

Autumn Symposium: Beyond the Visual (London, 7 Oct 25)

The Gallery, 70 Cowcross Street, London, Oct 07, 2025

Deadline: Sep 5, 2025

Christina Bradstreet, Association for Art History

2025 Autumn Symposium for PhD and Early Career Researchers:

BEYOND THE VISUAL: FULL BODY IN BRITISH ART HISTORY - PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Apply by Friday 5 September 2025.

Symposium Date: Tuesday 7 October 2025, 10am-6pm

Tickets: £12 for members, £15 for non-members

Location: The Gallery, 70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ

Western aesthetics since Plato have privileged the visual over the corporeal, leading to a limited understanding of artefacts, both outside and inside the West. As anthropologist David Howes writes in *The Craft of Senses*, the conventional western hierarchy of the senses “heaps honors on vision as the ‘noblest sense’ while relegating touch to the lowest, most ‘primitive’ rung of the sensorium” (2011: 1). The bodily senses of smell, taste and touch have been viewed as ‘nonaesthetic’ while sight and sound are classified as ‘aesthetic’ or ‘intellectual’ senses and granted superiority on epistemic, moral and aesthetic grounds (Caroline Korsmeyer 2019: 358). Recently, the ‘sensory turn’ and the ‘material turn’ have challenged this paradigm.

The 2025 Autumn Symposium organised by the Doctoral and Early Career Committee will explore the complex interplay between the senses when creating and experiencing artistic objects. Our aim is to go beyond the traditional emphasis on the visual gaze and to investigate how other sensory experiences have shaped, and keep shaping, our understanding and appreciation of artistic practices. How can attending to meanings achieved by other bodily senses offer alternative ways to understand works of art?

We invite proposals for 12-minute papers, relating to questions such as:

- How are emotional responses to art evoked through the non-visual senses?
- Might a sensory approach to sculpture, crafted objects, textiles etc lead to a reinterrogation of what qualifies as art?
- How has the focus on the gaze influenced the reception of objects that appeal to other senses?
- What happens to the afterlives of artifacts crafted for tactile encounters or to oral storytelling when we experience them through the lens of visibility?
- What kind of role did visibility have in imperialistic agendas?
- How do contemporary artists draw from historical practices to forge new understandings of art

that transcend the visual?

- What is or could be the role of the body in this new art history, and how can academia engage more closely with multi-sensory experiences of art?

We aim to address these questions by examining how different artistic theories, art forms, artisanal practices, and so-called 'low art' have engaged with the body and its senses. We welcome a wide range of perspectives and methodologies, from historical and theoretical inquiries to contemporary practices, such as explorations into oral traditions and folklore, materiality, museological and curatorial practices, theories of art, et cetera. Speakers will examine diverse artistic expressions in diverse chronological and geographical contexts, exploring the full sensory experiences they offer. By providing a platform for discussion across disciplinary lines, we hope to cultivate a deeper understanding of the complexity of artifacts in their production and their reception.

Broader topics may include, but will not be limited to:

- Material processes in art
- Art theory and criticism
- Art and embodiment
- Art and science
- Ecological art
- Decolonialising art and curatorial processes
- Non-Western art
- Outsider art

How to Apply:

To apply, please send complete this form by Friday, 5 September 2025:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1IL0IsXwy8PgG1OxZWnMFkXx_QETrkJLXctYI7NUIO3c/edit

Name, email and institutional affiliation

Title of your 12-minute paper

300-word abstract

200-word biography

If accepted, you will be invited to deliver a 12-minute talk accompanied by slides in person. You are expected to attend the full-day programme in support of your fellow researchers' work. No remote/pre-recorded papers will be accepted. Incomplete applications and alternative formats will not be considered. If you have any questions, please write to us at DECR@forarthistory.org.uk.

Downloadable / printable PDF of CFP available here.

<https://forarthistory.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/DECR-Symposium-2025-Call-for-Papers.pdf>

Eligibility:

This conference is for current or recent PhD students and early career researchers in the arts, humanities, and museum sector broadly defined. MA students (including those starting a PhD in autumn 2025) are warmly directed to the Association for Art History's Global New Voices event. We will not accept applications from faculty in permanent roles, prioritising instead junior mem-

bers of our field who are doctoral students or in temporary employment. You may be an experienced conference presenter, or this might be your first time speaking at a conference. The Summer Symposium is a warm and welcoming place where we can practice presenting our research publicly.

DECR Committee:

This symposium is organised by DECR Committee members Lavinia Amenduni, Pragya Sharma and Edward Kettleborough (University of Bristol).

The Doctoral and Early Career Research (DECR) Committee is a volunteer board that drives the Association for Art History's doctoral and early career research events and initiatives.

Reference:

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