5 Sessions at AAH (Exeter, 7-9 Apr 27)

Association for Art History Annual Conference, University of Exeter, Apr 7–09, 2027
Deadline: Oct 25, 2026

ArtHist.net Redaktion

[1] Sculptural Guts: Statues and their Insides
[2] Critical Fortunes of the Catalogue Raisonné
[3] Provincialising Art History: Rethinking Art Historiography in the Postcolonial World
[4] Animal Voices, Art History, and More-than-Human Aesthetics: Listening Beyond the Human
[5] Prophetic Temporalities: Visualising Futures in Southeast Asia

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[1] Sculptural Guts: Statues and their Insides

From: Peter Dent

Date: Oct 2, 2026

This panel considers the practice of placing objects of various sorts within the hollow interiors of statues. The phenomenon is widespread, occurring in different cultures at different times across the globe. Buddhist sculpture, for example, might contain anything from representations of interior organs through to books, relics or smaller images. A similar range of objects has been found inside Christian statues of Christ and other holy figures. We are interested in any examples of this phenomenon from any cultural context with the intention of exploring its occurrence from a comparative perspective. Papers reporting new discoveries of such material and novel technical approaches to recording it are encouraged. Approaches that consider not just the interior material itself but also any ritual activities, for example, that might accompany the insertion or removal of objects from statues, are particularly welcome. Equally, conceptual or methodological reflections on the significance of such interior deposits would be of interest. We are also open to papers that consider the imagined or implied interiors of statues, even where no actual cavity containing objects exists.

Questions that papers might consider could include:
– What kind of connections – if any – exist between exterior appearance and interior contents?
– What relationships exists between the actual interiors of the human body and the manufactured interiors of statues?
– How do audiences relate to objects within statues, especially where these are normally hidden from view?
– Are there common typological elements to the practice across different cultural contexts?
– What motivations govern the deposition of objects inside statues?

Themes: sculpture, interiority, global

Additional format comment: Either 4 papers or longer introduction by convenors and 3 papers.

Lead Convenor: Peter Dent, University of Bristol, United Kingdom

Co-convenors: Benedetta Lomi, University of Bristol, United Kingdom

To submit a Paper to this Session, please follow the guidance here:
https://forarthistory.org.uk/81-sculptural-guts-statues-and-their-insides/

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[2] Critical Fortunes of the Catalogue Raisonné
From: Danielle Smith
Date: Oct 2, 2026
Catalogues raisonnés are among the most authoritative yet least critically examined tools in art history. Shaping attribution, authentication, and market value, they play a central role in constructing artistic legacies, with consequence for posthumous reputations. Despite this, they have rarely become objects of scholarly inquiry. Attention has focused on the artists they document rather than the intellectual, institutional, and methodological frameworks underpinning their production.

No single model exists for preparing a catalogue raisonné. Since the eighteenth century, diverse approaches have emerged, reflecting shifting understandings of expertise, authorship, artistic value, and the legal frameworks surrounding art. Yet the principles guiding individual publications are rarely examined collectively, leaving the genre characterised by what Antoinette Friedenthal identifies as a perceived “lack of theory”. Concerns also persist about authority, exclusion, and gatekeeping, captured in François Duret Robert’s critique of the growing “dictatorship of cataloguers”. These have gained new urgency in art law, where questions of liability, authentication disputes, and expert responsibility have drawn attention to the risks of catalogue raisonné production.

This session invites papers that critically examine and theorise the catalogue raisonné beyond its function as an inventory. How do catalogues raisonnés construct authority, define bodies of work, and shape cultural memory? What forms of expertise, labour, and institutional power determine whose knowledge dictates their production? How have digital technologies, artist estates, and legal frameworks transformed their reach? Case studies across all periods and geographies are particularly welcome, as are contributions that help identify future directions for catalogues raisonnés.

To submit a Paper to this Session, please follow the guidance on our website and complete the AAH 2027 Call for Papers Proposal Submission Form: https://forarthistory.org.uk/conference/2027-exeter/

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[3] Provincialising Art History: Rethinking Art Historiography in the Postcolonial World
From: Amalu Shaji
Date: Oct 3, 2026
This session responds to the expanding body of scholarship that has sought to globalise and decolonise art history by challenging the Eurocentric foundations of the discipline. The work of scholars such as Dipesh Chakrabarty, Partha Mitter, James Elkins, David Carrier, Monica Juneja and others has fundamentally reshaped discussions of world art histories, multiple modernities and the place of the Global South in art historical discourse. These interventions have transformed the geographical and conceptual terrains of the discipline, while also raising important questions about its methods, categories and narratives.

By building upon these debates, this session turns attention to art historiography as a critical site of enquiry. The session asks how art historical knowledge itself is produced in postcolonial contexts rather

than asking only how neglected artists, regions or traditions may be incorporated into existing histories. What alternative understandings of archives, temporality, artistic categories and intellectual genealogies emerge through vernacular scholarship, regional institutions, exhibition histories, print cultures, oral traditions and interdisciplinary methods? How might these practices challenge inherited assumptions about evidence, chronology and the disciplinary boundaries of art history?

