Art, the Sacred, and the Profane
5th Annual Concordia Undergraduate Art History Conference

Art, the Sacred, and the Profane

February 12th and 13th
Concordia University, York Amphitheatre
1515, Ste. Catherine W.

We would like to acknowledge that Concordia University is on the traditional territory of the Kanien'kehá:ka (Ga-niyen-gé-haa-ga), a place that has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst nations. The Concordia Undergraduate Journal of Art History recognizes and respects the Kanien'kehá:ka (Ga-niyen-gé-haa-ga) as the traditional custodians of the lands and waters on which we meet today.
About the Conference

The Annual Concordia Undergraduate Art History Conference, coordinated by students in the Department of Art History, provides a unique environment for students to share their own research with the Concordia community and with participants from universities across Canada. Entering its fifth year, the conference is for the third time being organized under the auspices of the Concordia Undergraduate Journal of Art History, a peer-reviewed publication that is entering its twelfth year. In its past four iterations, the conference has allowed students to gain valuable experience presenting their work in front of their peers – an experience that is invaluable to any student considering further education at the graduate level.

The theme for this year’s conference is Art, the Sacred, and the Profane. Students from local universities will present papers that address the multi-faceted and complex relationship between the religious, the sacrilegious, and art. The variety of topics, approaches, and methodologies that make up the program you now hold in your hands is witness to the cutting-edge research that takes place at the undergraduate level.

This year, in collaboration with the Art Matters Festival, we have invited practicing student artists to present their work as it engages with ideas of sacredness and profanity.

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to our sponsors. This year’s conference would not have been possible without the support offered by the Department of Art History, the Concordia Council on Student Life, the Fine Arts Student Alliance, and the Concordia Student Union.

For more information about the conference and the CUJAH, please visit cujah.org
Professional Panel

Friday, February 12th 2016
6:00 PM
Room EV-1.615

Engaging the Sacred and the Profane in Art: New Directions and Interpretations

Moderator: Braden Scott
In his widely influential essay “The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology,” anthropologist Alfred Gell proposes that anthropological insight into the role of art in human societies has been inhibited by a sacred reverence toward art in contemporary Western society. By rejecting the notion that aesthetic beauty defines art, and adopting an approach he calls “methodological philistinism,” Gell explores how works of art exist in the interstices of magic and technology, possessing the power to effect change as social agents would. The sacred art of Early Modern Europe provides fertile ground to explore Gell’s thesis, especially as it was in this period that the modern Western concept of art emerged from the realm of sacred images as a distinct category. In my presentation I will explore some of the ways that we can study the sacred art of the Renaissance as an enchanted technology that enfolds “magic” with scientific technology.

Steven Stowell is a historian of late medieval and Early Modern Italian art, whose research focuses on the devotional experiences and ritual uses of Renaissance art, the intersections between art and language, and the relationship between art and cultural discourses on gender and sexuality. In his recent book, The Spiritual Language of Art: Medieval Christian Themes in Writings on Art of the Italian Renaissance, Dr. Stowell investigates the relationships between art, literature, and devotional responses to images.
The angel was a recurrent motif on hundreds of maps made in seventeenth-century Amsterdam, whose commercial mapmaking dominated the international market. This paper explores how Amsterdam mapmakers cleverly adapted pervasive conventions of cartographic angelology as a means to explore the expanding possibilities as well as the limitations of their own practice. The angels that decorate the edges of so many maps are more than ornamental: as we'll see, they do a lot of work. Intermediaries between heaven and earth, the angels simultaneously convey glorious truths and minister to the mundane. The first part of this talk assesses how the peculiar pictorial partnership between cartographers and their guardian spirits served to delineate cartography as inspired and inspirited work. I then interrogate the implications of this spiritual service by tracing the angels’ descent as their downfall, showing how they were enlisted—and ultimately enslaved—by their earthly ministry to the global mapping enterprises of the Dutch trading empire.

Angela Vanhaelen is Associate Professor in the Department of Art History and Communication Studies at McGill University. She is the author of The Wake of Iconoclasm: Painting the Church in the Dutch Republic, which was awarded the 2013 Roland H. Bainton book prize. She is currently a co-investigator in the international, multi-disciplinary research collaboration, “Early Modern Conversions: Religions, Cultures and Cognitive Ecologies”.

