

# **COURTAULD INSTITUTE**

## **Year Three PhD Symposium**

**Thursday 30 April, 16.30–18.20**

**Friday 1 May, 09.30–18.10**



**We are delighted to invite you to the Courtauld's annual Postgraduate Symposium 2025/2026. Researchers in the final stages of their doctoral degrees will deliver papers on an aspect of their research projects. In past years, the event has been a moment for faculty, students and the public to celebrate innovative research.**

Organised by Courtauld PhD students Alison Braybrooks, Smaranda Ciubotaru.

# Programme Day One

- 16.00–16.30 **Registration opens**
- 16.30–16.40 **Opening remarks and introduction**  
Alison Braybrooks, Smaranda Ciubotaru, PhD students and symposium organisers
- 16.40–18.20 **Panel 1 – Text, Material Dialogue and Ritual**
- ‘Transience and Permanence: The Effigy of Wolfhard of Roth (d. 1302) and the Material Paradox of Death in Metal’  
**Isabella Maoz (Schwarzer)**
- “‘With such colour and embroidery as shall be agreed upon by the entire fellowship’: The *Parureboek* and Ceremonial Dress in Bruges’ Confraternity of the Holy Blood’  
**Leylim Erenel**
- “‘in order that their fervent devotion may be kindled and God in his creation glorified more often’: The Chantry Chapel of Henry V in Westminster Abbey’  
**Sophia Dumoulin**
- ‘Keeping it Short (*Breviculum*): A Pre-History of Comic Strips’  
**Ricardo Mandelbaum Balla**
- 18.20–19.30 **Drinks Reception**  
*Open to all*

# Programme Day Two

- 9.00–9.30 **Registration opens**
- 9.30–9.40 **Opening remarks and introduction**  
Alison Braybrooks, Smaranda Ciubotaru, PhD students and symposium organisers
- 9.40–11.20 **Panel 2 - Under the Lens**
- ‘Revisiting Varnish Removal: “Greener” Cleaning Methods for Aged Synthetic Varnishes on Acrylic Emulsion Paint Films’  
**Beatrice Menegaldo**
- ‘From Materiality to Meaning: An Investigation into the Painting Materials and Techniques of Joan Miró during his Artistic Period in Mallorca (1956-1983)’  
**Mar Gomez**
- ‘Interconnected Identities: Applying Machine Learning Analysis to Small-Scale 16th c. Paintings’  
**Tanya Klowden**
- ‘Unseen Disegno: The Use of Cartoons in Renaissance Venice’  
**Emma P. Holter**

- 11.20–11.40    **Refreshment Break**  
*Tea and coffee provided*
- 11.20–13.00    **Panel 3 - Architectural Identities**  
‘Architectural Ambition: Jacopo de’ Pazzi at Santa Croce, Palazzo Pazzi, and the Florentine Badia’  
**Emma Iadanza**  
  
‘Building a “Compositional Kit”’: Records, Copies, and Collaboration in Andrea Palladio’s Workshop’  
**Alexis Nanavaty**  
  
‘Release the Angels: The Use of Stucco in Immersive Religious Spaces in Rome around 1600’  
**Alison Braybrooks**
- 13.00–13.40    **Lunch break**  
*Provided for participants and organisers*
- 13.40–15.00    **Panel 4 – Subversive Collectives**  
‘Free Unions Locked Up: The Paradox of Resistance and the Special Branch Confiscation of a British Surrealist Journal’  
**Christina Childs**  
  
“‘Le streghe son tornate”’: Anti-Institutional Feminists Reimagining Women in 1970s Italy’  
**Veronica Orlandi**  
  
‘Maud Sulter’s Early Years: From the Blackwomen’s Creativity Project to *Passion*, 1982-1990’  
**Zoe Bromberg-McCarthy**
- 15.00–16.20    **Panel 5 - Nations, Peripheries and Localities**  
‘Third Cultures: Late Soviet Samizdat in the Practice of Serge Segay and Rea Nikonova’  
**Rada Georgieva**  
  
