Head to Toe
(un)covering the human body

October 10-11, 2003

Keynote Lecture
Helen Rodnite Lemay
State University of New York-Stony Brook
October 10 6:00 PM

Symposium:
October 11
9:30 AM-6 PM
Payson Lecture Room
Carpenter Library
Bryn Mawr College

The idea of the body has always been a source of artistic inspiration, and the representation of the body, in image and text, has always generated interest and study among scholars in various fields. Our conference seeks to examine the concept of the body as it is conceived of in both writing and visual image through time.

From the poetry of Sappho to the catacombs of Rome, the bodies of Michelangelo to the criticism of Winckelmann, up to the images of Picasso and the performance art of Karen Finley, how have individuals and society changed over time, and how have perceptions been affected by social class, aesthetics, historicity and contemporary viewpoints?
Abstracts

The Desired Body: The Bride, the Prostitute, and the iunx

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Department of Classics, Bryn Mawr College

Although the bride and prostitute were socially incompatible in ancient Greece, each was desirable because of her body - the bride for her procreative abilities and the prostitute for her availability. Each woman used the same adornments to enhance her desirability. One such tool was the iunx.

The transitional state, temporary for the bride and permanent for the prostitute, makes each of these women desirable in society and is manifested in the symbolism of the iunx. The bride is located within social parameters while the prostitute is on the margins; however, they are both desirable women whose images are depicted visually and textually by men. Each of these women uses the iunx as they do other adornments to increase their beauty. It is not important that two forms of imagery are used: visual and textual, nor that the iunx was even used at all; what is important is the symbolism of the iunx and what that symbol meant - eros/desire - to both the bride and prostitute.

As described by ancient authors, the iunx, magical device, was used by prostitutes to attract or keep lovers. In iconographic evidence specifically epaulia/wedding scenes, brides are depicted holding an iunx. Using the iunx as a starting point, I began to investigate representations of the iunx as a bird, a device, and as mythical personifications. The iconographic evidence of the bird, and the iunx, and its connections to Eros and Aphrodite facilitate the association of the iunx with desire.

Both bride and prostitute answer different needs in society but use the same accoutrements: makeup, perfumes, jewelry and special clothing to adorn their bodies. Both women use the iunx as another decoration in their adornment.

Through research it became apparent that the iunx need not be seen only as a magical device in both textual and iconographic evidence; it evolved to become symbolic for eros/desire. Through this symbolism, the connection between depictions of both bride and prostitute with the iunx became clear.

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The Absent Body in Ivan Albright's Still-lifes of 1931

Robert Cozzolino
Department of Art History, University Wisconsin-Madison

Ivan Albright is best known as a merciless painter of flesh. He made a reputation early with starkly lit, "microscopically-rendered," shockingly corporeal paintings of individuals presented alone in dark rooms. Why then did he suddenly abandon the body in favor of three complex still-lifes in 1931? This paper focuses on the apparent absence of the body in Albright's projects of the 1930s. The most notorious of the trio shows an eight-foot high door bearing a wreath of black lilies, pink roses and one yellow carnation. Albright worked on the canvas for
Despite Albright's prominence in his oeuvre, the painting has attracted little scholarly attention. The Door has been regarded as a morbid meditation on death and regret, firmly in the vanitas tradition. I will argue that the body remains Albright's subject in The Door and his two contemporary still-lifes.

The Door and its immediate predecessors represent Albright's struggle to paint the intangible. In 1931, he shifted away from an excessively corporeal subject to that of the body implied; bodily presence suggested through traces, ghostly iconography and the "place" of the viewer. Albright manipulated the viewer's body before these paintings through subtle but disconcerting shifts in perspective which call the gravity, stability, and meaning of the body into question. One still-life implies that we are suddenly floating, dizzy, above an elaborately arranged arrangement. A second makes us contemplate a surrogate doll lying in state in a large glass case. Before The Door, we are confronted with an uncanny image; space, a portal, a threshold and light rendered with such virtuosity that it seems real. Yet the door buckles, swells, and assumes the mortal qualities of flesh. Mists, streams of vapor, and a wisp of smoke glide over the portal, suggesting spirits, ethereal bodies, and the paranormal. Albright's suppression of the physical body in these paintings reveals much about his spiritual attitude toward "body." He believed in two bodies: one earth-bound and another eternal. I will offer a new interpretation of The Door by looking closely at its content in relationship to Spiritualism, Theosophy and Albright's writing.