Dr. Angela Vanhaelen

Mapping Angels
“Sacredness is not exclusive to religious buildings. Sacredness is not only derived from content or use—it can also be attained by the very ‘spirituality’ of the ‘matter.’”

So begins the programmatic article “Design for Worship,” published in Canadian Architect in 1968. Its author, architect and artist Étienne-Joseph Gaboury, brings forth a series of reflections on the history of Christianity and proposes a range of architectural solutions to answer the liturgical changes outlined by the Second Vatican Council. Gaboury’s architectural practice is deeply intertwined with the events of Vatican II: in 1962, just as he began work on a series of modernist churches in Western Canada (including his now famous Précieux-Sang parish church in St. Boniface, Manitoba), Pope John XXIII presided over the opening of the ecumenical Council that was supposed to bring about aggiornamento, a formidable “bringing up to date” of the Church’s teachings and sacraments to meet the challenges of the postwar world. In this presentation, I wish to focus on Gaboury’s interest in the links between spirituality and materiality via his concept of architecture as a “transcendence of matter.” How does this metamorphic concept blur the boundaries between the sacred and the profane, as well as between architecture and art? In what ways did Gaboury seek inspiration from nature and from Christian traditions in his organic designs and how does his choices reflect the ongoing reforms within Catholicism at this point time? Special attention will be devoted to Gaboury’s stained glass windows in his early church projects.

Nicola Pezolet is Assistant Professor of architecture and art history at Concordia University. His research is focused on the creation of aesthetic environments and atmospheres, both secular and religious, throughout the 19th and 20th century. He has a special interest in the role of polychromy, mural painting, stained glass, and public sculpture in relations to modern architecture. His first book focuses on the Reconstruction and the debates on the synthesis of the arts in postwar France (forthcoming in the Ashgate Studies in Architecture series). His second project explores the links between Catholic liturgy, modern architecture and architectural publishing in twentieth century Canada.
Dr. Jason Crawford

The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence: Moral Geographies in Performance

The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence are a 21st century order of queer nuns who originated in San Francisco in 1979. Their members are drawn from all walks of life and faith and are organized into houses all over the world. They are often very recognizable in public spaces by their use of clown-white face makeup, drag, and their sexy and spiritual performance rituals. Ideas of the sacred and the profane are important typologies for art, anthropology or sociology, but when thinking of LGBT and queer politics and community, the line between the sacred and the profane can often be a matter of life and death. This talk, based on over fifteen years of observations of the Order of Indulgence, notes how the Sisters queer the line between the sacred and profane, challenging moral geographies that seek to obliterate both queerness and spirituality from the public sphere. To make this point, I focus analysis and reflection on one event that I observed in San Francisco’s gay neighbourhood, the Castro. On a night when a group of Christian fundamentalists gathered to protest against homosexuality, the Sisters rallied and performed a ritual “die-in” that, when considered geographically, challenges our ideas about religion in public space as well as taken-for-granted notions that the sacred and the profane are antithetical to one another.

Jason B. Crawford holds a PhD in interdisciplinary humanities from Concordia University and teaches courses on gender, sexuality and social activism at Champlain College, Saint-Lambert. His research and writing focus on the history and geography of queer culture and the relation between space and performance. He is currently working on a paper on the renovation of Cabot Square in Montreal as well as a collaborative research project on the spatial history of Montreal’s gay pride parades.
Student Panels

Saturday, February 13th 2016

10:00 AM: Coffee and opening remarks

Room EV-1.605
The Golden Temple’s Expansion: Recreating and Redefining the Sikh Structure
Taran Jeet Singh