‘A Blackface Knight: The Arthurian Legends, Minstrelsy, and Trans-Atlantic Cultural Exchange, 1860 – 1918’  
**Zoe Mercer-Golden**  
  
‘The Geological Stripe: Ethel Mairet and the Landscape of Sussex’  
**Alice Dodds**
- 16.20–16.40    **Refreshment Break**  
*Tea and coffee provided*

16.40–18.00 **Panel 6 - Embodied Approaches**

'The Architectonics of Spirit: Galka Scheyer's Home-Gallery by Richard Neutra and Gregory Ain, 1934-6'

**Rachel Denniston**

'Resistant Skins: Material Agency in Feminist Painting'

**Tatjana Schaefer**

'Playing with Matches: Exhibiting Șerbana Drăgoescu's Intermedial Game Across the Iron Curtain'

**Smaranda Ciubotaru**

18.00–18.10 **Closing Remarks**

Klara Kemp-Welch, Professor of Modern and Contemporary Art History and Head of Research Degrees Programme, The Courtauld

18.10–19.00 **Drinks Reception**

*Open to all*

# Abstracts

Isabella Maoz (Schwarzer), Supervisor: Dr Jessica Barker

## **Transience and Permanence: The Effigy of Wolfhard of Roth (d. 1302) and the Material Paradox of Death in Metal**

The bronze effigy of Bishop Wolfhard of Roth (d. 1302) in Augsburg Cathedral has been noted for its uncompromising depiction of the dead body, linked by Panofsky and others to death masks. Such readings emphasise the effigy's depiction of death while overlooking the significance of its material – bronze – and the implications of rendering lifelessness in a medium associated with permanence.

This paper foregrounds the dialectical relationship between bronze and the rhetoric of death. It argues that the effigy departs from earlier tomb monuments that evoked the glorified body, instead constructing a tension between transience and permanence that aligns with reliquary busts featuring relic-openings (oculi).

The paper situates the effigy both within the broader medieval significance of bronze and within its specific context in Augsburg, drawing a parallel with the 12th century copper tomb slab of St Ulrich. It links the effigy to reliquary busts with oculi, including fourteenth- and fifteenth-century examples from Augsburg, which juxtapose a perfected metal exterior with fragmentary relics.

The analysis combines technical examination of the effigy (2020) with primary sources, including cathedral inventories (1522, 1582), the Augsburg Chronik (1483), and the Heiltumsblatt (c. 1500).

Leylim Erenel, Supervisor: Professor Susie Nash

## **'With such colour and embroidery as shall be agreed upon by the entire fellowship': The *Parureboek* and Ceremonial Dress in Bruges' Confraternity of the Holy Blood**

The *Parureboek* of Bruges' Confraternity of the Holy Blood is a unique volume containing eighty-three coloured drawings which document the embroidered ornamentation displayed on the ceremonial garments of the organisation in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This paper examines the *Parureboek* as a record of how the Confraternity constructed and sustained a distinctive corporate identity, how this identity was negotiated over time through artistic interpretation and how it was reinforced through repeated ritual performance. Drawing on the organisation's own archives alongside Bruges' municipal accounts and guild records, the paper situates the Confraternity's ceremonial self-presentation within the broader visual culture of civic ceremony in late medieval Bruges, while relating the visual and written evidence preserved in the volume to shifting economic and political circumstances.

Sophia Dumoulin, Supervisor: Dr Tom Nickson

## **'in order that their fervent devotion may be kindled and God in his creation glorified more often': The Chantry Chapel of Henry V in Westminster Abbey**

The chantry chapel of Henry V (r.1413-22) in Westminster Abbey has long been neglected in art historical scholarship because of its late medieval date and relative inaccessibility, positioned high above the ambulatory. Recent studies have, however, analysed the chapel's architecture in the context of the Perpendicular style and interpreted the memorial as a carefully crafted statement intended to secure the king's salvation, legitimise Lancastrian rule and assert the English claim to the French throne. I will instead focus on a comparatively understudied dimension of Henry V's commemoration: the chapel's engagement with the viewer. This question is particularly significant considering the king's stipulation in his will that the chapel should be constructed in such a way that his chantry priests were visible 'to the people'. I will also consider how the chapel's insertion into the east end of Westminster Abbey reshaped movement and vision in the church. Placing this analysis within broader

debates on the privatisation of medieval church space, I will argue that although Henry V's chantry chapel complicates the boundary between public and private, its primary function remained the commemoration and spiritual benefit of its elite patron.

