

Negotiating the Nude (online/Munich, 15–16 Sep 26)

Online / Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte, Katharina-von-Bora-Str. 10, München,
Vortragssaal 242, II. OG + online via Zoom, Sep 15–16, 2026

Dominik Brabant, ZI Munich | Susanne Huber, University of Bremen | Henry Kaap,
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Negotiating the Nude: Unclothed Bodies in Art and its Historiographies (1860s–2026).

Representations of the unclothed body have long been a focal point of aesthetic, cultural, and political debate. From the scandal surrounding Édouard Manet's *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1863) and *Olympia* (1865) to recent controversies over museum displays, public monuments, and contemporary performance art, nudity continues to expose shifting boundaries between art, morality, identity, and power. At the same time, feminist, queer, postcolonial, and disability studies have fundamentally reshaped the ways in which bodies are understood, represented, and interpreted, challenging long-established assumptions about gender, sexuality, race, and the gaze.

This conference investigates how art, art history, and related disciplines have negotiated the unclothed body from the late nineteenth century to the present. It asks how changing social, political, and cultural contexts have influenced artistic practices as well as their interpretation, and how the histories of the nude have themselves been constructed, contested, and revised. Particular attention will be paid to the role of exhibitions, museums, and curatorial practices in shaping public understandings of the nude, as well as to the impact of mass media and visual technologies on the circulation and reception of unclothed bodies.

The conference further examines the canonisations and exclusions that continue to shape the discipline of art history. How have Western artistic traditions informed dominant narratives of the nude? Which bodies and perspectives have been marginalised or omitted? How are questions of desire, embodiment, and affect embedded in scholarly writing? And how have contemporary artistic practices reclaimed or challenged the genre in response to ongoing debates about representation and agency?

Bringing together perspectives from art history, visual culture studies, museum studies, and aesthetic theory, the conference invites contributions that critically reassess the histories of the nude while moving beyond established Western narratives. It seeks to foster dialogue on the changing meanings of unclothed bodies in art from the 1860s to the present and highlights global, comparative, and de-centred perspectives on the subject.

PARTICIPATION:

The event takes place in a hybrid format. You can either attend in-person or via Zoom:

https://us02web.zoom.us/join/zoom/register/5cV7Sz_KQJqFqfBUSMV1tg#/registration

Recording the event or parts of the event, as well as taking screenshots, is not permitted. By parti-

icipating, you accept these terms of use.

PROGRAMME:

DAY 1, SEPTEMBER 15, 2026

13:00 | Guided tour through the Exhibition "unbekleidet | ausgezogen: Der Akt in der kunsthistorischen Forschung" (optional)

14:00 | Welcome and introduction by the organisers

14:30 | Session 1: Tracing Affective Relations

Joseph Imorde // Art Lovers / Art Historians Look at (Naked) Women

Elena Zanichelli // Driven Upwards: Nudity, Obscenity, and Other Obsessions in Anita Steckel's Gendering of Architecture

Moderation: Dominik Brabant

16:00 | Coffee break

16:30 | Session 2: In/Decency in Media Cultures

Mirja Beck // Confiscated 'Beauty'? The Case of the Hanfstaengl Catalogue 'Female Beauty' (Frauensönheit, c. 1920)

Athina Markopoulou // The Nation Undressed. Images of the Female Body and the Fantasies of Modernity in the Greek Press (1896–1939)

Moderation: Henry Kaap

18:00 | Break

18:30 | Counter | Canon? Roundtable with impulses by:

Charlotte Matter, Friederike Nastold & Gianmarco Russo

Moderation: Susanne Huber

DAY 2, SEPTEMBER 16, 2026

9:00 | Session 3: Channeling Resistance in the Flesh

Milena Chylińska // The Queer Potential of National Martyrology: The Male Body in the Work of Wlastimil Hofman

Indrek Grigor // The Queue: Negotiating the Nude in 1980s Soviet Estonia

Moderation: Franziska Kunze

10:30 | Coffee break

11:00 | Session 4: Nudity, Nation, and Trauma

Laura Moure Cecchini // Unmutilated Victory: The Return of the Female Nude in 1920s Italian Painting

Daniel Berndt // „The Country Has Changed, So I Decided to Burn All the Nude Shots” – On Akram Zaatari's Her & Him VAN LEO (1998)

Moderation: Franziska Lampe

12:30 | Lunch break and coffee

14:00 | Session 5: Bare Bodies and Cultural Layers

Nina Breuer // Respectfully Traversing Space: Black Female Nudity in Heitor dos Prazeres' Paintings

Meng Yi // Negotiating the Female Nude: Visibility, Ideology, and Modernity in Contemporary Chinese Art

Moderation: Mascha Salgado de Matos & Sabine Weingartner

15:30 | Final discussion

16:00 | Official end of the event

Organisation: Dominik Brabant, ZI Munich | Susanne Huber, University of Bremen | Henry Kaap, LMU Munich

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Reference:

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