The Golden Temple is the preeminent shrine of Sikhism and serves as its spiritual and political centre. Since its inception in 1601, the Golden Temple has crystalized Sikh identity, philosophy and ritual practices. After Indian Independence in 1947, the complex of the Golden Temple was expanded under the watch of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), and much of the structure, including the parikrama (circumambulatory path), and inner and surrounding buildings were completely redrawn. There is little scholarship that focuses on understanding the significance and consequences of this reconstruction. This paper will examine the changes to the architecture, the art and the decorum (norms of behaviour) of the Golden Temple during this period. I will argue that these alterations reflect a shift in Sikh identity as desired by the proponents of the Rehat Maryada, the Sikh code of conduct adopted in its final form in 1945 by the SGPC. In examining the structure and art of the temple, this paper will explore the following questions: how has the temple been altered; what features were kept and which were omitted; what was added and what has been recreated? Historically, this temple has undergone several reconstructions—some due to armed destruction, some for expansion or glorification—all while maintaining its holiness. Through examining the connection between architecture and doctrine in the Sikh tradition, this paper will touch on many of the central themes of the conference: such as the creation and reclaiming of sacred space, orthodoxy and architecture and issues of faith as represented through art.
Museums as Sacred Spaces and Patriarchal Places: Elucidating dogma within the Montreal Museum of Fine Art

Alyse Tunnell

My intention for this essay is to explore the museum from three perspectives: Firstly, I am interested specifically in how the dogma and architecture of the museum spaces mirrors sacred space and the politics therein. Secondly, I am interested in the gendered nature of public art museums and the insidious patriarchal constructs that manifest in myriad aspects of the museum. Thirdly, in response to the aforementioned statements, I will look to see how aspects of the museum affect the museum-goer’s interaction with the space. I will use the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA) as a case study to investigate both the museum’s architectural qualities as well as to consider the curatorial aspects such as the presentation of and discourse surrounding works of art. I will bolster my theoretical exploration of museum space by using specific examples from the MMFA. Exhibitions such as Sacred Africa (2013/14) will act as points of reference. As well, I will consider the MMFA’s pavilions as individual parts and as a somewhat incohesive whole to discuss how numerous physical aspects of the museum reference sacred spaces and maintain patriarchal values. I will use concrete examples, combined with photographs of the space, to indicate how these architectural aspects function within the MMFA. I have consulted multiple academic texts, including Hilde Heine and Carol Duncan to garner an understanding of current scholarship pertaining to the physical and ideological space of the museum. As well, I have read articles that approach museums from a business and marketing perspective which consider how the spaces functions for visitors. In addition, I have read texts which relate specifically the gendered nature of both the museum’s content as well as the patriarchal social structures. This will result in a thorough explanation of how the MMFA uses architecture, discourse, and space to create and maintain the dogma of the art museum.
Démarche:
En envisagent la performance en art comme un rituel, nous sommes en face de deux discours ; celui qui est dit, et celui qui émane de l’expérience de ce même discours. L’artiste vise à repositionner le spectateur en mettant en avant des éléments d’étrangeté au contexte de monstration. Elle propose un regard analytique sur la réception d’un savoir comme une expérience singulière, en mettant en place des situations proches de celles du jeu social.

Sophie Auger vit et travaille à Montréal. En tant qu’artiste, elle élabore des œuvres qui établissent des hiérarchies dans les sources du savoir. À travers des techniques d’impression, elle reproduit et altère des outils pédagogiques tels que des tableaux mathématiques et des livres d’histoire de l’art. Elle tente de créer des confusions entre différents niveaux d’un système hiérarchique.

Artist Talk
Sophie Auger
The god Pan, perhaps one of the most famous deities of the Greek pantheon, is also the one who ‘made’ the transition into the Christian belief system, albeit not in the way he was perceived by the ancient Greeks. Pan’s place in Greek mythology was meant to fill in the role of the harmless trickster, frolicker, seducer, guide to the shepherds, and lastly his most iconic ‘role’ as the god of woods and forests. Described as somewhat of a recluse and wild god Pan’s believers tended to worship the Satyr in cave like shrines, usually offering him wine and fruit. In the Roman mythology Pan’s name was changed into Faunus, while in Christianity Pan’s figure was the foundation on which the Devil’s image was built upon. Lilith, according to Jewish folklore, Adam’s first ‘wife’ embodies sexual freedom, terror, and female liberation, the woman created from the same earth as the first man is now often associated with feminism and the emancipation of females. Despite the fact that Lilith was never mentioned in the Old Testament, her persona has gained much weight in religious traditions and myth. While Eve stands for suppressed sexuality and proper womanhood, Lilith stands for freedom and the taboo, not only personifying the wicked woman, but also by embodying that which men tend to ‘fear’. Mephistopheles was a demon character making his appearance for the first time in German folklore, the most notorious guest appearance probably being in the titular tale of Doctor Faust. Since then the demon has made appearances in Japanese animation, other tales and legends as well been depicted in the arts in the form of anything from drawings to statues. The denominator for these three characters is their ambiguous interpretations, fall-from-grace, and popularity in religious texts, art depictions, and pop-culture representations. The fascinating shift from religious imagery to various artistic representations took these characters from the sphere of the holy (deity, the First Mother, fallen angel) into the realm of the profane to serve as a cautionary tale against the base human desires. In my essay I will explore the shifts in historical and cultural
representation that is the result of shifts in perspective over the years of cultural human evolution and their representation in the artistic realm (books, film, paintings, statues, etc).

