Rebus: Beholding Difference: Impairment, Making, and Beholding

University of Essex
Deadline: Nov 15, 2026
www.essex.ac.uk/departments/philosophical-historical-and-interdisciplinary-studies/research/rebus-journal

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Beholding Difference: Impairment, Making, and Beholding.
Rebus, the postgraduate art history journal of the University of Essex, seeks paper submissions that explore the intersections of art history, critical disability studies and phenomenology in the study of the visual arts. The next issue takes particular interest in how bodily and sensory difference bears on art at the level of making and beholding, across the range of static media.

If we approach art made under conditions of impairment neither as evidence to be diagnosed nor as adversity to be transcended, what modes of attention do such works solicit from their beholders, and in what manner do the demands of the two-dimensional and the three-dimensional form converge and diverge? How might beholders hold artistic sensibility and impairment in productive tension before a single work, reading each through the other rather than letting either resolve the work alone? What would an account of beholding adequate to the diversity of impairment, and to the difference between picture and object look like?

When the maker's body is itself in question, a single passage—a mark, a contour, or even an omission—may be read at once as an effect of process, a consequence of the body, or a deliberate choice. As these readings are often undecidable, we seek articles that hold this difference between process, body and intention open without resolving a work prematurely toward any single cause. In this capacity, we invite PhD students working at the intersection of art history, critical disability studies and/or phenomenology, for whom such works pose a distinctive methodological challenge, to submit to this call. This issue is open across periods and geographies, and we particularly welcome submissions that take up visual arts beyond the Western canon.

Proposals should be sent to rebus@essex.ac.uk by 15 November 2026, in the form of a 400–500 word abstract with a 100-word bio. Decisions on proposals will be announced by 15 December 2026. Authors of accepted proposals will be invited to submit a full article of 6,000–9,000 words, inclusive of endnotes and figure captions, by 1 July 2027. Submissions should be anonymised, as Rebus operates a double-blind peer review process. All text should be original and written in English, and we ask that you do not submit your article elsewhere during the reviewing process.

If your proposal is accepted, the full article should include:
- 6,000–9,000 words, inclusive of endnotes and figure captions.

- A maximum of 10 figures, with a list of captions. (Authors will be responsible for securing images and open-access reproduction rights for all figures, if their articles pass peer review.)
- Citations in Chicago style (endnotes and bibliography).

Rebus, founded in 2008, is an open-access postgraduate journal published by the art history department at the University of Essex. Founded and edited by postgraduate students, the journal publishes peer-reviewed papers that present new research and fresh perspectives on art and its histories as well as related aspects of cultural theory. The current editor is Jessie Lim, PhD student in art history at Essex. For previous issues, see Rebus (https://www.essex.ac.uk/departments/philosophical-historical-and-interdisciplinary-studies/research/rebus-journal).

Reference:

CFP: Rebus: Beholding Difference: Impairment, Making, and Beholding. In: ArtHist.net, Sep 14, 2026 (accessed Nov 24, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/54173>.