

Art Hx 2022 Symposium

curative / spaces

Schedule and Abstracts

Thursday, April 28, 2022

9:00am ET

Opening Remarks

Anna Arabindan-Kesson, Art Hx Project Lead and Assistant Professor, African American Studies and Art & Archaeology, Princeton University

9:15am to 10:30am ET

1. Longing and Healing

Riva Lehrer, Sharrona Pearl, Giulia Smith
Moderated by **Anna Arabindan-Kesson**, Art Hx Project Lead and Assistant Professor, African American Studies and Art & Archaeology, Princeton University

*Face Hunger:
Satisfying Portraiture
Through Zoom*

Riva Lehrer and Sharrona Pearl

Artist and activist Riva Lehrer has written about the state of “face hunger,” a longing for the encounter of the face to face that emerged in particular during the pandemic. In this talk, Riva Lehrer and Sharrona Pearl discuss their collaboration on “The Zoom Portraits,” a series of portraits produced remotely that examined not just the experience of visual intimacy at a distance but the nature of embodiment and the questions of bodies on display. Lehrer and Pearl developed the project as a way to work together over zoom, but it became a form of satiation for a kind of longing that Lehrer continues to explore.

Healing (in) the Museum

Giulia Smith

This paper examines the possibilities as well as the problems opened up by contemporary art practices that reimagine the museum as a site of healing (in the sense of both caring for its users and curing the institution itself). To begin with, I will map out the ways in which recent critical discourses pivoting on terms such as “healing” and “care” have emerged as intersectional grounds for politicized artists including Simone Leigh, Jade Montserrat, Carolyn Lazard, and Grace Ndiritu. While such terms will be shown to have always played a strategic role within Afro-diasporic histories of grassroots mobilization and resistance, my presentation will examine the complex implications of relocating such racialized politics within the space of the museum.

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**2.
Confabulations:
Institutions, Power,
and Access**

**Studio Encounters:
The Spaces of Clinical
Photography in Cape Town,
South Africa**

References:
Azoulay, A. 2008. *The Civil Contract of Photography*. London: Zone Books.
Mifflin, J. 2007. *Visual Archives in Perspective: Enlarging on Historical Medical Photographs*. *The American Archivist* 70(1), Spring/Summer: 32-69.

**"The Mother Hospital of the Empire":
Imperial Visions of St
Bartholomew's Hospital**

Michaela Clark, Sadie Levy Gale, Chimwemwe Phiri, Shelley Angelie Saggar

Introduced by Allison Morehead, Associate Professor, Department of Art History and Art, Queen's University and Co-Director, Confabulations: Art Practice, Art History, Critical Medical Humanities

Moderated by Joseph Litts, Art Hx Lead Graduate Research Assistant, Ph.D. Student, Art & Archaeology, Princeton University

Michaela Clark

Clinical photographs often serve as supplementary sources in the history of medicine (Mifflin 2007). Harnessed in the past for the purposes of medical record-keeping, education, and publication, historical images of this kind can be seen to offer insight into disease discourses, institutional practices, and even patient experiences. However, while the images themselves have drawn much research attention, little has been said about the spatial conditions in which they were produced.

This presentation seeks to amend this omission by diving into what Ariella Azoulay (2008) calls the "photographic encounter" within a specific local context, the Old Groote Schuur Hospital, which opened in Cape Town, South Africa in 1938. In looking beyond the clinical photograph as an image, it attends to the circumstances, considerations, and concerns related to how such material was produced at a time when the profession (of clinical photography) and state-sanctioned segregation (apartheid) were being institutionalized. By grappling with medical hierarchies and racial dynamics within the space of the photographic studio in a South African hospital, my aim is to unravel the power relations embedded in the moment when doctor, photographer, and patient would have been located around the clinical camera at the Old Groote Schuur. Ultimately, addressing this dimension of medical photography offers a means to shine a light on the spatial and social relations of clinical photographic encounters in Cape Town.

Sadie Levy Gale

Throughout Britain's interwar years, London's oldest hospital—Saint Bartholomew's— established a reputation as "the Mother Hospital of the Empire," a descriptor used liberally in fundraising appeals for the reconstruction of the hospital's buildings. This paper seeks to analyze visual representations of the hospital in a select number of these fundraising appeals and to explore the interrelationship between healthcare spaces and British imperialism in the early twentieth

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***Refiguring the Visual
Archive of Tropical
medicine: Race,
Patienthood and the
Afterlives of Medical
Collections from Malawi
and Sudan***

century. By attending to the visual framing of St Bart's as a spectacular feature within London (the imperial capital), I will offer insights into how the health of the British population was seen as synonymous with the strength and longevity of the British Empire and its metropolises.