Mixing Bowls and Ancient LoLs: The fusion of the Sacred and Profane in Greek Pottery and Theatre
Aaron Golish

First posited by French sociologist Emile Durkheim, the sacred profane dichotomy is a dangerous binary that imposes an Abrahamic perspective religious practices. I propose to use the figure of the Greek satyr to deconstruct this dichotomy, using the depiction of satyrs in ancient pottery and funerary monuments will show how the satyr represents the seamless fusion of sacred and profane. Half-beast, half-human the satyr were the debauched followers of Dionysus at once divine and sub-human. The above quote, from the largely forgotten epicurean philosopher Ion of Chios, gives us a terse but important glimpse into the Greek aesthetic and ritual sensibility. Ion refers to the Greek practice of presenting three tragedies followed by a satyr-play as part of their Dionysian festival. The satyr-play is a lost genre of Greek drama that featured a chorus of satyrs, who drunkenly and licentiously lampooned the preceding tragedies. Though once central to Greek thought and aesthetic these minor fertility deities are all but lost to us except in pottery and funerary monuments where they survive in curiously abundant ubiquity. Perhaps most fascinating about the depiction of satyrs in these contexts is how often they are presented opposite scenes of sacred godly processions or scenes of mourning, often mirroring the seriousness of the other. Why would the Greeks place Satyrs parallel to images of both the dead and the deathless immortals? Why such a paradoxical mixture? Analysing the depictions of Satyr on Greek krators (large vessels used for mixing wine), I will show how the satyrs literally represent the mixing of sacred and profane, death and deathlessness. In fact I propose the krator paintings are designed specifically to instruct the user on how to properly mix the proportions of water and wine (3:1), just like the proper portion of tragedy to satyr-play in the theatre (3:1). Revealing a very Greek conception of the sacred, which must always have a little satyr mixed in it.
Art is a by-product of culture continuously changing in correlation with the evolution of society. The psychology of death entered European art in the religious illuminated manuscripts of the Middle Ages and continued into the ‘Modern Era’ of creative expression. The history of ‘death depictions’ depends on a culture’s proximity to mass deaths and the belief system through which they make sense of them. As a culture becomes distanced in time from these atrocities, their understanding and artistic rendering of death changes. In this paper I will focus on the ‘Death and the Maiden’ motif, observing the evolution from its inception and popular climax in sixteenth-century Germany to its reinvention in the nineteenth-century, exhibited in the works of Hans Baldung Grien (1480-1545) and Pierre-Eugène-Émile Hébert (1828-1893) respectively. My research fits well within the scope of Art, the Sacred and the Profane, while adding multidisciplinary scientific-methodology to analyze the psychology of a culture though the ‘art window.’ By the time of Hébert, the one in every two Europeans who had died from the Plague had long been forgotten by name and face, but left a trace of sorrow and anonymous remembrance that had passed down through the generations; they combatted the Plague immunogenically, only to be remembered and conserved in romanticized artworks and tiny decorative sculptures. By comparing Grien’s artwork to Hébert’s, Death and the Maiden (1517) and Et toujours! Et jamais! (1863), the ‘Death and the Maiden’ motif can be traced back to the Middle Ages as an artistic manifestation and coping mechanism for the trauma of the Black Death, which plagued Europe until the fourteenth century, as well as its metamorphosis into a commemorative and interpretive romantic symbol in the nineteenth century.
Louis-Charles Dionne is a Monteregian artist who approaches art rather as a research or thinking process allowing him to examine and deepen various concerns often related to his personal position towards his French-Quebecker cultural identity. Tradition and cultural heritage are predominant in Dionne’s work; what precisely explains his strong interest for popular art, traditional crafts and especially religious art; questioning the place and remainings of Catholic Church and religion in current Quebec culture and society. He approaches this Catholic heritage as a powerful marker of Quebec culture, which is still linked to collective imagination, aiming to maintain and feed this living heritage with new energies. By decontextualizing such connoted cultural signs or objects, Dionne draws on common sense, experience and collective imagination on many angles. Therefore using Catholic iconography for its evocative capacities as a meditation tool also allows him to approach it in a playful way; which sometimes gives a humorous aspect to his work.