**Ricardo Mandelbaum Balla**, Supervisor: Dr Tom Nickson

### **Keeping it Short (*Breviculum*): A Pre-History of Comic Strips**

This paper examines the *Breviculum*'s extraordinary use of written speech, text streams emerging directly from figures' mouths, to illuminate its contribution to the history of visual storytelling. Departing from conventional banderoles, the manuscript's inscriptions form dynamic, coloured ribbons that structure debates, model theological arguments, and express emotional intensity. The talk argues that the *Breviculum* represents a pivotal moment in the conceptualisation of visual-textual space. Its system of direct speech inscription blurs the boundaries between diagram, narrative, and argumentation, creating a proto-sequential visual language that anticipates elements of modern graphic storytelling. By analysing key folios, especially the Tunis debates and the chaotic dispute in Bugia, the paper shows how textual placement, colour, and graphic agitation convey epistemic tension, rhetorical escalation, and the collapse of dialogue itself. The *Breviculum* thus stands as a rare medieval artefact in which script becomes an active dramatic medium rather than a merely explanatory device.

**Beatrice Menegaldo**, Supervisor: Clare Richardson, FIIC

### **Revisiting Varnish Removal: 'Greener' Cleaning Methods for Aged Synthetic Varnishes on Acrylic Emulsion Paint Films**

Protective varnishes are often applied to acrylic emulsion-based works of art to prevent the accumulation of surface dirt, which can become permanently embedded in their relatively soft paint films. However, as these coatings age, their removal presents significant challenges and frequently requires the use of aromatic solvents, raising concerns about health and environmental risks. This study investigates the removal of aged synthetic varnishes from acrylic emulsion paint films, with a particular focus on evaluating 'greener' cleaning methods. It builds on and directly compares results with a study undertaken in 2007 by Ormsby and colleagues, which assessed the application and removability of a range of protective varnishes on acrylic emulsion paints. The same test samples are re-examined to assess changes in composition and solubility over time. The solvents used in Ormsby's study are reassessed to identify any changes in varnish behaviour, while additional 'greener' methods, selected in accordance with established sustainability guidelines, are also tested. Cleaning effectiveness and potential impacts on the paint surface are evaluated using a combination of analytical techniques. The findings will inform the development of varnish removal protocols that optimise cleaning effectiveness while preserving the underlying paint surface and minimising health and environmental risks.

**Mar Gomez**, Supervisor: Professor Aviva Burnstock

### **From Materiality to Meaning: An Investigation into the Painting Materials and Techniques of Joan Miró during his Artistic Period in Mallorca (1956-1983)**

When materiality and meaning are connected, we can elucidate the artist's intention. The technical study of a representative group of artworks by Joan Miró created during his artistic stage in Mallorca (1956-1983), contrasted with the artist's own accounts and the materials preserved in his studios, has revealed the key materials used by Miró during his period in Mallorca, as well as the reasons behind his choices. Miró used a very limited palette and was consistent in his choice of canvas supports and oil paints, and his search for pure colours determined his predilection for certain pigments and brands. His early use of water-based emulsion paints was driven by his desire to experiment with new media but limited by the materials available at the time during the Francoist regime. The study has provided evidence of Miró's use of polyvinyl acetate paints, rather than acrylics, and his use of different media in the same painting. Some deterioration phenomena such as surface efflorescence in certain paints have also been investigated. The results contribute to the knowledge of Miró's oeuvre, his painting materials and the conservation of his artworks.

