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British Art Network Seminar Queer British Art

Monday 10th April 2017 10.30-18.00 at Tate Britain (Clare Auditorium)

The British Art Network brings together professionals working with British art from the 16th century to the present day. The aim of the network is to contribute to the sharing of expertise, research and ideas across cultural organisations; to enable improvements in curatorial skills and collection knowledge; and to foster greater collaboration between partners leading to enriched understanding and enjoyment of British art for audiences across the UK.



Simeon Solomon *Sappho and Erinna in a Garden at Mytilene* 1864 © Tate

Featuring works from 1861–1967 that connect in a wide variety of ways with same-sex desire and gender variance across this period, *Queer British Art 1861-1967* marks the 50th anniversary of the partial decriminalisation of male homosexuality in England and Wales. It explores different approaches of artists and audiences in a time when established assumptions about gender and sexuality were being questioned and transformed.

This seminar will bring together contributions from artists, art historians, writers and curators to investigate museological challenges and sensitivities involved in putting on an exhibition of this kind and to explore these with the audience.

The seminar will present a series of short papers, provocations and breakout sessions followed by a panel discussion and opportunities for networking. Delegates are also invited to visit both the *Queer British Art 1861-1967* and *David Hockney: 60 Years of Work* exhibitions currently on show at Tate Britain.

Programme

- 10.00 – 10.30 Registration and welcome tea and coffee in the Clore Foyer (Clore Entrance) Tate Britain
- 10.30 – 10.40 Welcome from Alex Farquharson, Director of Tate Britain
- 10.40 – 11.05 Introduction to the exhibition *Queer British Art 1861-1967* from the exhibition's curator Clare Barlow, Assistant Curator British Art, 1750 – 1830, Tate Britain
- 11.05 – 11.55 Visit to the exhibition *Queer British Art 1861-1967*, Tate Britain
- 12.00 – 13.00 **Session One: Perspectives on Curating a Queer exhibition or collection**
Reflections on the scholarship and curation from different perspectives: art historian/curator, artist/curator
- 12.00-12.20: Jonathan Katz
- The Sexuality Of Exhibitions: An American Perspective
- In this talk, Katz discusses why the US has been slow to adopt the making of queer exhibitions, how such exhibitions are received, and especially why scandal and censorship seem to accompany every significant queer exhibition. He will also explore why so often American museums refuse to address questions of sexual difference in monographic exhibitions, ignoring and even deliberately censoring a now substantial scholarly literature. Finally, he will link this broad erasure of queerness in American museums to the selective and often erroneous deployment of postmodernist critical theory, thereby constructing an intellectually motivated rationale against taking questions of sexuality seriously.
- 12.20-12.40: Matt Smith
- Seeing Queerly
- In the calm of museum displays, objects are often presented within simple rationales - a brief history or description - which belies their rich and complex histories. The messiness and diversity of human life can be difficult to represent, and until recently has often been neglected as museums present their collections with a single, authoritative voice. Drawing from his projects, this talk will illustrate numerous interventionist techniques used to draw out and overlay queer narratives on existing museum collections, providing an opportunity to view the collections with fresh eyes and explore further the multitude of possible perspectives and readings.

12.40-13.00: Panel Q&A and group Discussion
Clare Barlow, Jonathan Katz, Matt Smith
Chaired by Andrew Stephenson

13.00-13.45: Delegates break for lunch (provided)

13.45 – 14.45: **Session Two: Four provocations**

Absences and Silences

Topher Campbell

The rukus! Archive launched in 2005, generates, collects, preserves and makes available to the public historical, cultural and artistic materials relating to black, queer lived experience in the UK.

Topher will talk about the spirit and energy of a Brother outsider, the way in which some of us have chosen to make difference work. Stating that "diversity" sometimes hides more than it reveals.

Caroline Gonda

Historical records and artistic representations of desire between women are often harder to find than similar evidence of desire between men. Many of the objects in Queer British Art relating to female same-sex desire are coded rather than explicit, or have a sense of something hidden or not quite visible. This talk explores some of the implications of gender in thinking about visibility, and in trying to deal with absences and silences.

Jen Grove

How can objects from the past help us to make sense of identities today? This presentation will look at research into how people in the last hundred years have engaged with historical material culture – and especially artefacts from the ancient past - in order to think through, understand and challenge ideas about sex, sexuality and gender.

Jason Edwards

What's Queer about Queer British Art, c.1861-1967, now?

In this provocation, Jason ponders what's so queer now about even the queerest British art displayed in the show, and wonders what might be the queer sexual vanguards confronting us today from the past or the future, or whether queer, as a rallying cry, itself might be best confined to the past.

14.45 – 15.15: Breakout sessions in 4 facilitated groups.
Each group will take one of the provocations as their starting point.
(Duffield Room and Clore Auditorium)

- 15.15- 16:00: Sharing - Facilitators feedback from each group responding to the provocations
Facilitators: Michelle Williams Gamaker, Jessie McLaughlin, Albert Potrony, Fran Laws, Helen Cooper
- 15.45 – 16.00: Break for tea and coffee (provided)
- 16.00 – 17.00: **Session Three: *Panel Discussion***
- 16.00 – 16.45: Panel discussion chaired by Andrew Stephenson
- 16.45 – 17.00 Reflections by chair. Thanks and close.
- 17.00 – 18.00 Optional visit to the David Hockney exhibition Tate Britain