# The Social Life of Sculpture (online, 15 Apr 21)

online / Association for Art History, Apr 15, 2021
Registration deadline: Apr 13, 2021

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Session at the Association for Art History Annual conference 2021

In contemporary artist Paul Chan's estimation, 'art is more and less than a thing' ('What Art Is and Where It Belongs', e-flux journal 10, 2009). Taking this claim, as well as anthropologist Arjun Appadurai's influential formula of The Social Life of Things (1988, Cambridge University Press), as points of departure, this panel investigates the social life of art, and more specifically sculpture, by looking closely at artistic practices across varying periods and places. Within the context of 20th–21st-century art, such an inquiry might engage categories of assemblage or the readymade; in more transhistorical terms, this could involve reassessing the afterlives of ancient or classical modes of sculpture.

Above all, we are interested in moments in which the unexpected resonance of 'things' is found. Rather than practices that simply celebrate the agency of things or the vibrancy of matter, the following papers will consider how material and object choices call attention to historical and political conundrums. Whether by highlighting the significance of artefacts of popular culture or by excavating neglected materials and giving them new life, artists have engaged with the evocative potential of materials, their unstable sensibility, and the ways meaning is altered by context. The papers included in this panel explore these connections and mine how artists deploy the social life of sculpture as a means to problematise both historic and imminent moments of geopolitical crisis.

Session convenors:
Christian Berger, Johannes Gutenberg-Universitat Mainz
Heather Diack, University of Miami

Speakers:

Dominic Hardy (Université du Québec à Montréal):
Transatlantic Nelsons: Material simulations and imperialist ironies in Vieux-Montréal

Vajdon Sohaili (Princeton University):
Suspended Partnership: The sculpting of Rhodesian race relations

Leah Modigliani (Tyler School of Art and Architecture, Temple University):
Deborah, Jerusalem and The City in Her Desolation

Chloe Julius (University College London):
Sculpture and Holocaust Memory in 1990s America

Kenneth White (State University of New York at Binghamton):
Phantoms: Lynda Benglis, Robert Smithson and the hyperventilation syndrome circa 1970

Samuel Luterbacher (Yale University):
Dressing Images: Sculpture and sumptuary law in 18th-century New Spain

Khulod M. Al-Bugami (Princess Nourah Bint Abdulrahman University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia):
'Food for Thought': Spatial and cultural memory in the work of Saudi artist Maha Malluh

Natasha Adamou (Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London):
Intimacy and Public Space: Lydia Ourahmane's 'The You in Us'

Reference:

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