**Tanya Klowden**, Supervisors: Professor Guido Rebecchini and Professor Stephen Whiteman

### **Interconnected Identities: Applying Machine Learning Analysis to Small-Scale 16th c. Paintings**

Computer vision has enabled computers to effectively study imagery for over two decades but there continues to be a profound disconnect between what the computer sees, what the human eye (and mind) see, and what the human mind thinks the computer sees. Applying multiple methods of computer vision and machine learning to the examination of small-scale 16th c. reproductions of portraits and religious figures, we examine the probabilistic and texture map-based results returned to see if identified features correlate to details of stylistic individuality or similarity among artists and whether there is evidence of collaboration between multiple hands or skilled copy-work that can be differentiated from an original. By defining control groups and test groups, we ascertain the likelihood that these results reflect a true measure of individuality or whether they are merely differentiating painted regions by similar subject, colours, surface texture, or other parametric biases. From these findings, we consider the barriers that still remain to augmenting the eye of the art historian with computational tools. We further assess the future utility of these methods in identifying subtle features within a painted work that have historically been challenging and potentially contentious to identify using human visual analysis alone.

**Emma P. Holter**, Samuel H. Kress Predoctoral Fellow, Supervisor: Professor Guido Rebecchini

### **Unseen Disegno: The Use of Cartoons in Renaissance Venice**

This paper examines the use of pricked and incised cartoons in the drawing and underdrawing practices of Venetian painters circa 1500. Although surviving cartoons are rare, evidence of their use can be observed through non-invasive technical imaging, specifically infrared reflectography. This conservation technology permits us to view the drawings beneath the painted surface, which are invisible to the naked eye. This paper problematizes the long-held assumption that cartoons were used exclusively in Venice for the creation of copies of devotional paintings. Through the analysis of infrared images taken of Venetian Renaissance paintings in the last decade, a more nuanced picture of Venetian draughtsmanship and workshop practice can be introduced.

**Emma Iadanza**, Supervisor: Professor Guido Rebecchini

### **Architectural Ambition: Jacopo de' Pazzi at Santa Croce, Palazzo Pazzi, and the Florentine Badia**

Due to his involvement in the infamous Pazzi Conspiracy of 1478, Jacopo de' Pazzi (1423-1478) is remembered to historians as a would-be tyrannicide and a traitor, rather than a successful merchant, politician, or patron of the arts. On the basis of visual and archival evidence, this paper reconsiders his role in ambitious reconstruction projects at the family chapel in Santa Croce, the family's ancestral palace on the Canto de' Pazzi, and the nearby Florentine Badia. Beyond identifying these projects, described in his 1464 will, and linking them to the evidence for progress on these works, I point to Jacopo's 'architectural ambition' (as later described by the contemporary poet Angelo Poliziano in his propagandistic *Coniurationis commentarium* [Commentary on the Pazzi Conspiracy 1478]) as the primary mechanism by which he sought to display his family's antiquity and nobility. Although these qualities were theoretically valued in the Florentine Republic, they instead came to be perceived as a threat to the ascendant Medici, and later prompted the *damnatio memoriae* that unilaterally targeted properties and imagery associated with the family.

**Alexis Nanavaty**, Supervisor: Professor Guido Rebecchini

### **Building a 'Compositional Kit': Records, Copies, and Collaboration in Andrea Palladio's Workshop**

Andrea Palladio's buildings are defined by carefully organised sequences of classical elements — columns, arches, pediments, and niches — at times adorned with sculpted stucco figures. Beyond their formal coherence, these structures preserve traces of their creation. Their realisation required

sustained study and collaboration: surveys of ancient architecture, presentation drawings for commissions, and ongoing dialogue with patrons and craftsmen.

Drawing on payment records, correspondence and Palladio's drawings, this paper examines selected case studies to show how collaboration on the worksite and in the workshop contributed to a shared repertoire of architectural and artistic models, termed the 'compositional kit.' Within this context, methods were exchanged, adapted, and reinvented. The artist developed an 'architectonic' awareness, while the architect engaged with the integration of figural elements. The result was a unified, 'total work of art' that reflects Palladio's architectural vision and broader ideological constructs for building during the period.