**Considering Castration: An Iconology of a Missing Member**

*John Corso*
History of Art and Archaeology, Cornell University

Gender is contingent; the gendered subject requires ongoing constitution to emerge within a symbolic system. Given that formation of the gendered subject is a continual and positional process, the use of one universal model of gender appears monopolistic. Thus, successful present-day discussions of gender must accommodate multivalent models.

The insistence on a range of gender models has enhanced research within contemporary medieval studies. In a broad attack on social construction, Nancy Partner asserts that the sole use of only one explanatory system to describe gender is insufficient (Partner 1993). Since her criticism holds discursive merit, this paper heeds Partner's reproof by situating a model of gender-as-attribute within the existent panoply of gender models. Applied to current scholarship on medieval castration, the gender-as-attribute model exposes the underlying iconographic methodology detectable in various articles on masculinity.

This paper starts with Martin Irvine's investigation of Abelard's remasculinization project (Irvine 1997). Irvine's essay analyzes various attempts by Abelard to remake his severed manhood. Irvine's analysis would profit from the gender-as-attribute model to better articulating Abelard's dependence on iconography in his reconstruction project. The second case centers on Jos Kodeweij's research on erotic pilgrim badges. In the case of sexually explicit badges, Kodeweij acknowledges the role of the attribute (Kodeweij 1999), but he does so using a static semiotic explanation. I would like to complicate this reading by contending that meanings were far more unstable. Like iconography as a whole, attributes benefit from a post-structural application of linguistic "slippage," rather than begin forced into an exact signification. Using both semiotic and performance theories, the paper concludes with a reconsideration of erasure as investigated by Michael Camille.

**The Beauty of Socrates: Unity, Utility, and the Body in Xenophon's Symposium**

*Alexander Alderman*
Department of Classics, Brown University

Xenophon’s Socratic writings (Memorabilia, Oeconomicus, Apology, and Symposium) serve two ends, sometimes at odds with one another. Through his portrayal of Socrates, Xenophon seeks to defend the philosopher from charges of antisocial or anti-Athenian opinions and behavior. Yet, he also uses Socrates’ famous gadfly nature to bring to light the shortcomings of Athenian beliefs and practices.

Both of these motives are clear from passages in the Memorabilia. We can see the first in action, for example, when Xenophon vehemently denies that Socrates and his pupil had masochistic tendencies resulting from their disdain for the human body. After some detailed analysis, we can see the second motive at work when Socrates chastises a member of the Athenian aristocracy; this nobleman has become exhausted after a short journey while his luggage-bearing slaveremains resilient. In his criticism, Socrates brings Greek slavery ideology, which claims that masters deserve to rule slaves because they have greater self-control, into conflict with Greek work ideology, which dictates that utility is only achieved through adversity.

In the Symposium, Xenophon takes that work ideology to task by exploring salutary forms of inactivity and play-the first line of the work is a sort of apology for the subject matter. Watching a pair of young dancers, Socrates argues that dancing beautifies the body by revealing its unity in motion; the jester Philpipances in response and shows that motion reveals his body’s disunity and ugliness. Xenophon then develops a critique of the concept of beauty and furthermore of Greek beauty ideology. The action of the work culminates in a beauty contest between the notoriously ugly Socrates and the young Critoboulus in which Socrates tries to equate beauty with goodness and thereby with utility and to argue that his bug eyes, snub nose, and oversized mouth all are entitled to claims of redefined beauty.

Xenophon’s Socrates is much more concerned with bodily matters than Plato’s, and Xenophon seems to recognize this and even make light of it. After Antisthenes praises Socrates for his well-trained appetites, Socrates playfully chastises Antisthenes, “You love me for my body, not my mind.”

"The Poorest and Thinnest of Men:"

Virtue and the Mortal Body in the Representations of Philip II

Alejandra Giménez-Berger
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In his Elogio de las esclarecidas virtudes del rey Felipe II (Eulogy of the noble virtues of the king Philip II), published in 1604, Cristóbal Pérez de Herrera introduces a series of moralizing descriptions of the dying king’s body. Alluding in part to the Medieval tradition of the double-body of the king, Herrera identifies the royal body, signified by heraldic dress and external accoutrements, as the locus of virtues long recognized as hallmarks of Habsburg and Iberian identity. Startling, however, is Herrera’s praise of those virtues which, revealed by the undressing of the king, reside in Philip’s natural body.

