “through the system of people.” Only such a biography, Tret’iakov maintained, can teach us about “the social significance of an emotion by considering its effect on the object being made.”

Taking the Russian avant-garde’s concern with the material life of emotions as our starting point, the conference brings together an international, interdisciplinary group of scholars working at the intersection between studies of affect and studies of material culture. In the last decade, these two crucial strands of social inquiry have shifted the focus of analytic attention away from the individual or collective subject towards emotional states and material substances. These interests in the affective and the tangible as such have helped

to foreground processes, conditions, and phenomena that are relatively autonomous from the individuals or social groups that originally produced them. Thus interrogating traditional notions of subjective agency, various scholars have drawn our attention to “a conative nature” of things (Jane Bennet), to “affective intensities” (Brian Massumi), or to textural perception (Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick) – to name just a few of these interventions – in order to pose questions that fall outside of dominant frameworks for understanding the epistemology of power.

Despite their growing importance, however, these diverse methods and concepts for mapping the emotive biographies of things have not yet been in a direct dialogue with one another. By focusing on the material dimensions of affect and, conversely, the emotional components of object formation, this conference aims to bridge this gap.

Program Committee:

Serguei Oushakine, Anna Katsnelson, David Leheny, Anson Rabinbach, Gayle Salamon

MAY 4, 2012

1.30pm – 3.15pm PANEL 1: AFFECTIVE POLITICS

Chair: Anson Rabinbach (Princeton University)

Sabine Kriebel (University College Cork) Left Wing Laughter: John Heartfield’s Mischievous Communist Subject

Natalia Skradol (Hebrew University of Jerusalem) Joy in Numbers: Measuring / Making Subjects and Objects in Labor Camps

Nadia Guessous (New York University) Visceral Politics and Sartorial Rifts: Feminism in the Age of the Hijab in Morocco

Discussant: Arzoo Osanloo (University of Washington/Law and Public Affairs Program, Princeton)

3.30 pm – 5.15pm PANEL 2: POWERFUL THINGS

Chair: David Leheny (Princeton University)

Kim Lane Scheppele (Princeton University) Constitutional Awe: Hungary’s Holy Crown of St. Stephen

Julia Chadaga (Macalester College) Embracing Stars: On the Corporeal Qualities of Russian Glass

May Chew (Queen’s University, Canada) Colonial Archives and Affective Residues

Discussant: Robert Geraci (Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton)

5.30pm PERFORMANCE PANEL

ECONOMIES OF DIFFERENCE: DENIAL, DESIRE, AND A GENEALOGY OF THE OBJECT

By Jessica Jacobson-Konefall (Queen's University at Kingston, Canada),  
Jaimie Isaac (University of British Columbia), Leah Decter (Winnipeg,  
Canada)

MAY 5, 2012

9.30am – 11.15am PANEL 3: STONE FEELINGS

Chair: Serguei Oushakine (Princeton University)

Jeehee Hong (Syracuse University) Grieving through Stone and Clay:  
Mourning Images of Middle-Period China (10th-14th Centuries)

Brigit Ferguson (UC, Santa Barbara) Judging Affect: Smiles in the  
Thirteenth-Century Sculpture of Bamberg Cathedral

Diego Cagueñas (Universidad Icesi, The New School for Social Research)  
The Impassivity of Stones and the Heart of Disaster

Discussant: Christopher Nygren (University of Pennsylvania)

11.30am – 1.15pm PANEL 4: ARCHITECTURES OF EMOTIONS

Chair: Rachael Z. DeLue (Princeton University)

Yogesh Chandrani (Columbia University) In the Asylum of Truth:  
Planning, Heritage, and Violence in Ahmedabad

Lois Weinthal (University of Texas) Embedded Emotions in Objects of the  
Architectural Interior

Krisztina Fehervary (University of Michigan) From Socialist Modern to  
Super Natural Organicism: Political Affect and the Materialities of the  
Home

Discussant: Spyros Papapetros (Princeton University)

2.00pm – 3.45pm PANEL 5: REGIMES OF SENSES

Chair: Ekaterina Pravilova (Princeton University)

Christina Kiaer (Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton) Feeling  
Socialism in the 1930s: A Haptic Aesthetics of Socialist Realist  
Painting

Emma Widdis (University of Cambridge) Socialist Senses: Film and the  
Creation of Soviet Subjectivity

Cheng-Guang Zhao (University of Chicago) Sentimental Objects: a Cultural Analysis of some Romantic Things and Spaces in Tianjin, China

Discussant: Anna Katsnelson (Princeton University)

4.00pm – 5.45pm PANEL 6: TECHNOLOGIES OF ADDICTION

Chair: Gayle Salamon (Princeton University)

Nicole Vitellone (University of Liverpool) Syringe Sociology: Addicts, Objects, Emotions

Jason Pine (Purchase College) The Demiurge of the Methamphetamine Economy

Diana Mincyte (New York University) Commodity-As-Comrade: The Making of Consumer Society in Brezhnev's Lithuania

Discussant: Devin Fore (Princeton University)

MAY 5, 2012

6.00pm

KEYNOTE ADDRESS:

PATRICIA TICINETO CLOUGH

THE NEW AESTHETIC: OBJECTS THAT MATTER

Patricia Ticineto Clough is professor of Sociology and Women's Studies at the Graduate Center and Queens College of the City University of New York. She is author of *Autoaffection: Unconscious Thought in the Age of Teletechnology* (2000); *Feminist Thought: Desire, Power and Academic Discourse* (1994) and *The End(s) of Ethnography: From Realism to Social Criticism* (1998). She is editor of *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, (2007) and with Craig Willse, editor of *Beyond Biopolitics: Essays on the Governance of Life and Death* (2011). She is currently working on *Ecstatic Corona: Philosophy and Family Violence*, an ethnographic historically researched experimental writing project about where she grew up in Queens New York. Clough's work has drawn on theoretical traditions concerned with technology, affect, unconscious processes, timespace and political economy.

MAY 6, 2012

9.30am-11.15am PANEL 7: OBJECT RELATIONS

Chair: Edyta Bojanowska (Rutgers University)

Judith Goldstein (Vassar College) Witness Objects

Joan Neuberger (University of Texas, Austin) Eisenstein's Feeling-Thinking Things

Victor Vakhshayn (Moscow School for Social and Economic Sciences)

“Toys are Us” or How to Do Emotions with Things

Discussant: Dragan Kujundzic (University of Florida)

11.30am – 1.15pm PANEL 8: ACOUSTIC PASSIONS

Chair: Joshua Kotin (Princeton University)

Anna Fishzon (Williams College) Sound Affects: Love, Hate, and the Gramophone in Prerevolutionary Russia

Olya Zikrata (Concordia University) Intangible Objects: Mapping Sonic Forces of the Russian Avant-garde

Lilya Kaganovsky (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) The Materiality of Sound: Esfir Shub’s Haptic Cinema

Discussant: Natasha Kurchanova (Independent Scholar)

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