

Craft History Workshop Seminar Series (online, 1 Feb–21 Nov 25)

virtual, Feb 1–Nov 21, 2025

Deadline: Jan 31, 2025

Antonia Behan, Queen's University

Craft History Workshop is a virtual works-in-progress seminar for interdisciplinary histories of making that aims to expand the temporal, geographic, and methodological scope of research in craft history. We invite submissions for Spring 2025 and Fall 2025 seminars.

This seminar series invites new considerations of craft in an expanded historical and methodological field. Recent art-historical scholarship on craft tends to emphasize the mechanisms and markets of contemporary art, or positions craft as a phenomenon arising specifically through the dialectics of industrial modernity. But this is not the only way we can define and frame craft. Even during the rise of the mass-produced modern world, craft remained integrated in industrial capitalism, not as its “other” but (as Raphael Samuel famously showed) part of its development and operation. Nor has modernity been the only driver of change: craft’s rich pre- and early-modern transformations deserve explicit attention as well. Furthermore, craft has an ongoing present beyond the specific frame of Western affluence; in the global South and in marginalized communities within the global North, craft’s enduring importance as a cultural technology and an economic engine (rather than a rarefied form of opposition to mass culture) can remain somewhat elusive when we look primarily through the conceptual prism of art history. Researchers from a wide variety of fields have also recognized craft’s central role—both in historical research and contemporary practice—in discourses of decoloniality. Rethinking craft in terms of these long and tangled histories can elicit new questions, challenges, and connections.

The Craft History Workshop aims to enrich our historical understanding of craft as more than a byproduct of a hand-versus-machine dichotomy; rather, we consider craft as a complex mesh woven between knowledge, skill, and materiality across the many contexts of human making. We welcome papers that consider the history of craft (in any period, from prehistory to the present) from a broad range of disciplines and approaches, including but by no means limited to art and design history, material culture studies, anthropology and archaeology, histories of science and technology, economics and public policy, and conservation. We also particularly encourage submissions on topics, time periods, and geographies not represented in the previous years of Craft History Workshop seminars.

Contributions might engage notions of craft and artisan economies from the local to the global; craftwork and labor organization; decoloniality in and through craft; artisanal epistemologies; craft practices within the spheres of mass, industrial, or digital production; historiographies and

categorizations of craft; processes of knowledge transfer; or histories of specific materials and their agency—among many other potential topics.

In the spirit of our title, we envision this as a less-formal space to discuss research still in development online via Zoom. Talks are not recorded, as we emphasize interaction and discussion of in-progress work. Emerging and early-career scholars, museum and heritage professionals, craft practitioners, and those working outside the traditional spaces and structures of academia are particularly encouraged to participate. We welcome contributions from anywhere in the world.

Please send talk proposals of around 300 words to crafthistoryworkshop@gmail.com along with a CV, link to a personal website, or biographical statement indicating your interests in and experiences with craft and craft history, and your availability (Feb–May 2025 or September–December 2025) by January 31, 2025.

Reference:

CFP: Craft History Workshop Seminar Series (online, 1 Feb–21 Nov 25). In: ArtHist.net, Nov 25, 2024 (accessed Jun 5, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/43231>>.