

Showcasing Art History lecture series, season XI, summer term 2017
25 April – 23 May 2017

Art and the Senses



Sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch: the idea that we experience the world through these five senses goes back to classical antiquity.

Allegorical representations of the senses are a frequent subject in art from the middle ages to the early modern period; a particularly sumptuous and influential set was painted by Peter Paul Rubens and Jan Brueghel the Elder in 1617-18 for Archdukes Albert and Isabel, the Habsburg rulers of the Southern Netherlands.

Traditional theories of the senses posited a hierarchy in which the sense of sight was privileged as the most rational and least

associated with the baser aspects of human nature - although all five senses were potential gateways to corruption and sin. The sense of sight has, of course, also been privileged in the experience and appreciation of the fine and applied arts themselves; this is indicated not least by our notion of the *visual arts*. But do we really perceive painting, sculpture and other object-based arts only by sight? A growing field of art-historical scholarship has been seeking to replace traditional ocular-centricity with a more multi-sensory approach to the arts. Art and cultural historians have been investigating our fully embodied responses to modern and contemporary installations specifically designed to feature sound and smell and touch, but have also been exploring what it might have been like to experience sacred and secular spaces and objects with every sense in the past. These five talks are given by experts in the field and are intended as an introduction into the vibrant and expanding field of sensory studies of the arts.

The Programme:

25 April	Dr Patrizia Di Bello	The 'sensory turn' in art history
2 May	Professor Joanna Woodall	Jan Brueghel the Elder's <i>Five Senses</i>
9 May	Dr Irene Noy	A Short History of Sound & Art as Never Heard & Seen Before
16 May	FLYING OBJECT creative studio	Tate Sensorium
23 May	Dr Peter Dent	Sculpture and Touch

Preliminary Reading:

Patrizia di Bello and Gabriel Koureas (eds.), *Art, History and the Senses. 1830 to the Present*, Ashgate, 2010

Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture*, Oxford University Press, 2007

Classen, Constance, 'The Witch's Senses: Sensory Ideologies and Transgressive Femininities from the Renaissance to Modernity', in *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Cultural Reader*, edited by David Howes (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2005), 70-84.

Peter Dent (ed.), *Sculpture and Touch*, Ashgate, 2014

Kahn, Douglas, *Noise Water Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999).

Alice E. Sanger and Siv Tove Kulbrandstad Walker (eds.), *Sense and the Senses in Early Modern Art and Cultural Practice*, Routledge, 2012