**Alison Braybrooks**, Supervisor: Professor Guido Rebecchini

### **Release the Angels: The Use of Stucco in Immersive Religious Spaces in Rome around 1600**

'Angels occupy a liminal place between the material and immaterial. As messenger figures they take human form but are strictly incorporeal.'

In Rome, around 1600, angels were everywhere – on street corners, on Hadrian's Bridge, where their tunics seemed to snap in the Tiber's breeze, and of course in every church, where they descended from the domes and perched on the cornices. This prevalence reflected their developing importance in contemporary Catholic theology and their crucial role in the church's campaign to involve laypeople in its rituals.

In a series of commissions, sculptor Ambrogio Buonvicino (1552-1622) and architect Flaminio Ponzio (1560-1613) created immersive spaces where these liminal figures were pushed to the limits of immateriality to act as relatable mediators between the worshipper and God. Buonvicino took the figures that floated weightless at the margins of decoration and gave them mass and authority, while still retaining a strange insubstantiality. Stucco's own liminal status and its material qualities of solid presence, combined with deceptive lightness, embodied the meanings that the artist was attempting to convey.

This paper will examine one of these commissions, the Cappella Rucellai in Sant'Andrea della Valle, and how collaboration between the architect, artist and sculptor enabled its coherence.

**Christina Childs**, Supervisor: Professor Gavin Parkinson

### **Free Unions Locked Up: The Paradox of Resistance and the Special Branch Confiscation of a British Surrealist Journal**

In December 1944, Special Branch seized the materials for *Free Unions / Unions Libres*, a journal produced by a loosely associated group of Surrealist artists and writers in Britain. In later accounts, it has been claimed that the journal was suspected of including coded messages to the enemy. Through declassified records and published statements from the journal's organisers, this paper will seek to challenge and clarify this narrative. It will describe how the confiscation was part of a wider government crackdown on London anarchist publishing. The Surrealists were targeted through their association with the Freedom Press group who were accused in 1945 of producing 'subversive propaganda' under the wartime Defence Regulations Act. Paradoxically, while the journal was seized in an attempt to suppress propaganda undermining the war effort, at the same time many of its Surrealist contributors were working in secret wartime occupations. Some were employed in producing British broadcast propaganda to enemy occupied territories, whereas others had been involved in undercover activities supporting European anti-fascist resistance movements. I will argue that, while not directly constituting so-called 'coded messages', aspects of *Free Unions* reflected covert propaganda and communication techniques, influenced by the wartime work of its contributors. I will consider how these artists navigated this complex position, working for the wartime state while simultaneously seeking to critique its aims and ideology. Through an analysis of the visual material published in the journal, I will explicate how these oppositions played out in its pages.

**Veronica Orlandi**, Supervisor: Professor Sarah Wilson

### **'Le streghe son tornate' (The Witches Are Back): Collective Theatre and Feminist Iconographies in 1970s Italy**

This paper focuses on feminist anti-institutional collectives whose political activism was deeply intertwined with creative practices in 1970s Italy. It examines their experimental work—primarily theatre and performance—exploring how it reflected key features of Italian feminism, including small-group organisation, separatism, and consciousness-raising practices such as *autocoscienza*. It further considers how these practices expanded feminist communication strategies, fostering more accessible and empathetic forms of engagement with women at the margins of the movement. These groups serve as case studies for understanding how visual strategies embedded within activism contributed to the formation of feminist identities and to the articulation of a political agenda. In particular, theatre developed an alternative aesthetic around the figure of the witch, contributing to its emergence as a feminist icon in Italy and shaping new representations of the female body and the spaces it could inhabit.

**Zoe Bromberg-McCarthy**, Supervisor: Professor Dorothy Price

### **Maud Sulter's Early Years: From the Blackwomen's Creativity Project to *Passion*, 1982-1990.**

Maud Sulter is an enigmatic figure within British art history. Her work is held in significant national collections, and she is regularly included in surveys of Black, women's, feminist, or 1980s art. But her trajectory as an artist and the breadth of her practice remain opaque, perhaps due to her untimely death in 2008. The Blackwomen's Creativity Project, for example, is regularly included in biographical sketches, though details of what the project entailed, who was involved, and what it set out to do remain unclear.

