

Representations of the Domestic Milieu in Feminist Art (online, 14–17 Nov 22)

online / University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa, Nov 14–17, 2022

Deadline: Mar 15, 2022

Brenda Schmahmann, University of Johannesburg

Hitting Home: Representations of the Domestic Milieu in Feminist Art

This is a call for papers for an online conference hosted by the NRF Research Chair in South African Art and Visual Culture at the University of Johannesburg between 14 and 17 November 2022. It is envisaged that selected papers from the conference will be developed into either an edited scholarly volume or a special issue of a peer-reviewed journal.

THEME

The politics of the home was often a focus in second-wave feminist art in the West. Influenced by Betty Friedan's *The Feminist Mystique* (1963), which challenged the notion that women were content to be wives, mothers and homemakers, artists often represented the domestic milieu as a space of oppression. But Friedan's ideas would be challenged by bell hooks who indicated that such perceptions simply assumed a woman who was middle-class and white. As hooks observed in *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (1984), Friedan "did not tell readers whether it was more fulfilling to be a maid, a babysitter, a factory worker, a clerk, or a prostitute than to be a leisure-class housewife". It should also be noted that Friedan's views were shaped by a USA context specifically, and that the politics of home, domesticity, marriage or parenthood may be perceived very differently in geographies outside the United States or the West more generally.

This conference asks for a reconsideration of how the home has been conceptualised in feminist art practices, both historical and recent. It asks for engagement with how the domestic environment and its politics have been explored in feminist works from outside the West as well as inviting new perspectives on the conception of the domestic milieu by feminist artists operating within Western contexts.

What constitutes "the domestic environment" or "the home" can be interpreted in a broad sense. It is envisaged that papers will not be limited to those focusing on the politics of household labour, although this topic is relevant. The theme is intended to also encompass feminist explorations of family relationships and interactions – motherhood, parenting, spousal interactions, sisterhood, widowhood, etc. – as well as events structuring and changing domestic life such as marriage, birth and death.

PROPOSALS

A prospective presenter is invited to offer a 30-minute paper focusing on art from any geography that engages with domestic life (in the broad sense, as defined above) and is underpinned by a concern with gender. Individual papers may focus on a single work or series or group of works.

Papers must be on material that has not already been published. A prospective presenter must also be willing to develop the proposed paper into either a book chapter or journal article, should it be selected for inclusion in a publication. Papers must be in English.

Please submit your proposal with "Hitting Home" in the subject line, and send it to the convener, Brenda Schmahmann (brendas@uj.ac.za), and copied to the administrator at the offices of the Research Chair of South African Art and Visual Culture, Neelofir Nagdee (nnagdee@uj.ac.za), by 15 March 2021. Please submit a single WORD document with the following information:

1. a title for your paper
2. an abstract between 350 and 500 words in length for a 30-minute paper
3. a short biography, including your current institutional affiliation (up to 200 words)
4. your contact details, i.e. e-mail address, postal address, mobile phone number
5. a statement confirming that your paper has not been previously published and that, should it be selected, you would be willing to develop it into an article or chapter for inclusion in a publication emanating from the conference

Applicants will be notified of decisions by the end of April.

Presenters will not be charged a conference fee.

Reference:

CFP: Representations of the Domestic Milieu in Feminist Art (online, 14-17 Nov 22). In: ArtHist.net, Jan 24, 2022 (accessed Jul 13, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/35758>>.