

Material/Immaterial: The lives (and afterlives) of objects (online, 14 Apr 21)

online / Association for Art History

Registration deadline: Apr 13, 2021

Lynn Somers, Drew University

Session at the Association for Art History annual conference 2021 AAH

Recent work on matter, materiality, and materialisms has enriched the study of objects in the aesthetic, and more broadly, cultural spheres. Beyond formal considerations, artists have mined materials as complex, affective carriers of communication (as recent exhibitions of Hilma af Klint, Henry Moore, Ruth Asawa, Claire Falkenstein, and Doris Salcedo suggest). But what precisely is the relationship between medium and materiality, the latter of which Michael Ann Holly has called 'the meeting of matter and imagination' (The Art Bulletin, March 2013, p. 15)? Panofsky wrote that the melancholy task of humanists isn't 'arresting what would otherwise slip away but enlivening what would otherwise remain dead' (Meaning in the Visual Arts, 1983, p. 24). How might we understand the powerful tug-of-war between tangible surface and the immaterial – psychological, emotional, and memorial – that the 'stuff' of objects transmits?

The materiality of the works we study, collect, and exhibit are both lost and found, past and present. Equally important, they are embedded to varying degrees with the lives of their makers, carrying their own narratives across time and space in ways that are often difficult to untangle from the stories of people who produced them. Perhaps scholars needn't shy away from their desires to recapture the ineffable that imaginative endeavours offer. What, for instance, makes one object forgettable and another arresting? There's a difference, both psychoanalysts and connoisseurs say, between an ordinary object and an evocative one, but the aforementioned questions are open to other sociocultural, anthropological, and theoretical inquiries. This panel explores dialogues between material, materiality, and making viewed through the lenses of history, philosophy, museology, political theory and practice.

Panel Organizer: Lynn M. Somers

Speakers:

"Decentred Space in Claire Falkenstein's Suns"

Elizabeth Buhe (The Courtauld Institute of Art)

"The Matter of Darkness: Rothko's late works as transformational objects"

Lynn M. Somers (Independent Scholar)

"Immaterial Matter: The politics of subverting 'feminine' space(s) in Francesca Woodman's Some

"Disordered Interior Geometries"

Márcia Oliveira (CEHUM – Centre for Humanistic Studies of the University of Minho, Portugal)

"Materiality and Double Disappearance in Doris Salcedo's Atrabiliarios"

Jamie DiSarno (University at Buffalo)

For abstracts, please visit the AAH website, <https://eu-admin.eventscloud.com/website/2065/theatre,-art,-and-visual-culture/> For the programme, <https://eu-admin.eventscloud.com/website/2065/programme-by-day/>. For tickets and online booking, <https://eu.eventscloud.com/website/2065/tickets/>.

Reference:

CONF: Material/Immaterial: The lives (and afterlives) of objects (online, 14 Apr 21). In: ArHist.net, Apr 8, 2021 (accessed Dec 29, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/33770>>.