

Challenging Materials (London, 15 May 2015)

London, The Wallace Collection, May 15, 2015

Deadline: Feb 13, 2015

Ella Fleming

CALL FOR PAPERS: Challenging Materials: Joshua Reynolds and Artistic Experiment in the Eighteenth Century

Submission deadline: 13th February 2015

Venue: The Wallace Collection

Event date: 15th May 2015

This conference, which accompanies the exhibition Joshua Reynolds: Experiments in Paint at the Wallace Collection, is designed to investigate and contextualise the artist's famously experimental practice. Building upon the technical findings of the Reynolds Research Project at the Wallace Collection, and also on a range of recent conservation projects on Reynolds's paintings, it will explore his distinctive manipulation of paint as a medium. Papers are encouraged that will offer new perspectives on Reynolds's experimental forms of pictorial composition, narrative and allusion, and to look afresh at the dynamic interactions between the artist, his sitters and his models in the studio.

As well as focusing on Reynolds's own art in detail, the conference seeks to place his experimental activities within the context of wider artistic, cultural and scientific practices of the eighteenth century. How did his own attitudes to the fundamental materials of his profession - to pigments, oils, varnishes and glazes - relate to those of other artists, both from his own period and before? How did his distinctive engagement with the conventions of portraiture, fancy pictures and history painting compare to the ways in which other practitioners reworked such pictorial genres? Can we contextualise his painting within a broader project of cultural experimentation and innovation in the period, one that is also visible in the spheres of literary, theatrical and musical production? And, finally, might it be helpful to understand his work in relation to the forms of scientific and technological experimentation that developed in the Georgian era, whether institutionalised or unofficial? The Challenging Materials conference is designed to address such questions, and in doing so to shed fresh light not only on Reynolds's own work, but also on the visual culture of which it was a part.

This one-day conference is being organised by the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and the Wallace Collection. It will take place at the Wallace Collection and includes a morning viewing of Joshua Reynolds: Experiments in Paint. Substantial time will be granted for discussion; refreshments, lunch and a drinks reception will also be provided.

Proposals of no more than 300 words for 20-minute papers should be sent to Ella Fleming at

efleming@paul-mellon-centre.ac.uk by Friday 13th February 2015. Please also include a short biography of c. 150 words in your application.

Reference:

CFP: Challenging Materials (London, 15 May 2015). In: Arthist.net, Jan 14, 2015 (accessed Dec 21, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/9243>>.