

Mind, Body, and the Arts, 1100–1800 (Frankfurt/M., 28 Mar 24)

Frankfurt am Main, Max Planck Institute for Empirical Aesthetics, Mar 28, 2024

Deadline: Nov 15, 2023

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In recent decades, scholars across the humanities have grown increasingly interested in historical understandings of the effects of art on the mind and body. In the Middle East, for instance, Islamicate medics regarded certain musical modes (*maqāmāt*) as having therapeutic properties, linking them to states of mind and body thought to depend on the four humors. In pre-modern China, writers such as the Song historian Lu You (1125-1210) identified poetry as a means of healing a mind that was closely interwoven with the body. Meanwhile, in Europe, emotional states such as melancholy, nostalgia, or hysteria were theorized as stemming not only from an imbalance of the humors but also to stimulants ranging from the eerie tones of the glass armonica and the disturbing effects of romantic fiction, to the therapeutic effects of the color green.

This workshop asks whether we can reconfigure our understandings of art and health by decentering modern Western accounts of aesthetic experience and psychology. To this end, it will emphasize global early modern perspectives on the links between the body, health, and artistic production/experience. It will bring historical accounts of embodied experience into dialogue with artistic productions—and their associated cosmologies—found across a wide range of early modern cultures around the world. In particular, it will investigate whether there were links between the notion of balance/imbalance in the body, and the notion of harmony / dissonance in artistic productions and aesthetic experiences.

This conference forms part of the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council funded project "The Arts as Medicine? New Histories of the Arts and Health," led by Alexander Wragge Morley and Carmel Raz. It will consist of three workshops - this workshop at the Max Planck Institute for Empirical Aesthetics in Frankfurt, Germany, and subsequent workshops at the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, UK and at Lancaster University, UK.

For the current workshop, we are soliciting papers that will be submitted for a special issue of a leading peer-reviewed journal in the humanities. Draft versions of those papers will be circulated ahead of the workshop, so that participants can discuss them together. We welcome proposals from scholars working on the period 1100-1800 in (but not necessarily limited to) the fields of: history of science and medicine, musicology, ethnomusicology, anthropology, dance studies, literary studies, the history of music theory, history of art, or literary studies. Funding will be available to assist with the travel and accommodation costs of invited participants.

Please send an abstract of 250-500 words by November 15, 2023 to the following email:

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Max Planck Institute for Empirical Aesthetics, Frankfurt

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Reference:

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