Sulter began the Blackwomen's Creativity project in 1982, aged 22, as a member of Sheba Feminist Publishers Collective and an aspiring writer. She later reflected, 'I certainly did not know then that I myself would someday become just that, a Blackwoman artist.' The project ended with the 1990 release of *Passion: Discourses on Blackwomen's Creativity*, edited by Sulter and published by Urban Fox Press, which she led with her partner Lubaina Himid. By then, Sulter was an award-winning poet and respected visual artist, about to embark on a residency at Tate Liverpool.

In this paper, I will present some of my research on the Blackwomen's Creativity Project to contextualise Sulter's emergence as a visual artist and to enhance our understanding of her creative strategies.

**Rada Georgieva**, Supervisor: Professor Klara Kemp-Welch

### **Third Cultures: Late Soviet Samizdat in the Practice of Serge Segay and Rea Nikonova**

During the Late Soviet period, underground publications known as samizdat ('self-publishing') proliferated throughout the USSR, although concentrated in Moscow and Leningrad. In this paper, I examine the samizdat publication *Transponans*, created by the artists Serge Segay and Rea Nikonova in the small town Yeysk, located on the shore of the Sea of Azov.

*Transponans* was dedicated to experimental poetry, art, and criticism, and emerged from the concept of 'transponirovanie' or transposition, which was the editors' way of incorporating appropriation as an artistic strategy. Nikonova and Segay addressed this notion particularly in relation to the aesthetics of

the early avant-garde. Further, the journal included works by some of the major alternative artists and poets working in the capitals, such as many of the Moscow Conceptualists.

In this paper, I examine how *Transponans* drew the centre into the periphery. I foreground Segay and Nikonova's journal as a site of intellectual exchange and as an intentional intervention into the cultural hierarchies of the period. Discussing the paradoxes of Segay and Nikonova's self-proclaimed 'provincialism', I question Moscow-centric narratives of conceptualist and experimental practices during the 1970s-1980s to highlight the periphery as a generative locus of artistic production.

**Zoe Mercer-Golden**, Supervisor: Professor David Peters Corbett

### **A Blackface Knight: The Arthurian Legends, Minstrelsy, and Trans-Atlantic Cultural Exchange, 1860 – 1918**

This paper uses a provocative, largely unknown depiction of an Arthurian knight in Blackface as a jumping-off point to consider the myriad uses of the Arthurian legends in Anglo-American cultural exchange between 1860 and 1918. On the eve of the American Civil War, the British costume designer and so-called 'phrenologist' Dykwynkyn created a 'Dark Knight' for a Christmas pantomime that made use of racist imagery more common in American contexts. The design helps illuminate the complex network of cultural continuities and tensions central to the Anglo-American relationship during a time of great change. Four other cases studies are used to explore this evolving landscape: *King Arthur* (1895) and *Sir Galahad* (1862 – 1904), two archetypal examples of British Arthurian art that were highly influential in America, and *The Quest and Achievement of the Holy Grail* (1890 – 1901) and *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889), Arthurian works by Americans that were both trans-Atlantic in origin and impact. The paper ultimately proposes a new framework for considering Arthurian art of the era that is trans-Atlantic, multi- and mass-media, and popular, arguing that these Arthurian works played an important and under-acknowledged role in identity formation both within and between the two countries.

**Alice Dodds**, Supervisor: Professor David Peters Corbett

### **The Geological Stripe: Ethel Mairet and the Landscape of Sussex**

This paper examines the geological imagination of the weaver and craft theorist Ethel Mairet (1872–1952), arguing that her early career as a geologist profoundly shaped the visual forms and utopian philosophy of her interwar weavings. From her election to the Geologists' Association in 1896, presence on the British Mineralogical Survey of Ceylon in 1904, and published scientific articles and photographs, Mairet developed a stratigraphical way of seeing that persisted long after she left geology for weaving. This paper traces the migration of geological form into her woven textiles, revealing that the banded structures of her interwar weavings, made within sight of Sussex's recognisable chalk formations, find their logic as much in a geological language of stratigraphy as in the medium specificities of handloom weaving. Situating Mairet within a longer history of geology's shaping of the British landscape tradition, this paper suggests the geological stripe allowed weavers to consider their place in time – both in relation to the deep past and the utopian future.

