

Writing Across Art History's Tears: An Examination of a Traumatized Body of Knowledge

This panel seeks to engage the conference theme “interregnum” by writing and thinking across established art historical chronological categorizations. In each paper, we argue, either explicitly or implicitly, that this mode of writing and thinking allows us to acknowledge the way in which art history is traumatized by interdisciplinarity. Trauma is the result of witnessing or experiencing a threat to the bodily and psychological integrity of self or others. It is, by definition, a reaction to the breakdown of one’s faith in the permanence and impenetrability of the body’s borders. Each paper regards this phenomenon uniquely and obliquely, considering both the actual and metaphorical bodies that haunt the wide variety of works of art we discuss. Ultimately, we hope to open up and dissect the way in which femininity and masculinity, illness and health, destruction and preservation, the beautiful and the grotesque are visualized and theorized. This results in the temporary destabilization and dematerialization of these categories on which art history relies for its stability. Though all critical art historical gestures are eventually drawn into the canon, we continue to make them, repeatedly writing back and forth across chronological and disciplinary categories, our words like stitches across the borders of a cut that will not stop tearing.

Panellist:

Elizabeth Carlson, “Nearly Departed: The Seams Between Life and Death in the Artwork of Annette Messenger” Assistant Professor of Art History, Lawrence University, Appleton WI

Andrea Nelson, “Between Beauty and Pain: Hannah Wilke’s Intra-Venus Series” Curatorial Fellow, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

Tiffany Johnson Bidler, “Experiments in Dying: Queered Colors and Supersaturated Art Historical Vision” Ph.D. Candidate, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis MN