What are the intellectual discourses that enable Herrera to ascribe virtue and through it, power to a physical body ravaged by illness and time? What are the liminal bodies/spaces through which royal identity is transferred when the body decays? In this paper, I address a number of issues that stem from an anthropological and art-historical reading of the natural and the political bodies of the kings as informed by the rhetoric of this most popular eulogy. A necessary corollary to this reading is the anastomosis of individual character and rising national sentiments that occurs in autonomous Habsburg portraiture. In the painted portrait, identity is represented by the strict control of the natural body (through its gestures, movements, physiognomy, demeanor) or by its erasure (through its encasement by heraldic dress). Philip’s self-fashioning in portraiture, sustained by international dialogues on the behavior of the ideal courtier, elucidates the success of Herrera’s rhetoric.
Modes of Resistance: Reconceptualizing the Black Body in Art from 1970 to Present

Soraya Murray and Derek Conrad Murray
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From Black Power to the Feminist Movement to Post-Black, the Black body continues to be utilized both metaphorically and allegorically as a tool of radical resistance. Societal fixation on the Black body illuminates the black/white binary, which in turn reinforces the notion of an interdependent historical existence. Both fetishized and rebuked, the Black body exists in a complex fear/fantasy matrix, as it bears the brunt of society’s ugliest pathologies. Utilizing the Black body as a focal point (as radical Sameness, not as radical Otherness) this paper will explore new and divergent modes of historiography, with the intention of engendering an equivalence.

Traditionally employing the rhetoric of Otherness and marginalization, Black art discourse (in its resistance to mainstream neglect and erasure) has in many respects performed difference, locking Black artistic production into a separate history. Similarly, Eurocentric historicizing efforts have continuously ignored African and African-American modernist contributions, creating a skewed, and altogether sterilized vision. Eurocentric and diaspora aesthetics alike exist as divergent, counter-histories that reinforce and maintain the illusion of inherent difference. Thus, conventional art historical research forms a constellation of sovereign histories founded on essentialism and cultural purity. We [art historians, critics, curators] perform and maintain ritual separation: ritual classification and hierarchy. Considering the effects of postcolonial and postmodern paradigms in contemporary cultural discourses, this paper re-examines the Black body within art history as resistant to social and historical division: divisions that create inadequate and incomplete research on both sides of the mythical racial divide.

Sweeping Sacred Floors with Her Hair: Polybius IX.6 and the Republican Woman’s Crinis Passus

Jennifer Eyl
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In describing the events of 211 BCE during the second Punic War, Polybius (IX.6) tells us that the women of Rome swept the temple pavements with their [unbound/disheveled] hair, beseeching the gods to protect the city from Hannibal, whose intractable army was suddenly camped five miles away. Polybius indicates that this supplication ritual, mentioned also in Livy (III.7 and XXVI.7), was reserved only for the most severe moments of civic crisis. This paper examines the status of Republican women’s disheveled hair (crinis passus) as a powerful symbol and vehicle for ritual liminality, as well as a superior tool for mediation between the human and divine realms.

The approach of this paper is twofold. After examining artistic and literary images of Republican women’s bound vs. unbound hair, I first argue that bound female hair stood as a societal standard—a symbol in Republican Rome of normalcy and female compliance to ordered culture. With ritually unbound hair, however, women transgressed this cultural boundary and placed themselves at the threshold between social order and chaos, between the tangible and intangible. A brief analysis of the language of disheveledness elucidates the association between a woman’s unbound hair and the threat of unstructured abandon. Secondly I argue that, while in this liminal state, a woman’s unbound hair improved her capacity for mediation by untying/unblocking her lines of communication. The untying of knots to reinforce prayer is seen elsewhere in Roman ritual.
Scholarship on Roman women's hair has often focused on the elaborately coiffured styles of the Imperial period. This paper serves to deepen our understanding of how women's hair was perceived and treated in Republican Rome. The paper also attempts to further our understanding of how hair was used ritually to mark a woman in the anomalous "betwixt and between" state and to increase the urgency and clarity of Republican prayers.

Maya Masquerade: Bodily Inscription from Classic to Colonial

Fernando Rochaix
Department of Art History, University of Texas at Austin

The Maya of México were the first known people of the New World to keep historical records. From 50 BCE, until the Spanish conquest in the 16th century, they avidly inscribed texts on every man-made surface around them. Two Spanish chroniclers from the colonial period report that glyphic inscriptions even covered the body through the practice of tattooing, scarification, and body painting. While these testaments are our best-written accounts for the varieties of Maya body markings, they nonetheless contain contradictory elements and raise problems on colonial readership.

