

Workshop Series: Femininity and Design at Work (online, 1 Mar–16 Apr 24)

online, Mar 1–Apr 16, 2024

Deadline: Dec 15, 2023

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For some time, femininity has operated as a highly contested -and controversial- term in feminist historiography and gender studies. Frequently discussed in relation to ideas of superficiality, glamour, fashion and style, it has also been associated with oppressive ideals in beauty, lifestyle and identity. From a design history perspective, gendered ideals of feminized consumption and masculine production are well established, but recent histories have indicated the value of moving beyond these binaries and boundaries.

This workshop series seeks to build a research discussion around the concept of femininity at work in design, through an historical and critical lens, and beyond gender binaries. The discussion aims to interrogate the value and meaning of femininity in relation to the history of design work and working identities in design. The workshop will take the form of a series of paper presentations, followed by discussion.

We invite paper proposals from across all historical periods, geographical territories and design disciplines or practices, that respond to the theme and engage with the following questions:

- What are the parameters of femininity and how has it shaped identities and practices in design work?
- How did femininity support or enable the formation of new working identities in 'new careers' and 'new professions', like design and related industries?
- How has it worked to support certain professional identities and obstruct others?
- What was the nature of its relationship to media and publicity?
- What are the politics of visibility and aesthetics in relation to femininity?
- How does it interact with motherhood, marriage or familial bonds?
- How have historical subjects engaged with practices of femininity in their work or how have they rejected it?
- How did professional designers or practitioners use hyper-femininity and the performance of feminine ideals throughout their careers?
- What kind of historical source material illuminates and captures the dynamics of femininity in design work and what are the methodological problems associated with this?

Organisers:

Leah Armstrong, University of applied arts Vienna

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Please submit your proposals (300-350 words) and a short biographical note to leah.armstrong@uni-ak.ac.at and secklehner@muni.phil.cz by 15 December 2023. The online series is scheduled to take place throughout March 2024.

Reference:

CFP: Workshop Series: Femininity and Design at Work (online, 1 Mar-16 Apr 24). In: Arthist.net, Oct 22, 2023 (accessed Oct 13, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/40410>>.