New Perspectives on Life Drawing (online/London, 20–21 Jun 24)

Online/The Courtauld Institute of Art, Vernon Square, London, Jun 20–21, 2024
Deadline: Mar 22, 2024

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Pose, Power, Practice: New Perspectives on Life Drawing.

From the sixteenth century to the present, drawing the human body from life has remained a mainstay of Western institutional art practice. Despite significant shifts in the aesthetics, media, and purpose of art over the last five hundred years, life drawing endures in both the studio and the classroom.

Pose, Power, Practice is a one-day symposium that seeks to reassess the state of the field on life drawing and apply new critical frameworks to this sustained practice. It aims to better understand life drawing in all its complexity, from its presumed advantages to its consequences. This is a practice deeply intertwined with concerns central to the discipline of art history, including but not limited to: the power dynamics of the gaze; the politics of representation; recognition of multiple forms of artistic labor; formulations of race, dis/ability, gender, and sexuality; and critiques of institutions. How has life drawing changed across time and place? How and why has it endured as a pedagogical practice, despite repeated dismissals of its “academicism”? What uses does it hold today, for artists and art historians alike?

We invite studies that unearth the specificities of life drawing to interrogate larger questions of ethics, labor, power, and potential in the life studio. Papers might attend to any and all aspects of this practice, from the models who pose, to the materials used, to the dynamics of the environments—formal and informal—in which life drawing takes place. We welcome papers that consider artistic engagements with drawing the human figure from life across all regions and periods, historical and contemporary.

This symposium aims to bridge connections and bolster dialogue across specialist scholarly communities by centring this shared subject of concern, while also inspiring broader understandings of what constitutes expertise in this field. We therefore encourage applications from all scholars and practitioners of life drawing, including students, artists, and models, in the UK and abroad. In addition to 20-minute conference papers, we welcome creative or collaborative submissions.

Pose, Power, Practice will take place at the Courtauld’s Vernon Square campus in person on Thursday, 20 June 2024. The programme will be recorded and subsequently shared on the Courtauld’s YouTube channel. Speakers will be further invited to participate in a workshop in The Courtauld’s Prints and Drawings Study Room on 21 June 2024. Partial reimbursement for travel and

accommodation may be available. In addition, we are planning a remote component of the symposium earlier in the week in collaboration with The Drawing Foundation, so if you are unable to travel to Vernon Square please do submit an application and indicate this preference.

Proposal submissions: Applications, including abstract, CV, and short bio are due on 22 March via https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1BgNGDOl-5HYatCKXKMv7InttGrKfprefsqCjNrB4OV4/viewform?edit_requested=true

Speakers will be notified by 5 April.

If you have any questions, please contact Zoë Dostal (azd2103@columbia.edu) or Isabel Bird (isabelbird@g.harvard.edu).

Reference:
CFP: New Perspectives on Life Drawing (online/London, 20-21 Jun 24). In: ArtHist.net, Feb 22, 2024 (accessed Nov 24, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/41280>.