Previous scholarship has often ignored or left ancient Mayan body inscriptions unexplained. This paper is an effort to interpret the tattoos and scars generated in colonial descriptions, using helpful examples found in the Classic art of the pre-conquest Maya. Body art can be found on human and non-human characters in various monumental reliefs, ceramic vessels, and personal artifacts. Some scholars propose that imperial Mayan ritual practice, preformed exclusively by elite personages, alone explain the abundant use of bodily inscriptions found in art artifacts. I instead suggest a model for the social construction of the human body in ancient Maya life, based on the form of inscriptions left on body and the communal process of reading these images by a larger demographic.

For the ancient Maya tattoos, scarification, and body paint were community markers, references to religious belief extending beyond imperial elites to every level of Mayan society. At the core of my argument is the centrality of anthropocentrism and animism in Maya religion, and how this shaped image making in the Classic period. For the ancient Maya the human body was a vessel for animating energies and entities. Writing on skin drew attention to the presence of flesh, to a sacred container, one that simultaneously enclosed a sacred human body, and equally belonged to an aesthetic dialog found in Mayan art practices. Animism is therefore represented, through the interchangeable play of new body parts and new sheaths of skin. The skin, and its relation to the body, can thus be understood as a nexus of public, private, and aesthetic relations.

Modern Primitive Body Art of the Early 1990s: Performativity, Ritual and Communitas

Ketti Neil
Department of History of Art, Bryn Mawr College

This discussion focuses on Modern Primitive body art performances and happenings that took place in non-traditional venues in the early 1990s, in which connections between bloodletting and ritual transformation were explicitly emphasized. The development of this type of "extreme performance" has been interpreted by Rose Lee Goldberg to reflect the artistic solidarity of marginal cultures against the conservative backlash of that period. My focus here is to investigate examples of these performances with regard to scholarly theories about "performativity," and to offer some insights into ritual notions of communitas and subcultural bonding.

An analysis of three different performances -- Ron Athey's Martyrs and Saints, Jesse G.'s...
Flesh Hook Suspension, and Ball Dances by Black Leather Wings — will be used to illustrate varying degrees of separation and interaction between the artists and their audiences. The performers' physical enactments of actual blood rites will be examined in relation to ideas about subjectivity, realness and temporality; the blurring of artistic boundaries; and the issue of audience involvement and consent. What happens when the body of the performance itself is creatively perforated, pushed or extended? How does this artistic modification create a liminal shift in perception, linking performers and audience in the shared flow of communitas? An investigation of these and other questions will play into my exploration of Modern Primitive body art as a form of ritualized spectacle that was generative as well as reflective of subcultural solidarity.

The Ecclesiastical History III.5-7: Bodies of Punishment and Worship

Peter Parisi
Department of Classics, Rutgers University

Throughout the Ecclesiastical History, Eusebius develops the notion that ascesis most truly express the Christian's love of Christ. Furthermore, because Eusebius associates Christ—who is the Logos or Divine Word—with true wisdom, the love of Christ is also, literally, philosophy, the love of wisdom. While Eusebius' predecessors had already made this association, he develops it into the paradigm of Christian worship.

At the same time, Eusebius has committed himself to narrating "the consequences which arose for the Jewish nation as a result of their betrayal of Jesus" (1.1). A major part of the 'punishment' he describes is starvation. The precedent for this punishment is given in Book I, where the historian portrays starvation as the most painful result of the Fall (1.2). Just as Moses restored order to the world and ended the Jews' suffering by bringing the divine law, Christ, as the divine law personified, came to the world to end man's separation from God. In Eusebius' account, the crucifixion of Christ and subsequent martyrdoms of early Christian leaders represents a second rejection of God by the Jews.

E.H III.5-7, a major episode in this narrative thread, reveals much about Eusebius' method. In this passage, he combines historical and scriptural sources to portray the destruction of Jerusalem as the fulfillment of a divine plan. In constructing this polemic he is helped by his source Josephus' own attribution of "the fall of the Jewish state" to the death of a single, just man: the high priest Ananus (Bellum Iudaeum, III.318--22). Throughout his description of the punishment of the Jews, Eusebius, by treating the martyrs as analogs of Christ, reinforces the idea that love of God is best expressed by ascetic practice. The story of the rich woman who is driven by famine to cook and eat her child unites the two themes of ascetic philosophy and the punishment of the Jews.