Sometimes, this reflection on religion as a construct more so than a belief becomes deeply ironical. In fact, Dionne does not venerate religious doctrine but valorize it, again, as part of cultural identity and heritage. He tends to look critically at it as a dominating force in Quebec cultural life; alluding to the larger scope of the conflict between reason and belief.

Lunch
1:05 - 2:00/2:15
Lunch provided by CUJAH for speakers, volunteers, and members of the Department.
The body as a site of sexual and gender self-performance degrades itself in the seemingly profane ritual of sexual activity. Discourses of sexual propriety and heteronormativity have condemned the pleasure seeking body. Prominent theories such as Foucauldian discourse analysis and Psychoanalysis are useful tools for dismantling orthodox views of the body and understanding the subconscious cultural underpinnings that regulate bodily activities. However, Queer theory and the discourse of heteronormativity is left out of psychoanalytic analysis leaving scholars to try to redress discrepancies between the theoretical and the cultural. Psychoanalysis as it is understood and employed leaves out desires diverse from compulsory heterosexuality, does not have theoretical room for biological experiences outside of the gender-sex binary, and positions heterosexuality as the normative sexual subconscious as the peak of sexual evolution. Through an anti-oppressive and trans* positive framework I explore the self and other sexually using four separate works of contemporary art to queer common psychoanalytic theories. Using these art works as case studies to expand the field of psychoanalysis by dismantling our understanding of concepts such as the uncanny, sexual evolution, the gaze, and the phallus. The sexual body represented in art has broken free from fetishized, regulated, and constructed ideal forms. Instead the real, imperfect body enters contemporary art through media like performance art, polychrome sculpture, hyperrealist sculpture, and photo collage. Psychoanalytic understandings of the sexual self and the sexual other need to be broadened beyond heteronormativity.
Je propose un bilan de la relation entretenue entre l’art, le sacré et le profane dans l’histoire de l’art et plus particulièrement, dans la peinture de la première moitié du 20e siècle. Pour illustrer mon propos, je propose de faire un parallèle entre deux artistes de cette époque, Emily Carr et Paul Klee, afin de mettre en lumière le passage de la production de scènes à caractère sacré vers des images séculaires et ce, à un niveau euraméricain. Tout au long des 19e et 20e siècles, de nombreux dogmes et doctrines se sont développés, parmi lesquels le transcendantalisme de Ralph Waldo Emerson et la théosophie d’Helena Petrovna Blavatsky. Ces croyances ont alimenté les productions picturales et littéraires de nombreux artistes qui auront cherché une spiritualité alternative (Galbreath 1986 : 388-389). Elles sont particulièrement intéressantes dans la mise en relation de Carr et Klee justement parce qu’elles ont eu une certaine influence sur eux. Dans le cas du transcendantalisme, il s’agissait de retrouver sa « relation originelle » avec l’univers grâce à une observation de la nature (Emerson 1990 : 3). De façon analogue, les préceptes théosophiques stipulent que c’est à travers un examen dénué d’intellect de la nature permettait de comprendre sa place entre le celle-ci et le divin (Davis 1992 : 110). Pour continuer, les deux artistes que j’ai choisi de mettre en parallèle souhaitaient pas adhérer à un dogme ou à une religion fixe : ils ont ainsi créé leur propre réseau spirituel, influencé par la théosophie et le transcendantalisme. Pour Klee, cela voulait dire que le monde matériel n’était qu’une des facettes du réel accessible de façon phénoménologique à l’homme et ses oeuvres servaient donc de passage entre le réel et l’indicible (Werkmeister 1989 : 215). Pour Carr, la nature était une façon d’observer Dieu et de se connecter avec lui : ses oeuvres de maturité se font l’expression d’un tel sentiment (Shadbolt 1978 : 70-78). Il est possible de voir que pour ces deux peintres, la limite entre sacré et profane était plutôt mince. C’est à partir de sujets profanes, des paysages ou des représentations abstraites de la nature, que l’artiste bernois et la peintre canadienne sont parvenus à représenter leur idée du sacré. De cette manière, la figure de l’arbre a été grandement importante chez Klee et Carr : elle permettait d’illustrer leur idée d’énergie divine, du besoin de transcendance de l’esprit humain et leur conception de l’art (Aichele 2006 : 172 ; Linsley 1996 : 91). Enfin, pour ces deux artistes, le profane, le sacré, et l’art ne se distinguent plus : c’est précisément cette relation que j’exposerai ici.
Dissidents of the Empire: A discussion of colonialist and art historical themes in the work of Paul Gauguin and Yinka Shonibare MBE.