This paper will also trace how images of St Bart's hospital were projected and disseminated across imperial networks. Many of St Bart's fundraising appeals were published in *The Illustrated London News*, a publication that was circulated across the British Empire. An examination of the magazine's colonial readership will open up considerations of how "mother hospitals" like St Barts were viewed as an imperial product that could be reproduced in different colonial contexts, in the form of new health spaces like clinics and hospitals. I will also explore how in return, the recruitment of medical students from across the Empire strengthened St Bart's reputation as a site of imperial and biomedical power. Through such analyses, my paper will uncover how imperial approaches to healthcare predicated on Britain's medical and scientific supremacy paved the way for racialized discourses of public health that still have repercussions today.

Chimwemwe Phiri

My paper draws on archival material related to two former British colonial medical officers. I will begin by contextualizing the two collections, looking at the socio-political environments in which the photographs were produced, collected, and circulated to show how they fostered a specific colonial scientific vision.

The second part of my paper unpacks the process of conducting an ethnography of the colonial archive. I will place the meaning of the archive to me as a researcher and as someone who is connected to the place of origin and my role in the process of return. I will detail my experience researching historic sources kept in two settings (the UK and Malawi), highlighting the social, epistemological, and logistical constraints to accessing archival material.

Finally, I will discuss contemporary meanings of the collections, looking at encounters with the colonial archive by individuals who come from the countries where the collections were sourced. In 2018, the Malawian artist Samson Kambalu created a series of artworks entitled *The African Cowboy* that moved the collections from a medical space to a curative one that fractured the meanings of patienthood and scientific readings rendered on the African body. From October 2021 to February 2022, I did a "visual repatriation" in Malawi where I worked with a range of

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Researching culturally sensitive items in the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum Collections

people, including visual artists, health practitioners, and local archivists, to interpret the historical material. I will discuss how moving the archive across institutional, curative, and hegemonic spaces asks us to ponder who has the right to use archival material.

Shelley Angelie Saggar

Arguably one of the most significant collections of medical artifacts in the world, Henry Wellcome's Historical Medical Museum was intended to tell the comprehensive story of mankind's approach to health, from the hall of "primitive medicine," right through to the most sophisticated healing technologies of the day. Wellcome amassed over a million objects over his lifetime, and since his death in 1936, the collection has been dispersed to museums in the UK and around the world, but its significance has largely been eclipsed by the biomedical focus of the Wellcome Trust. This paper situates Wellcome's collecting vision within the context of traditional approaches to organizing and presenting the history of medicine, with its inherent connections to teleological narratives of hierarchy and civilizational "progress."

I will then outline how the Wellcome Collection is attempting to address the colonial histories of the items still in the collection today. This initiative—to research items in the collection that may be classed as "sacred," "secret," or otherwise culturally sensitive by their communities of origin—began in 2019 in conjunction with the Science Museum. Through case studies of a pair of shoes connected with men's business from Central Australia and the plaster cast of the face of a Māori man displayed in Wellcome's permanent exhibition, *Medicine Man*, I will consider what it means for science and medicine museums to embark on the work of addressing (post)colonial history, and how this measures alongside the contested debates that surround both institutions—particularly when working with Indigenous material and communities.

12:30pm to 1:30pm ET

Opening Keynote

A Conversation with artist Andrea Chung

Moderated by Jessica Womack, Art Hx Project Manager and Ph.D. Candidate, Art & Archaeology, Princeton University

Informed by extensive research, artist Andrea Chung creates works that probe often erased histories, such as those related to slavery, labor, migration, colonialism, and postcolonialism. In this conversation, Chung will discuss how archival photographs and documents inspire her artistic approach, particularly focusing on her 2020 *Colostrum* series, which probes the historical and ongoing exploitation of the breast milk from Black women, and her *Pure* (2017), *Midwives* (2017), and *Crowning* (2014) series, which call attention to the practices of Black midwives in the Caribbean.

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1:30pm to 3:00pm ET

**3.
How Do We Create
Places of Care, of
Possibility?**

Chung will also discuss her usage of sugar, a colonial product, as well as her 2018 commission for the Lentz Public Health Center in Nashville, Tennessee Eeny, meeny, miny, moe, an installation that addresses the disproportionately high rates of Black maternal and infant mortality in the United States and includes a brass mobile in the shape of Interstate 40; the work highlights the relationships between urban planning that displaces Black communities and inequitable healthcare access and outcomes.

Linda Black Elk, Sarah Khan, Carolyn Finney, Ellen Sebastian Chang

Moderated by Sarah K. Khan, 2021-2022 Art Hx Artist-in-Residence

Join Linda Black Elk, Sarah Khan, Carolyn Finney, and Ellen Sebastian Chang as they engage in a group conversation about how their creative practices, past and present, engender care. As a group of makers, scholars, activists, artists, and healers from across the United States, how do we each show up for ourselves, chosen family, and the larger local and global community?

