

The Menil Archive of The Image of the Black in Western Art (London, 7–8 Nov 25)

The Warburg Institute, London, Nov 7–08, 2025

Deadline: Jun 16, 2025

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The Menil Archive of 'The Image of the Black in Western Art': Past, Present and Future.

In 1960, Franco-American art collectors and philanthropists Jean and Dominique de Menil initiated the Menil Archive of 'The Image of the Black in Western Art' (IBWA). Originally started in Paris and then expanded with an office in Houston, the IBWA research project resulted in two visual archives of photographs. Collected between 1960 and the 1990s, the photographs document paintings, sculptures, manuscripts, decorative arts, and other objects depicting people of African heritage in ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman art, early modern and modern European and American art, as well as art created by Western artists in Africa and America. The reference collection of photographs and accompanying materials from Paris is now held by the Warburg Institute.

The Menil Archive of 'The Image of the Black in Western Art': Past, Present and Future conference will bring together scholars who have contributed to the project over its history and those producing new research on the historic representation of African people in European and American art and culture. The conference aims to:

- contextualise the Archive within the existing scholarship,
- consider how the themes and topics mapped out by the Archive have changed and developed over time,
- discuss how the materials held by the Archive can be useful to researchers as well as potential challenges that working with this type of visual archive can present.

We would like to invite proposals for papers of 20 minutes which connect to the wide range of themes covered by the Menil Archive's holdings. We particularly welcome applications from PhD students and early career scholars working in this field.

Suggested topics include, but are not limited to:

Black antiquity

Manuscript, book and print culture

Travelogues

Medieval and early modern art and material culture

Decorative arts

Portraiture

The Transatlantic world

The visual and material history of slavery

The history of the 'Image of the Black in Western Art' project and archive

Archival and curatorial practices

A full index outlining the themes and research areas covered by the Archive can be found here:

<https://warburg.sas.ac.uk/photographic-collection/index/menil-archive-image-black-western-art>

Please send an abstract of up to 200 words and brief biography to maria.golovteeva@sas.ac.uk and hannah.lee@sas.ac.uk by Monday 16th June 2025.

Reference:

CFP: The Menil Archive of The Image of the Black in Western Art (London, 7-8 Nov 25). In: Arthist.net, May 18, 2025 (accessed Sep 9, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/49284>>.