

Conference Programme

The 3rd Sociology of the Arts PG Symposium: The Aesthetic and Culture in the Arts

A BSA Postgraduate Forum Regional Event

Time	Session
10:00 - 11:00	Registration
11:00	Opening Remark
11:00 - 12:00	Aesthetic Forms as Political Expressions The Politics of Listening: Music and noise as expressions of political voice (Daniela Fazio-Vargas, University of Manchester) Preserving Albanian Identity: Exploring the visual and material use of xhubleta as a form of resistance for Northern Albanian women in the late nineteenth and twentieth century (Greisi Halilaj, University of Cambridge) The Social Aesthetics of Colonial Divide-and-Rule: Examining displacement and dislocation through the visual culture of Hindu nationalism in India (Aqsa Ashraf, University of St Andrews)
12:00 - 13:00	Lunch and Coffee
13:00 - 13:40	Aesthetic Experience in Place-Making Beyond the Material in Heritage Designations: The cultural biographies of mass housing (Joyce Fu Si Qi, The University of Edinburgh) The City as a Curatorial Space: Liverpool's 'aesthetics of trauma' and identity reconstruction (Chudi Hua, Lancaster University)
13:40 - 14:00	Tea break
14:00 - 15:20	Aesthetic Encounter and Its Social Mediation From the Apocryphal Avellaneda to the Impossible Menard: The Don Quijote that never ends (Feliipe Zárate Guerrero, Durham University) The Most Spectacular of Monsters: Affective connection & the intolerable encounter in art (Karen A. Bannister, University of Edinburgh) When Art Recedes: Aesthetic encounter and social mediation in rural China (Jingsi Wang, University of Oxford) Embodied Aesthetics Across Tradition, Institution, and Diaspora: A sociological perspective from Sri Lankan dance practice (Pathiranage Pramodi Sithumini Amarasingha, London Metropolitan University)
15:20 - 15:30	Break
15:30 - 17:00	Keynote by Dr Liliana Riga, The University of Edinburgh (including Q&A)
17:00	Concluding Remark

Information

Date: 7th October 2026, full day

Place: Violet Laidlaw Room, 6th Floor, Chrystal Macmillan Building, 15a George Square,
Edinburgh, EH8 9LD

Keynote

Title

The lonely palette – disenchantment and the art-historical imagination

Introduction

Despite a scholarly consensus on the need to bring artworks more fully into sociological analyses, we still grapple with how to think about the artwork itself. And yet why should art history and the humanities have all the fun? Can we articulate a non-cynical, non-critical, non-reductive art historical sociology that is also not too encumbered by *homo academicus*? I offer a simple sociology of aesthetic encounter that conceives artworks as age-old containers of social knowledge, of human experience, human values and moral frameworks, and as objects ‘in the museums, where infinity goes up on trial’. My focus here is on paintings because on the historical sociological record images or pictorial culture have existed in all human societies. Retrieving insights from art history, philosophy of art, historical sociology, literary theory, and anthropology, I reflect on how an aesthetically sterile sociology of art might be re-encharmed by cultivating an art historical imagination.

About the speaker

Lilli Riga is a historical sociologist in the School of Social and Political Science at the University of Edinburgh. This talk draws on a forthcoming book, *The Modern Self in Art. An Art-Historical Sociology*.