

Objects. Between Absorption and Isolation (Florence / online, 17.–19. Oct 24)

Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz - Max-Planck-Institut, Florence / online, Oct 17–19, 2024

Natalie Arrowsmith

Symposium: Objects. Between Absorption and Isolation.

Organized by Anna-Maria Meister, Anna Luise Schubert and the Lise Meitner Group "Coded Objects".

Objects might emerge from muddled contexts into crisp discreteness in a material, sensorial, epistemological and ontological negotiation—one with fuzzy edges and cracking seams. Taking this process as a question of figure and ground into three dimensions, during this symposium, we want to ask: when do objects come into being, and when are they recognized as such? How do they behave, get used, or get culturally coded and re-inscribed and how can they be perceived? What throws them into relief, what helps to see, grasp or make them? By investigating objecthood as a process of formation from (material, cultural, political or aesthetic) backgrounds as well as their potential decay, or dispersal, we want to carve out terms and concepts to describe and discuss objects anew.

Concepts like subjectivity and objectivity have long received critical attention, and the categories of their constitutive counterparts—subject and object—are no longer seen as sole agents operating in and on the world. Similarly, the understanding of the environment has been expanded to encompass 'vibrant matter' as integral part of networks between humans, objects, matter and non-human beings. At the same time, the perception of objects is still shaped by modern dichotomies. These divergences show that the question of objects and of their becoming is intrinsically linked to how (and whether) we know objects at all: attempts to map them onto reality on the one hand and the interpretations of their rendered presence on the other constantly undo and reconfigure each other.

Where the fields of art history and architecture history have artefacts at their disciplinary center, we want to expand that focus by adding the assumption of formal intent or consequence to other objects, as well as adding and testing methods from other fields. New materialism can help to understand objects as access to communities and practices around them; feminist and queer studies afford objects formerly excluded from canonical constructions other narratives or histories; post-colonial studies or anthropology help identifying the reinscription, projection or appropriation of forms and objects; media studies can assist in tracing aggregational processes and material translations between matter and objecthood (and reverse).

This Symposium is organized by the Lise Meitner Group "Coded Objects" (led by Anna-Maria Meister) at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut. "Coded Objects" as method of refraction questions any assumptions of "neutral" technology or immaterial bureaucracy. Instead, the Lise Meitner Group examines how processes form values through objects—and how objects inform processes in societies.

This event will be hybrid and take place in person at Palazzo Grifoni.

—

PROGRAM

Thursday, 17 October

3:00 pm – 4:00 pm – Introduction

Anna-Maria Meister, KHI and Karlsruhe Institute of Technology

4:00 – 7:00 pm

Magical Objects

Chair: Neilabh Sina, KHI

Ida Colangelo and Kathrin Borgers, University of Cologne

Between Material Evidence and Forgotten Curiosity: An Unusual Relic in the Gräfrath Monastery

Sandrine Welte, Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia

Objects in Motion - Late Antique Magical Artefacts as Liminal Spaces and Mobile Ritual Sites

Cristóbal Amunátegui, UCLA

Machines of State and Machines Chance: The Case of the Totalizator in Nineteenth-Century

Coffee Break

6:00 pm – Response: Laurent Stalder, ETH Zurich

& Discussion

Break

7:30 – 9:00 pm

Practices of Attention: D. Graham Burnett

Friday, 18 October

9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Resistance, Replication & Resilience

Chair: Anna Luise Schubert, KHI

Marie Meyering, Technische Universität Dresden

Environmental Feminist Art Fabricating Freedom: Textiles, Censorship and Environmental Art in the GDR

Taavi Hallimäe, Estonian Academy of Arts

Hitting the Slopes of Capitalism: The Case Study of the Ski Boots from the Soviet Estonian Factory Salvo in Late 80s

Malcolm Noble, University of Nottingham

Leaky and Absorbent Books: Material Paratexts and Contemporary Queer Print Culture

Coffee Break

11:00 am – Response: Rebecca Carrai, KHI
& Discussion

Lunch Break

01:30 pm – 4:30 pm

Emerging Formations

Chair: Karina Pawlow, KHI

Galaad Van Daele, ETH Zurich

Expressive Rocks and Geoarchitectural Histories: Lessons from the Grotto

Tamar Zinguer, The University of Oklahoma

The Grain: From Figure to Ground

Saskia Abrahms-Kavunenko, Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies

Anthropocene Ouroboros: Shimmying Plastics and the Contamination of Time

Coffee Break

3:30 pm – Response: Clemens Finkelstein, Princeton University
& Discussion

Break

5:00 pm – 7:00pm

Stabilizing Boundaries

Chair: Oliver Aas, Cornell University and KHI

Sarah Hearne, University of Colorado Denver

Stabilizing the Eroding Image: The 20th c., Project of Permanence in the Mesa Verde Cliff Dwellings

Ayala Levin, UCLA

The Fence and the Billboard: The Object of Land at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture in Ibadan, Nigeria, 1965-68

Coffee Break

6:00 pm – Response: Alina Payne, I Tatti – The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies

& Discussion

Saturday, 19 October

9:30 am – 12:30pm

Extending Subjects

Chair: Larissa Maria Müller, KHI

Jocelyn Beausire, Princeton University

“Will it Change the Baby?”: Sonic Respatialization and the Politics of Domestic Surveillance with the Advent of Infant Monitoring Systems

Ignacio G. Galán, Columbia GSAPP

Furnishings Like Us: Object Identifications in Fascist Italy

Elisa Palomino, Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History

Spirit and Skin: The Role of Fish Skin Objects in Arctic Indigenous Cosmologies

Coffee Break

11:30 am – Response: Virginia Marano, KHI

& Discussion

Lunch Break

02:00 pm – 5:00pm

Overwriting Attributes

Chair: Lunarita Sterpetti, KHI

Pratiti Ketoki, University of Minnesota, and Ipsa S. University of Wisconsin

Problematizing the Object Turn: Partition Histories and Politics of Remembering

Rachel Lee, TU Delft and Sarita Sundar Bangalore

A Chair by Any Other Name? Rewriting the Colonial Script

Will Davis, Università della Svizzera italiana

Bamboo Messages and Legacies of a Cryptic Letter

Coffee Break

4:00 pm – Response: Ariella Minden, Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max-Planck-Institut für Kunstgeschichte

& Discussion

5:00 pm – Closing Remarks

VENUE

Palazzo Grifoni Budini Gattai

Via dei Servi 51

50122 Firenze, Italia

To participate online please register in advance via Zoom:

https://eu02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/u5AtcOctrDojGN1AtVNzNvKDdKQFWGmFY_Ge#/registration

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

--

Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut

Via Giuseppe Giusti 44

50121 Firenze, Italia

+39 055 24911-1

info@khi.fi.it

www.khi.fi.it

khi.fi.it/newsletter

[instagram.com/khiflorenz](https://www.instagram.com/khiflorenz)

[facebook.com/khiflorenz](https://www.facebook.com/khiflorenz)

x.com/khiflorenz

@khiflorenz #khiflorenz

Reference:

CONF: Objects. Between Absorption and Isolation (Florence / online, 17.-19. Oct 24). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 5, 2024 (accessed Jul 13, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/42849>>.