Stokes' Objects (York, 20-21 Nov 26)

The Bowland Auditorium, Berick Saul Building, BS/005, Campus West, University of York, York, Y010 5DD., Nov 20–21, 2026
Registration deadline: Nov 20, 2026

Kirstie Gregory, Henry Moore Institute

This international conference brings together historians of Renaissance art, sculptural practice, and critical thought to engage with key objects of Adrian Stokes' criticism.

The conference examines Stokes' career-long fascination with the sculptural practices of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italy and their afterlives, from Agostino di Duccio's carvings for the Tempio Malatestiano in Rimini to the late work of Michelangelo and beyond, to Mickey Mouse and the Russian ballet. Contributors address Stokes' wide-ranging interests beyond the arts, from geology to psychoanalysis, while also positioning his work in dialogue with that of other sculptors and scholarly networks of the twentieth century.

The conference concludes Henry Moore Institute's Research Season Adrian Stokes, Inside Out, that centres on the critic's compelling and idiosyncratic sculptural imagination. A key voice in mid twentieth-century sculptural and architectural criticism, Stokes uniquely combined a disparate set of compelling concerns: modernist values of direct carving, speculative psychoanalytic thought, a sensitivity to the vitality of natural materials, and a deep understanding of pre-modern artmaking in its continual reanimation.

The conference Stokes' Objects has been kindly supported by a Lila Wallace – Reader's Digest Special Project Grant from Villa I Tatti, the Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies.

The Research Season Adrian Stokes, Inside Out has been conceived and organised in collaboration with Dr Ruth Ezra (University of St Andrews) and Dr Jeremy Melius (University of York).

Programme: Friday

Welcome
13:00
Jeremy Melius, University of York

Session One
13:15
Chaired by Alison Wright, University College London

'"Packing" the Block, Expressing the Form: Adrian Stokes on Michelangelo's Carving'
Baptiste Tochon-Danguy, Université catholique de Louvain

‘With and Against the Elemental’
Alistair Rider, University of St Andrews

‘Reading and Remaking Stone: Geological Time in Contemporary Sculpture’
Laura Chase, Victoria & Albert Museum

Break
15:15
Coffee and refreshments served

Session Two
16:00
Chaired by Jessica Richardson, University of York

‘The Ground and Matrix of the Sculptural’
Alex Potts, University of Michigan

‘Stokes Manifests the Quattrocento: Sculptural Relief as Measure of Vitality’
Henrike Christian Lange, University of California, Berkeley (presenting via Zoom)

Finish
18:00

Programme: Saturday

Session Three
11:00
Chaired by Alex Potts, University of Michigan

‘Adolfo Wildt and the Ambiguities of Direct Carving’
François Blanchetière, Musée d’Orsay

‘Stokes, Hepworth and the Carving Conception of Colour’
Stephen Feeke, independent

Break
12:30

Session Four
13:30
Chaired by Liz Prettejohn, University of York

‘“I see all art as architectural, or, if you like, sculptural, including music”: Adrian Stokes’ vision of art through his letters to Herbert Read (1951-59)’
Caterina Caputo, Università Iuav di Venezia

‘Carving, Modelling, Making’
Jeremy Melius, University of York

Break

15:00
Coffee and refreshments served

Session Five
15:30
Chaired by Sam Rose, University of St Andrews

‘The Rorschach Text: Adrian Stokes and the Associative Imagination’
James Williams, University of York

‘Dreaming Dreams of Stone’
Harmon Siegel, Boston Psychoanalytic Society and Institute
‘Adrian Stokes and the Imago Group’
David Russell, University of California, Los Angeles (presenting via Zoom)

Discussion [same font size as sessions]
17:15

Finish
18:00

Reference:
CONF: Stokes' Objects (York, 20-21 Nov 26). In: ArtHist.net, Nov 3, 2026 (accessed Nov 3, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/54817>.