

H-France Salon, Special Issue: Beyond the "Degas Dilemma"

Deadline: Oct 15, 2025

Juliet Bellow, American University

Call for Papers for a special issue of H-France Salon: Beyond the "Degas Dilemma": Dance-Sculpture Encounters in Francophone Contexts, Past and Present.

Guest editors: Juliet Bellow and Madison Mainwaring.

This special issue of H-France Salon aims to broaden our understanding of the intricate patterns of interconnection and mutual exchange between the arts of dance and sculpture. We seek contributions that complicate what we are calling the "Degas dilemma," whereby the (female) dancer passively serves as the (male) sculptor's "muse." Rather than reducing the relationship between these arts to mere illustration or representation, interventions should consider the range of ways that each responded to the other, and address how such encounters between artistic media illuminate, inform, or amplify hierarchies of gender, sexuality, race, class, nationality, and culture. Dance offers sculptors a variety of artistic possibilities—including, but not limited to, the qualities of movement and ephemerality that are often cited as sources of inspiration. Dance has also prompted experiments with sculptural materials, spatial relationships, and modes of exhibition or staging. Sculpture, in turn, has served dancers and dance-makers not only with a model of "perfect" or "ideal" form, but also spurred choreographic innovations with abstraction, isolations, and stillness. Sculpture can immortalize the dancer, although in so doing reduces the dancing body to a reproducible object, often one destined for mass consumption. Moreover, the relationship between sculpture and dance exceeds the domain of aesthetics: interactions between these arts have been catalyzed by novel uses of, and ideas about, the body; technological, scientific, and industrial breakthroughs; and new forms of popular culture, visual media, and performance.

This call is open to any consideration of the ways dance and sculpture relate, historically or in the present, within any Francophone contexts. The aim is not only to deepen knowledge about specific case studies, but also to reveal how approaches across these media can open up new ways of thinking, transcending disciplinary boundaries and mixing methodologies. Submissions may define "dance" and/or "sculpture" capaciously, including casts, statuettes, and ornamental sculptures; robots, puppets, and dolls; tableaux vivants, living statuary, or depictions in other visual or performing media. We welcome meta-reflections on how dance studies, art history, and related fields can inform one another, as well as practice-based contributions by visual or choreographic artists. And, sure—also Degas!

Interested participants should submit an abstract of up to 500 words and a CV or brief bio (200 words or less) to Juliet Bellow (Associate Professor of Art History, American University) and Madison Mainwaring (Assistant Professor of French and Francophone Studies, University of Notre

Dame) at bellow@american.edu and mmainwar@nd.edu by October 15, 2025. Applicants will be notified by December 1; contributions will be due on June 1, 2026. Essay contributions should be approximately 4,000-6,000 words; practice-based works should feature video, photographic, or audio documentation, accompanied by an artist's statement or commentary of approximately 1,000-2,000 words.

Reference:

CFP: H-France Salon, Special Issue: Beyond the "Degas Dilemma". In: ArtHist.net, Sep 6, 2025 (accessed Sep 22, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/50471>>.