Camille Devaux

Through a comparison of Gauguin’s Moisson en Bretagne (1889) and Shonibare’s The Swing (After Fragonard) (2001), this paper attempts to deconstruct the notion of primitivism seen in both the contemporary practice of an artist whose practice is imprinted by its cultural heritage as both Nigerian and British, and in modernist painting practices. In light of the art critic Brian O’Doherty’s theories on the gallery space, a formal and iconological analysis of the art pieces is done in this text. It explores how the medium is able to convey a politicized message about colonialism, history, and art’s own past. Gauguin’s work, in using flatness, renounces the past ideas of imitative painting, in which canvases were windows into a scene. In stark contrast, Shonibare will bring back a realistic approach to question the appropriative occidental culture, which has been for so long the norm and the standard in arts. In sums, this comparative analysis of two artworks, whose ideologies clash and argue, hopes to unpack how postmodern methods of art-making reflect on and exploit its past to better critique it. In this instance, Shonibare uses the transformed meaning of wax printed textiles, known to both West-African and Indonesian cultures through the intervention of Dutch colonialism, to create a discussion with modern culture and Modernism. By categorizing and glorifying these cultures, so called “exotic” and pure, as the art critic Hal Foster explains in The Return of the Real(1996), it was ostracized by modern artists. They created this ideal ethos of a culture that was not theirs, in which their alterity from the said “brutal and industrial” world that Europe had become could find peace. This detachment which the modernists had with their respective culture was impacted by colonialist discoveries of the time. However, it also influenced the way contact zones from 19th century global cultural exchanges worked in sustaining the stigma of a primitive other, which was not worth giving credit to via cultural appropriation. In sums, this duality which has worked itself in this text gives a voice to two artists whose views differ greatly.
Eric Paulino is an American Painter born in 1991, raised in Miami, Florida. Currently in his final year of his BFA in Painting & Drawing. He comes from and immigrant family from the Dominican Republic, which has been a major interest in certain aspects of his work. The work is broad, relating to a variety of historical, social, cultural and personal issues. He is especially interested in transforming images from a variety of times and movements in art, reinterpreting them into new characters and scenes. Nature itself is cyclical and we are the conscious changing part of it, our ideas in art and imagery morph and grow but we are following an undeniable pattern. By recontextualizing images he opens the work to a dialogue between the history of art and his personal lived experiences. In his most recent work he has integrated traditional and contemporary approaches to pictorial space, as a way of establishing these concerns more clearly. Although religion is not part of his personal practice, there is often an interplay of spirituality in his work. These thoughts form the overall web of topics that occupy him as an artist, the seemingly never-ending exploration of the world we inhabit and fill with meaning for better understanding of the invisible and the concrete.
“Memories do not always soften with time; some grow edges like knives.”
*The Lacuna*, Barbara Kingsolver (2009)