3:45pm to 5:00pm ET

**4.
Skin, Color, Disease,
and Place**

Cecilio M. Cooper, Keren Hammerschlag, Elise Mitchell

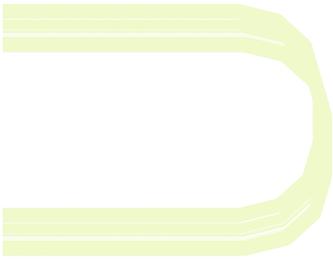
Moderated by Molly Eckel, Art Hx Data Curator and Ph.D. Candidate, Art & Archaeology, Princeton University

Nigredo in Medical Alchemy: The Blackest Black

Cecilio M. Cooper

Medical alchemy modified techniques for observing, extracting, distilling, and purifying substances developed through studying the Great Work (or *Magnum Opus*) in order to manage unwell souls, minds, and bodies. From avatars of Ethiopian persons to vials of inky fluid, my talk considers visual depictions of alchemical *nigredo* that emblemize how early modern occult iconography shapes attempts to codify tethers between blackness and disease. *Nigredo*, the blackest black, instigates the color-coded cycle of transformation that defines alchemy's *Magnum Opus*. It is followed by *albedo*'s purifying whiteness, *citrinitas*'s enlightening yellowness, and culminates with *rubedo*'s bloody redness. Alchemy's quadripartite chromatic schema would come to resonate with Carl Linnaeus' territorialized racial taxonomy, which divides the human species into varieties emerging from the continents of Africa, America, Asia, and Europe. The blackening stage of *nigredo* marks a period of devitalization and decomposition that matter must pass through before eventually achieving more idealized states. Steeped in darkness, stone or metal breaks down into essential components that together comprise *prima materia*. Cold, moist, and receptive female "seeds" percolate *prima materia* alongside their

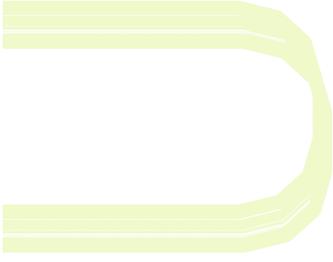
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**Colonial Cosmetics and
the Sunny Art of Rupert
Bunny**

Keren Hammerschlag

The late Victorian and Edwardian beauty industry produced a wealth of visual material that promoted lily-white complexions as a privileged indicator of beauty, youth, health, and hygiene. Advertisements for skin lightening, skin whitening, and skin bleaching products developed visual and linguistic devices to convince white women in particular that the application of often toxic products would restore blemished, tanned and freckled complexions to “natural” whiteness. In this talk, I consider the ways in which skin lightening products were actively marketed to white women living in Federation Australia, revealing particular fears associated with the darkening and reddening effects of the southern sun. Moving from colonial cosmetics to a series of paintings by Australian expatriate artist Rupert Bunny of women in front of mirrors and bathed in sunlight, I seek to re-examine popular conceptions about Australia’s celebrated—sunny—relationship to the sun.



Slavery’s Scars

Elise Mitchell

Scars permeate the history of Atlantic slavery. This presentation focuses on enslaved Africans who survived smallpox by natural infection and by inoculation and the histories their smallpox and inoculation scars tell.

Smallpox, a virulent, contagious, pox-producing disease, plagued enslaved Africans from the earliest days of the transatlantic slave trade through its abolition in the nineteenth century. In the early eighteenth century, West Africans, North Africans, Middle Eastern, and East Asian enslaved and free people introduced Western Europeans to smallpox inoculation. Western Europeans, beginning with the English and later the Portuguese, French, Spanish, and Danish, appropriated the practice during the eighteenth century to control the spread of smallpox in the slave trade and among enslaved people in the Caribbean. They used the practice to perpetuate slavery. Europeans imbued smallpox and smallpox inoculation scars with economic meaning to commodify Africans and identify them as their property. These processes required a derecognition of

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Africans' kinship ties and political subjectivities.

Nevertheless, many Africans in the Americas remembered that healing from smallpox entailed much more than healing the body. They understood smallpox as a collective misfortune that signified social, political, and spiritual disarray. For them, smallpox manifested the consequences of slavery and colonialism on the skin. Healing from smallpox entailed a reconstitution of intergenerational kinship bonds, community and geopolitical ties, and spiritual geographies. Scars served as reminders of both histories of healing and histories of harm.

