

The Porous Body in Early Modern Europe

The Council Room,
King's College London, Strand, WC2R 2LS
30 November - 1 December 2017

In early modern medical theory, skin was imagined as a porous boundary. Plato, Hippocrates and Galen all agreed on the permeable quality of the skin, which the sixteenth century physician Mercurialis described as a 'fisherman's net', easily pierced and difficult to protect. Its porous nature invited speculation about sweat, urine, blood and tears, and its susceptibility to disease focused civic debates about the environment, atmosphere, humours and astrology. Treatments like blood-letting, cupping and purging sought to maintain its integrity through the counter-intuitive manoeuvres of piercing it, while, as a canvas upon which the signs of disease could be read, it invited medical participation from lay and learned alike. Écorché models, anatomical illustrations and artistic representations of flayed skin spoke to the ease with which skin could be set aside, even while new genres of portraiture, and artisanal cosmetic practices valorized it as a cultural determiner of beauty, purity and individuality. The malleability of *cutis* in early modern artistic, medical and artisanal discourses called into question not just the healthy, moral individual's relationship with skin, but the boundaries between medicine, the individual and their environment as well.

Within this interdisciplinary conference, we aim to consider the porousness of the early modern body as physiologically, emotionally, and socially constituted, depicted in art, debated in print and played out in a dizzying array of social practices. Historical focus on skin has often been highly anthropocentric; but bodies were not just human; nor were the porous properties of skin defined by medicine alone. As flesh it was eaten, as fur it was worn, as leather it was worked. In considering the broad dimensions of porous bodies, and the many reasons these ideas changed, this conference investigates boundaries between nature and culture, animal and artifice, human and other.

This conference is organised as part of the Renaissance Skin project (@RenSkinKCL), funded by the Wellcome Trust.

Please Tweet/Instagram using #theporousbody

Image: Detail of *Queen Henrietta Maria*, Anthony van Dyck, before Aug 1632?
Royal Collection Trust/© Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2017

Conference Programme

Thursday 30 November

1.30pm

Welcome and Introductions

2.00-3.30pm

Panel 1, Chair: Natasha Awais-Dean (KCL)

Jemma Field, Brunel University London

Purified, Beautified and Scented: the Cosmetic and Medicinal Life of Anna of Denmark

Erin Griffey, University of Auckland

The Lily and the Rose: Henrietta Maria's complexion and the practical and performative treatment of skin at the Stuart court

Romana Sammern, University of Salzburg

Palette of Beauty: the Complexion, Art and Medicine

3.30-4.00pm

Coffee break (The River Room)

4.00-5.30pm

Panel 2, Chair: Hannah Murphy (KCL)

M. A. Katritzky, The Open University

Shared Skin: transnational parasitic conjoined twins: 1500-1775

Paolo Savoia, King's College London

Visualizing Pain: Religion, Politics, and Medicine in Giovanni Andrea Dalla Croce's surgery manual (1573)

Jack Hartnell, University of East Anglia

The Porous Poetics of the Wound Man's Skin

6.00pm

Keynote & Public Lecture (Bush House Lecture Theatre 1)

Thomas W. Laqueur, University of California, Berkeley

Seeing Through Fur: the Dog's Gaze in Western Art

7.00pm

Drinks Reception (8th Floor North. Bush House)

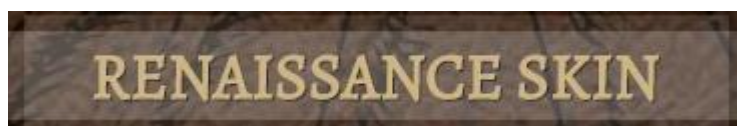
Friday 1 December

9.30-10.30am

Conference Keynote

Anita Guerrini, Oregon State University

Imagining Skin: Giant Bones and Giants' Bodies



10.30-12.30pm

Panel 3, Chair: Alex Bamji (Leeds)

Tian S. Liang, University of Oxford

The (Mis)depiction of Skin in China: the Long Eighteenth Century

Julia Biggs, Independent Scholar

The Perfumed Threshold: skin and smell memory in Renaissance Jewish Devotion

Hannah Lee, Queen Mary, University of London

Painting, Making and Thinking Skin and Race in Early Modern Venice

Christina Neilson, Oberlin College

Incarnating Skin: Polychroming Sculpture in Early Modern Europe

12.30-1.30pm

Lunch break (not provided)

1.30- 3.00pm

Panel 4, Chair: Paolo Savoia (KCL)

Sophie Morris, University College London

To Cut a Fine Figure: Anatomical Bodies and Courtesy Culture in Late Seventeenth Century London

Alun Withey, University of Exeter

Fashioning Politeness: Personal grooming in Eighteenth Century Britain

Kathryn Woods, University of Warwick

An Excrement or Anatomical Part? The Emergence of Conceptions of Hair as Porous Structure in Early Modern Anatomy

3.00-3.30pm

Coffee break

3.30-5.00pm

Panel 5, Chair: Kathleen Walker-Meikle (KCL)

Tom Rusbridge, University of Birmingham

Saddle, Horse and Rider in Early Modern England

Elizabeth McFadden, The Courtauld Institute of Art & University of California, Berkeley

The Iconographic Status of Fur in Tudor Portraiture

Thomas Balfe, The Courtauld Institute of Art

Bitten, battered, bedraggled: painted fur as injured skin in the Netherlandish gamepiece

5.00-5.15pm

Closing Remarks

Kevin Siena, Trent University

