

Skinterfaces & Skinscapes (UAAC/AAUC, Banff, 17–20 Oct 13)

UAAC/AAUC Conference, Banff Centre, Banff, Alberta, Oct 17–20, 2013

Deadline: Jun 4, 2013

Heidi Kellett

UAAC/AAUC Conference Session:

Skinterfaces and Skinscapes: Bodies and Embodiment in Contemporary Art

In recent years, the arts and humanities have fostered a study of skin in an effort to better understand bodies and the experiences of embodiment in the twenty-first century. Notably, scholar Steven Connor suggests that "[t]he skin's capacity to bear and retain marks is also a capacity to transfer affect from body to body" (Book of Skin, 2004: 84). What Connor asserts, echoing philosopher Michel Serres, is that the skin is affective, bringing bodies in contact with one another because it is a meta organ that houses the five senses (sight, touch, taste, smell and hearing). This panel considers the appearance of skin as a metaphor, medium and milieu in contemporary art, positioning the epidermis as an organ that engenders alternative, affective studies of bodies and their experiences. Anatomically, skin is a paradoxical organ that resides at the margins of bodies, acting both as a protective or boundary landscape and a porous, mediating interface. This paradoxical positioning has been illustrated by recent exhibitions such as "Skin" at the Wellcome Collection (2010) and "Skin: The Seduction of Surface" at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia (2012), challenging historical understandings skin by illuminating that it cannot be reduced to one thing or activity because it is spatio-temporal. While the primary focus of this panel is human skin, the skins of things such as: architecture, film, photography, bio art, fashion, craft and 'soft sculpture' will also be considered as they also impact, foster and disrupt experiences of bodies and embodiment. This session would invite art historical as well interdisciplinary projects that explore artworks and institutional discourses framing or exploring skin in visual culture.

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