

Beyond the Visual (London, 7 Oct 25)

The Gallery, 70 Cowcross Street, London, EC1M 6EJ, Oct 07, 2025

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Beyond the Visual: Autumn Symposium.

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?

This conference interrogates the sensory dimensions of art beyond the primacy of vision, exploring how tactile, auditory, and other non-visual modalities elicit emotional responses and complicate established definitions of “art.” It considers the historical privileging of the gaze and its impact on the reception of objects and practices designed for haptic or oral engagement, as well as the afterlives of such works when reframed through visual regimes. Attention will also be given to the entanglement of visibility with imperialist agendas and to the ways contemporary artists draw on historical practices to forge new aesthetic forms that challenge ocularcentrism. 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.

Organised by our Doctoral and Early Career Research Committee, the Symposium takes place annually. It is intended for current or recent PhD students, and early career researchers in the arts, humanities, and museum sector and disciplines beyond these.

Programme

09:30 – 09:45

Welcome & Opening Remarks

Chair: Ed Kettleborough

Panel 1 | 09:45 – 10:30

Bodily Experiences in Art History before the 20th Century

09:45 – 10:00 | Olivia Birkelund

Fertile Liquidity: Moiré and Touch in Mantegna and Raphael

10:00 – 10:15 | Gianna French

Material Hauntings: The Sensory Afterlife of Rossetti's The Raven

10:15 – 10:30

Discussion

10:30 – 10:45

Coffee Break

Panel 2 | 10:45 – 12:45

Modernist Accounts of Bodily Art Histories

10:45 – 11:00 | Jan Zacharias

Towards a Bodily Art Criticism? Robert Collingwood, Adrian Stokes and the Sense of Touch

11:00 – 11:45 | Christina Ntanovasili

Sensing the Cosmos: Matter and Spirit in Hilma af Klint and Modern European Art and Culture

11:45 – 12:15

Discussion

12:15 – 13:15

Lunch provided

Panel 3 | 13:15 – 14:30

Post-War Artists and Bodily Experiences

13:15 – 13:30 | Jelena Sofronijevic

Chewed Up: Zeljko Kujundzic, Dusan Kusmic, and Zoran Mušič's Representations of the Body through War

13:30 – 13:45 | Martina Borghi

13:45 – 14:00 | Nicola Baird

Beyond the Visual: Expanded Sculpture and Paul Neagu's Palpable Art Practice

14:00 – 14:30

Discussion

14:30 – 14:45

Coffee Break

Panel 4 | 14:45 – 16:00

Rethinking Museums, Archives and Media Beyond the Visual

14:45 – 15:00 | Michaela Clarence

Pressing Your Head Against the Glass: Haptic Memory and the Temporalities of Dress in the Museum

15:00 – 15:15 | Denise Startin

Re-citing the Archive: Fieldwork, Fiction and the Politics of Memory

15:15 – 15:30 | Megan Carnrite

Beyond Visuality: Atkins, Derges, and the Body

15:30 – 16:00

Discussion

16:00 – 16:15

Coffee Break

16:15 – 17:15 | Christina Bradstreet

Keynote Lecture

Following the Fragrance Trail: Writing and curating Scented Visions

17:15 – 17:30

Closing Remarks

17:30-18:30

Drinks Reception

Full programme details at: <https://forarthistory.org.uk/events/autumn-symposium-2025/>

Reference:

CONF: Beyond the Visual (London, 7 Oct 25). In: Arthist.net, Sep 24, 2025 (accessed Oct 14, 2025),

<<https://arthist.net/archive/50693>>.