Rachel Denniston, Supervisor: Professor Robin Schuldenfrei

### **The Architectonics of Spirit: Galka Scheyer's Home-Gallery by Richard Neutra and Gregory Ain, 1934-6**

The home-gallery of curator, collector, and dealer Galka Scheyer (1889-1945) in Hollywood, California, designed in 1934 by Austrian American architect Richard Neutra with American architect Gregory Ain, was central to Scheyer's efforts in promoting the work of Blue Four artists Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Lyonel Feininger, and Alexej von Jawlensky. It was where she held lectures, exhibitions, hosted gatherings, and entertained Hollywood's elite. Understudied, however, is the way this space functioned to make more accessible the esoteric nature of works by the Blue Four within conservative 1930s Los Angeles. Interweaving avant-garde museology and exhibition design with occultural spatiality and theories of affect and wholeness, this paper argues that the gallery was designed to offer an innovative opportunity for art viewing where art could not only be seen, but felt and experienced in more accessible and embodied ways. This paper positions the gallery as a 'total environment' which integrated the art on view with the affective temporalities of its surrounding natural environment and extra-ordinary sensory perceptions facilitated through Neutra's architectural design. It thus contributes to a greater understanding of curatorial agency at the intersection of esotericism and modern art conceived with the aim of bringing forth a new and better world.

Tatjana Schaefer, Supervisor: Professor Jo Applin

### **Resistant Skins: Material Agency in Feminist Painting**

Despite the vigour that 1970s American feminism is commonly known for, its beginnings were marked by major hesitancy towards addressing the sensitive subject of sexual violence. This hesitation strongly reflected in the feminist art movement, where visual approaches to the matter were treated with suspicion and largely denounced. The more accepted form of artistic resistance became practice-based, embodied works, heralded by various platforms and journals leading the discourse of the time, like *Heresies* no. 6 'On Women and Violence.'

Of all visual media, painting had a particularly difficult standing in this context given its tainted history of mythologised rape scenes, commodifying women's pain into pleasurable objects of high art. For this same reason though, painting became an important site of contest and feminist rebellion, where pain and resistance were re-situated on the same site from which they had been eclipsed.

In my paper, I examine the paintings of Ida Applebroog and Joan Snyder that developed in response to the 1970s unfolding feminist discourse on sexual violence. Refraining from explicit depiction, both artists chose distinctive material approaches to the canvas as body proxy—as vulnerable and resilient skin.

Smaranda Ciubotaru, Supervisor: Professor Klara Kemp-Welch

### **Playing with Matches: Exhibiting Șerbana Drăgoescu's Intermedial Game Across the Iron Curtain**

Sparking much controversy upon its display, the selection of Șerbana Drăgoescu's *Matchstick Game: Therapy for the Rich and the Poor* for the 8th edition of the International Lausanne Tapestry Biennials echoed the increasingly experimental approach to tapestry that had defined the 1960s and 70s. Comprised of a rug and an oversized crate filled with yarn-wrapped metal "matchsticks", the intermediality of Drăgoescu's work elicited disputation, while its incendiary title overtly signalled a shift in the paradigm of viewing. Within this paper I consider the allographic

approach of Drăgoescu's *Matchstick Game*, arguing for its inherent interactivity and dependence on activation. Previous mockups of the work included a magnetic component that, when cranked, served to attract the metallic matches. While the magnet was later removed from the final version, its initial addition evidences Drăgoescu's intention to circumvent passivity. The work invites its audience to transgress a prescriptive site of viewing and quite literally "play with matches". Upon its return to Romania, *Matchstick Game* was exhibited again under the less-inflammatory name *Game for Peers* at the National Museum of Art in 1981. Referring to installation shots of the work, I further inquire into the subdual of its allographic quality within the hegemonic context of the Nicolae Ceaușescu dictatorship.