Focusing on III.5-7, this paper examines Eusebius' notion of the body as the locus of both worship and punishment.

An Afternoon at the Morgue: The Pleasure of Pain

Elizabeth Carlson
Department of Art History, University of Minnesota

The morgue in Paris was open to the public from 1804 to 1907 and attracted thousands of visitors daily—men and women, upper and lower classes, Parisians and tourists. This paper does not intend to recount the history of the public morgue, its contribution to medical innovations, or the individual accounts of bodies exhibited. This paper, instead, will address the theatricality of the morgue both in terms of the display of the corpse and the spectators' relationship to that display. Using archival accounts and illustrations of the Paris morgue, I will attempt to answer the question, "why did the morgue attract such a huge and varied
and examine the strange coupling of entertainment and horror within it. By claiming the morgue as performative, we can more clearly see how the act of viewing dead bodies became a theatrical spectacle. Not only did the morgue employ props such as velvet curtains to enhance the display of corpses, but also sold souvenirs such as miniature replicas of the trunk where a young girl was found dead.

The paper further argues that masochism was inherent in the spectacle and the attraction of the public morgue. Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's novel Venus in Furs (1870), published at the height of the morgue's popularity imitates not only the experience of pleasure and pain, but also the theatricality and the fascination with the white cold body. Sacher-Masoch's novel lays out three specific components to masochism: suspense, fantasy and fetishism. Like Severin in Sacher-Masoch's novel, the spectators at the morgue found pleasure in the suspense, tension, and anxiety of the unknown. Each day spectators flocked to the public morgue to see literal illustrations of newspaper accounts. The viewers fantasized about the story behind the corpses exhibited in individual cells. With velvet drapery and the application of make-up, the morgue fetishized and aestheticized these statuesque bodies, as they were exhibited behind glass, but never touched. Within the theatrical environment of fantasy, suspense and discipline, the public became not simply viewers of corpses, but actors in this masochistic performance, taking pleasure in the horrors of the morgue.
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Event Information

Accommodations
Several hotels in the area of Bryn Mawr College are listed below, for those participants who need accommodations. The graduate students of Bryn Mawr College will be happy to offer transportation to and from the hotels which are not close to public transportation.

Philadelphia Marriott West
111 Crawford Avenue
West Conshohocken, PA 19428
610.941.5600
$95-$130 per night
a 7 minute drive from campus

The Radnor Hotel
591 East Lancaster Avenue
St. Davids, PA 19087
610.688.5800
$99-$119 per night
a 10 minute drive from campus
walking distance to restaurants

Wayne Hotel
139 East Lancaster Avenue
Wayne, PA 19087
$139 per night with local college discount
a 15 minute drive from campus
walking distance to shopping, movies, and restaurants

We may also be able to arrange a home-stay with a graduate student for both nights (Friday and Saturday). You will need to be in contact with him/her in advance of your arrival. If you would like to have a home-stay arranged, please email Kristen Masters at kmasters@brynmawr.edu.

Registration
Conference registration will take place at Carpenter Library (see attached map) between 2 and 5pmon Friday, October 10th.

AV Considerations
Payson Lecture Room is equipped with dual slide projectors, microphone, and a podium. You will have use of the dual slide projectors. Please bring your slides already loaded into slide trays and labeled "Left" and "Right". Clearly indicate to whom the slides belong, to avoid confusion during the lectures. During your talk, you will advance your own slides and have access to a laser pointer. We will, however, have AV personnel on call to load your slides and troubleshoot. There will be someone to receive your slide trays before the conference begins on the morning of October 11th.

Dinner Reservations for Saturday Evening
Immediate following the conference on Saturday, October 11th, there will be a dinner with all of the participants of the conference, Bryn Mawr faculty, graduate students and guests.
Please RSVP by October 1st to Victoria Tsoukala at victsoukala@hotmail.com. We are asking all participants to contribute $20.00 each for a spouse and/or other guest. The checks are due at the time of the registration.

**Directions to Bryn Mawr College**

Detailed maps and directions to the college can be found in at [http://www.brynmawr.edu/about/map_directions_directions.shtml](http://www.brynmawr.edu/about/map_directions_directions.shtml)
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If we have left out any information that you might require, or you have additional inquiries, please contact:

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