

Call for Papers

“Patchwork and Creativity” - A Workshop

September 19-20, Cambridge, UK

Keynote speaker: Karen Livingstone (Fitzwilliam Museum)

Roundtable guests: Beau Brannick (Museum of Cambridge), Layla Khoo (University of Leeds), chaired by Laura Moseley (Women’s Art Collection and Common Threads Press)

Organised by: Tricia Zakreski and Alex Gushurst-Moore (University of Exeter)

Description

This two-day workshop uses the theme of “Patchwork and Creativity” to prompt conversations about modes of being and knowing that emphasise the collaborative, the collective, the non-linear, and the potentially deconstructive or resistant forms of creativity that have not historically been privileged by Western art histories.

Patchwork in relation to creativity has often described a particular method of making. To patchwork is to collect, select, sort, and assemble: to create something new out of existing materials that are arranged and rearranged into new forms. Unlike other forms such as collage and assemblage, patchwork has also been gendered feminine. Thus, by focusing on patchwork, we are ambitious to produce new knowledge around the history of women’s contribution to our creative history and culture.

Invitation

We invite paper abstracts for 10-minute presentations on research that responds to the workshop theme. We particularly encourage papers reflecting research that is in an early stage of development.

Prompts include, but are not limited to:

- Collaboration and collaborative creative experience
- Patchwork, femmage, bricolage
- Patchwork as method
- Interrogation of the notion of the “individual creative genius”
- Group/hidden labour
- Creativity, creative experience, and creative encounter

Over two days in Cambridge, we will engage directly with the city’s rich collections to create further scholarly responses to the theme of “Patchwork and Creativity”, motivated by and grounded in response to visual and material culture. Our patchwork-ed event will enmesh participants’ 10-minute research presentations into a two-day period of reflection and conversation formed around objects selected by

participants from collections including the Fitzwilliam Museum, Kettle's Yard, the Museum of Cambridge, and the Women's Art Collection.

Background

Patchwork is a valuable metaphor for how art is made, research is conducted, and writing is achieved. Kristina Lindström and Åsa Ståhl, in "Patchwork Ways of Knowing and Making" (*The Handbook of Textile Culture*, 2015), describe patchwork 'as concretely taking what is at hand and putting it into relations', a medium as well as a narrative position that embraces multivocality and the fragmentary nature of conducting and writing about research ("Working Patches", *Studies in Material Thinking*, 2012). 'This book too is patchwork', wrote Jacqueline Bishop, in *Patchwork: Essays & Interviews on Caribbean Visual Culture* (2023), a work that examined 'patchwork as metaphor, the seeking to create order and make whole out of bits and pieces and the left over' in the context of her research on Caribbean visual culture; patchwork, she explained, 'is an apt metaphor for the Caribbean a whole – a region formed out of a history of colonization and conquest.' This workshop builds on the research of scholars such as these who have established the art historical significance of patchworking through investigation of its diverse affordances.

In the context of our investigation of creativity, the work of social anthropologists, including Tim Ingold, Elizabeth Hallam, and others, in *Creativity as Cultural Improvisation* (2007), suggests that we view creativity not as a process of individual innovation, but rather collective improvisation. As such, one avenue for discussion might be the consideration of creativity as a continuum: a patchwork of people and personalities that contribute to an ever-evolving creative programme, reflective of Howard S. Becker's assertion that 'all artistic work, like all human activity, involves the joint activity of a number, often a large number of people [...] the work always shows signs of that cooperation' (*Art Worlds*, 1982). How does patchwork as a metaphor help us to resist the narrative of the individual creative genius and reincorporate diverse histories of creativity into the history of art?

The Art of Fiction Project

This workshop is an output of [The Art of Fiction](#) project (University of Exeter), which considers how judgements of literary, aesthetic, and professional value affect women's creative identities. It explores forms of artistic production that historically were neglected or considered inferior because associated with the feminine, the popular and the everyday. It also marks the close of our call for contributions to the "[Patchwork Object Project](#)", a branch of our project that examines making and multi-vocality through the development of a collaboratively sourced work of art themed around 'women's creative identities'. As an archival corollary to this experiment in embodied research, we will explore other patchwork objects that help us to explore key project themes including domestic art, reclaimed materials, and women's craft.

Bursaries for unwaged attendees

We have several £100 bursaries to support travel and accommodation for unwaged presenters (including but not limited to students, researchers with no institutional affiliation, unemployed presenters). Successful paper applicants will be invited to self-identify as belonging to this category on acceptance.

Further information

The workshop will take place from 19th to 20th September 2024, in Cambridge, UK. Tea, coffee, and lunch will be served as part of the event. There is no fee for attending; however, we will host an optional conference dinner, for which there will be an additional cost.

To apply

Please email abstracts of up to 300 words for papers of 10 minutes to [Dr Tricia Zakreski](mailto:p.zakreski@exeter.ac.uk) (p.zakreski@exeter.ac.uk) by Wednesday 14th August 2024.



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