

Pose, Power, Practice: New Perspectives on Life Drawing (London, 20 Jun 24)

The Courtauld Institute, Vernon Square, London, Jun 20, 2024

Zoë Dostal, Columbia University

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 labour; 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?

Our re-evaluation of life drawing will start with two virtual panels earlier in the week, hosted in collaboration with The Drawing Foundation. At ‘Life Drawing After Death’ on Monday 17 June, 16:00 BST and ‘Life Model as Laborer and Artist’ on Tuesday 18 June, 13:00 BST, we will dive into topics that will resonate with and inform our in-person discussions on the varied perspectives, ethical considerations, and diverse practices that make up life drawing.

Life Drawing After Death, Monday June 17, 2024, 11:00am–12:30pm EST

What happens to life drawing after death? This panel brings together three perspectives on historical and contemporary practices of drawing the human body as cadaver to consider the ethics and experience of life drawing at its existential limits.

Panelists: Linda Carreiro (Professor of Visual Arts, Faculty of Humanities, Brock University), “Performing Memory: Drawing and Dissection”, V Yeh (Yale School of Art MFA ‘24), “Death Drawing”, Alejandro Nodarse (PhD Candidate, Harvard University, and MFA Candidate, Ruskin School of Art, University of Oxford), “When the body is not a ship; or, towards an historical ethics of life drawing”
Moderator: Isabel Bird, PhD candidate, Harvard University

Life Model as Laborer and Artist, Tuesday June 18, 2024, 8:00–9:30am EST

There are two primary actors in life drawing: artist and model. Yet art historians and critics often treat the resulting works as the product of the artist alone, thereby foreclosing the creativity, labor, and perspective of the model. This panel, featuring four practicing life models, centers models as

workers and artists in their own right. How can interrogating life drawing from the perspective of models challenge partial narratives and open more collaborative understandings of this practice? Panelists: Kat Chimonides (Writer and Artist), "The Model Memoir", Fleur Blüm (Life Model and Community Servant), and Asako Saito (Life Model and Public Servant), "Model as Worker: Raising the Model Status with the Life Models' Society", Dominic Blake (Art Writer), "Are Life Models Artists? An art historical analysis from the Renaissance to the present day"

Moderator: Zoë Dostal, Kress Fellow, The Courtauld

Visit The Drawing Foundation's event webpage for further details.

Organised by Dr Zoë Dostal (Kress Fellow, The Courtauld) and Isabel Bird (PhD candidate, Harvard University).

Programme:

10.00: Registration opens

Coffee and tea provided for attendees.

10.30: Welcome from Organisers

Professor Alixe Bovey, The Courtauld

Zoë Dostal, The Courtauld and Isabel Bird, Harvard University

10.50: Session 1 – Life Drawing as an Enduring Practice

Chaired by Tara Versey, Royal Drawing School

Antje Southern, The King's Foundation Diploma Year, 'The Creative Impact of Life Drawing at Fine Art Foundation Level: A Case Study'.

Susanne Müller-Bechtel, Saxon Academy of Sciences and Humanities in Leipzig – Young Forum, 'The Experimental Arrangement in the "Aktsaal" at the Early Modern Academies and the Effects on the Artistic Practice'.

John Fagg, University of Birmingham, "'Take the pose of the model, yourself": Empathy in Robert Henri's Pedagogy and Practice'.

12.15 – 13.45: Lunch Break

Provided for speakers, chairs, and organisers.

13.45: Session 2 – Exposure and Expression: Life Modelling

Chaired by Carole Nataf, The Courtauld

Fra Beecher, Director of United Models Life Drawing CIC, 'The Body, Captured; Photography & the Life Room'.

Tomáš Valeš, Institute of Art History, Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague & Department of Art History, Masaryk University, Brno, 'Employed, Exposed, Captured: Life Model Praxis in 18th-century Vienna'.

Yanyun Chen, School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Tufts University, 'Skinning Nudity: Life Modelling Practice in Singapore'.

15.10 – 15.40: Comfort Break

Coffee and tea provided for attendees.

15.40: Session 3 – Beyond the Life Room: Unexpected Practices

Chaired by Professor Joanna Woodall, The Courtauld

Suri Li, University of Cambridge, 'A Renaissance Nun's Drawing Practices: Suor Plautilla Nelli (1524-1588) and Her Drawing of a Young Woman'.

Oriane Poret, Université Lyon 2, LARHRA 'Beyond Human: Drawing from Non-Human Life During the 19th Century'.

Nick Robbins, University College London, 'The Life Academy and the Origins of Landscape'.

17.00: Drinks Reception

18.00: End of the event

Reference:

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