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**5.
Environments,
Organisms, and the
(Un)Seen**

Daniella Rose King, Nate Lewis, Paige Patchin
Moderated by Dannelle Gutarra Cordero, Art Hx Advisory Committee Member and Lecturer, African American Studies and Gender and Sexuality Studies, Princeton University

Hostile Environment

Daniella Rose King

This presentation will look at three texts commissioned by Art Hx, proposed as an exhibition in three parts: *Part I: Hostile Environments*, *Part II: The Master's Tools*, and *Part III: Invasive Species*. The texts constitute a constellation of artworks, histories, and knowledges that consider the entanglements of racial capitalism, medicine, and the environment. Looking to examples and approaches that reclaim subaltern geographies, a "demonic ground" (Katherine McKittrick, Sylvia Wynter) from which to understand history and our natural environment, the artworks and historical objects—photographs, video, paintings, sculptures and works on paper—constitute a diverse array of intellectual projects that mobilize alternative framings of value, relationships to place, labor, and nature.

Nate Lewis

Lewis will discuss his artistic practice, his background as a nurse, and how he uses photographs to make visible hidden histories. By altering photographs, Lewis aims to challenge people's perspectives on race and history through distortion and illusion. Treating the paper like an organism itself, Lewis sculpts patterns akin to cellular tissue and anatomical elements, allowing hidden histories and patterns to be uncovered from the photographs.

*Death by design: race
science and reproduction
in new public health
experiments in extinction*

Paige Patchin

Thinking design across its evolutionary and technological modalities, this talk explores a new disease control technique: the manipulation of mosquito genomes towards the extinction of their species. I discuss three projects that seek to control Zika and dengue fever by programming *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes to reproduce for death instead of life. British biotech firm Oxitec have introduced a gene

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into male mosquitoes that ensures offspring die before reaching sexual maturity; by mating with wild females, these patented “Friendly” mosquitoes dramatically reduce populations of *Aedes* wherever they are released. Another project infected mosquitoes with Wolbachia, a bacteria that transforms the reproductive capabilities of their host organisms. A third proposed the use of “gene drive” technology to push a genetic change throughout a population of *Aedes aegypti* as it reproduces. For some, the reining in of dangerous disease through the redesign of its mosquito transporters represents utopian public health futures; for others, it is a nightmarish scene of tampering with the mechanics of evolution with lethal intent. My goal in this talk is to explore how these mosquitoes became part of, and in their cyborgian animality continue to produce, the uneven human geographies of colonialism, racism, and patriarchy. In their instrumental extinction of an undesirable species, they recapitulate residual logics of race science.

12:30 to 1:30pm ET

Closing Keynote

Mabel O. Wilson, Nancy and George Rupp Professor of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, Professor in African American and African Diasporic Studies, and the Director of the Institute for Research in African American Studies, Columbia University
Moderated by Nancy Ai, Art Hx Graduate Research Assistant and Designer and M.Arch Candidate, Architecture, Princeton University

*10,000 Recollections...
Never Forgotten*

Mabel O. Wilson
The degradation, violence, and dehumanization of racialization threads through modernity—its subjectivities, social relations, politics, culture, capitalism, and built environment, especially within institutions like universities that order all of these formations. Mabel O. Wilson will explore how the Memorial for Enslaved Labors at the University of Virginia engages the university’s hidden history of slavery. She shares how the memorial’s complicated design process and public dialogues wrestled with the legacy of anti-black racism in its remembrance of the pain of bondage and the dignity of this enslaved community. Her talk asks how/if commemoration can serve as a means of repair and care for those living in the slavery’s wake?

1:45pm to 3:15pm ET

6. Foregrounding Care and Defining our Terms: Considerations for Art Hx

Joseph Litts, Luke Naessens, Jessica Womack
Moderated by Dennis Schäfer, Art Hx University Administrative Fellow and Ph.D. Candidate, German, Princeton University

How does Art Hx approach interpreting objects?
When do we decide to reproduce images or not? How

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do we endeavor to make content accessible and engaging for a wide audience? Art Hx team members Joseph Litts, Luke Naessens, and Jessica Womack will discuss the Art Hx ethics of care and make transparent the conversations and research that have shaped Art Hx over our first two years, outlining in particular the partnerships and collaborative processes that have been integral to the project's development and online presence. This presentation will also highlight the project's three frameworks—Cultivating Care, Medicalized Space, and Pathologies of Difference—and how they inform our methodologies and object-based narratives. Additionally, panelists will share how research on objects in collections across the globe has shaped the project's themes, such as anatomy, disability, policy and politics, and tropical medicine. Inspired by subject headings and controlled vocabularies used by the National Library of Medicine, Library of Congress, and Getty Research Institute, Art Hx themes function as specific lenses through which the three frameworks can be investigated.

3:15pm to 3:30pm ET

Closing Remarks

Jessica Womack, Art Hx Project Manager and Ph.D. Candidate, Art & Archaeology, Princeton University