We welcome papers that examine historiographical practices across postcolonial contexts through archives, biography, translation, museums, exhibition histories, regional art writing, Indigenous epistemologies, digital methodologies and other approaches that rethink the production of art historical knowledge. The session seeks to foster comparative conversations on the plurality of historiographical traditions shaping art history today.

Themes: Art historiography, Decolonial discourses, Vernacular histories

Additional format comment: The session will consist of four 20-minute papers, each followed by five minutes of discussion, with concluding remarks by the convenor to draw together the key historiographical themes.

Lead Convenor: Amalu Shaji, Research Scholar, India

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[4] Animal Voices, Art History, and More-than-Human Aesthetics: Listening Beyond the Human
From: Jessica Ullrich
Date: 04.10.2026
Recent debates in animal studies, sound studies, and the environmental humanities have challenged the anthropocentric assumptions that continue to shape concepts of voice, communication, and aesthetic agency. While animal representations have long occupied a place within art history, the question of animal voices—their audibility, mediation, translation, and political significance—has received comparatively little sustained attention. This session invites contributions that explore how (sound) art engages with animal vocalizations as forms of more-than-human expression. Rather than approaching animal voices as mere "natural" phenomena, we seek papers that consider them as relational practices that produce political territories, aesthetic collaborations, and ethical forms of coexistence. How do artistic strategies and practices render animal voices perceptible, imaginable, or negotiable? How do acts of translation, notation, imitation, visualization, or technological mediation shape encounters between species? The session is particularly interested in discussions informed by contemporary theoretical approaches, including Vinciane Despret's concept of the "Phonocene," Pauline Oliveros's notion of "Deep Listening," critical posthumanist and multispecies perspectives, eco-critical methodologies, and theories of resonance, affect, and more-than-human agency.
Possible topics include, but are not limited to:
• Aesthetic practices of listening and attention to animal voices in sound art
• Interspecies music, communication and translation in artistic practices
• Acoustic territories and more-than-human environments within the realm of art
• Notation, visualization, and mediation of animal sounds in artworks
• Ecological loss, extinction, and sonic disappearance in art
• Ethical and political dimensions of animal voices in artworks

We invite proposals for 20-minute papers from scholars at all career stages.
Lead Convenor: Jessica Ullrich, Braunschweig University of Fine Arts, Germany
Co-convenor: Martin Ullrich, Nuremberg University of Music, Germany
Call for Papers deadline is 23:59 UK, Sunday 25 October 2026.
To submit a Paper to this Session, please follow the guidance on our website and complete the AAH 2027 Call for Papers Proposal Submission Form: https://forarthistory.org.uk/conference/2027-exeter/

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[5] Prophetic Temporalities: Visualising Futures in Southeast Asia
From: Kiki Rizky Soetisna Putri
Date: Oct 5, 2026
How have images, objects, and social practices enabled people to anticipate uncertain futures? Building on the works of Ashley Thompson, Pamela Corey, and others in the field of Southeast Asian art history that challenge linear and secular models of historical chronology and on the 2025 Annual Conference's "Regionalist and Other Decolonising Perspectives" panel on cultivating alternative approaches from the region, this session proposes prophecy as a productive lens for rethinking questions of temporality, memory, and historical imagination in art history. Rather than treating prophecy solely as a theological category, the session approaches it as a broader mode of anticipation through which communities have imagined, negotiated, and inhabited uncertain worlds shaped by violence, displacement, ecological extraction, and discrimination. From images, objects, architectures, performances, media practices to collective actions and networks of human and more-than-human relations, these manifestations not only represented but also participated in coping with change, crisis, hope, and possibility. By foregrounding anticipation and uncertainty as analytical categories, this session contributes to current debates in global art history concerning temporality, affect, and the production of futures. It proposes Southeast Asia as a critical site for understanding how visual and material culture participate in the negotiation of uncertain presents, sustain fragile forms of coexistence, and imagine possibilities for living otherwise. We welcome contributions addressing a wide range of periods, media, and methodological approaches.

Papers might examine the visualisation of future worlds, the materialisation of collective hopes and fears, the aesthetics of waiting and expectation, or the role of art in mediating moments of political, ecological, or spiritual uncertainty, all of which complicate dominant narratives of modernity, progress, and historical development.

Themes: uncertainty, collective hope, visual and material cultures

Additional format comment: Maximum 5 papers and a respondent.

Lead Convenor: Panggah Ardiyansyah, SOAS University of London, United Kingdom

Co-convenors: Kiki Rizky Soetisna Putri, Bandung Institute of Technology, Indonesia

To submit a Paper to this Session, please follow the guidance on our website and complete the AAH 2027 Call for Papers Proposal Submission Form: https://forarthistory.org.uk/conference/2027-exeter/

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