Amid Barbara Kingsolver’s poetic lyricism is the notion of memory as a living entity, one that might prick like the sharp thorn or gradually soften like warm melting wax. It is within this interplay of memory and materiality that Abbas Akhavan’s installation *Study for a Monument* (2013-) and Carlos Garaicoa’s installation *Ahora juguemos a desaparecer* (Now let’s play to disappear II) (2002) are situated. More specifically, these two contemporary works investigate the material possibilities of wax and bronze under varying conditions of decay—melting, rusting, softening, oxidizing, crumbling—in order to allude to the unstable socio-political context of war-torn Iraq and post-war Arnhem, Netherlands respectively. My research broadly seeks to bridge traditional art historical acts of commemoration, via monumental architecture, with contemporary material practices. In his multi-media installation, Canadian artist Akhavan conserves ancient flora species from Iraq through bronze-casted models, employing the sort of archiving process that one undertakes with fear that a specimen might soon disappear. The artwork seeks to commemorate the many historic instances of architectural rise and ruin in pre and post-war Iraq, equally alluding to the artistic tradition of the funerary monument, particularly haunting in the fact that the decaying bronze flora lay on white sheets, such that are used to transport bodies during war. Garaicoa’s ephemeral installation is equally evocative; inspired by the post-war identity of Arnhem, the artist modeled the city’s downtown core out of wax candles and installed it in the town’s main Cathedral, which was almost destroyed in the aftermath of a World War II bombing. His shrine-like compilation of burning candles is bittersweet, for despite
its glowing beauty, the burning wax city would gradually melt and pool together. My research focuses on how these specific material explorations may prompt a new type of monument or archeological ruin in contemporary art practices, all the while remaining historically relevant and poignant. Moreover, I am interested in comparing the ritualized aspects of material production, the repetitive steps of bronze and wax casting for example, with the monumental acts of commemoration in which these installations embody. Above all, it is my intention to approach the conference’s topic within the realm of ritual, commemoration and collective memory.

Discourse and Decency: A Case Study of Courbet’s Origin of the World and Censorship in the Arts
Stephanie Barclay

In lieu of the Charlie Hebdo controversy and continuing debates over internet freedom, the struggle between censorship and freedoms of expression is relevant now more than ever. Within the arts, the act of censoring works or those parts deemed unsavory (such as the genitalia in Michelangelo’s Last Judgement which was painted over by church officials in the 16th century) has a long history. A society, government, or individual’s moral standards regarding sexuality (the pornographic), politics (ideology), religion (the blasphemous), and culture (the aesthetic obscene) can result in the removal of a work from the public sphere or, most drastically, its destruction. The following paper will explore what is sacred and what remains profane in the discourses surrounding ‘decency’ in the arts. Based on the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin I will focus my study upon Gustave Courbet’s Origin of the World (1866) and a recent lawsuit against Facebook over the removal of this image from a user’s personal profile. How does an online platform influence a viewer’s response to a work of art especially in regards to the exercise of reporting and blocking? In many ways, the internet allows a viewer to interact, transfer, and manipulate a work of art (.jpg) directly; Thus the idea of “answering as authoring” is augmented to the extreme. Why does this particular work still resonate with viewers as warranting of censorship? Considering its canonization within Western art history, how does the context and medium of reception influence reader response? Courbet’s Origin of the World makes an interesting study because it is both sacred (canonized) and profane (censored).
Kara Sterne is a Montreal-based artist working in drawing, fibres, and installation. She is currently finishing her BFA at Concordia University, where she is also a student librarian at the Fine Arts Reading Room (FARR).

Informed by drawing’s capacity to sustain its own incompleteness, her work embraces the formal qualities of ambiguity, hybridity, and insufficiency across a variety of media. Her dual association of “body” with both the physical body and the body of a text has led to an interest in modeling the ways in which bodily transgressions are formed through language and representation in the symbolic realm.

Material exploration is central to her practice. The resulting images and objects dwell among the insecurities of process-based work, making them closer in nature to cast-offs than monuments. They opt for the half-baked over the commemorative and distort attempts to make meaning from material. Here, images are ambiguously abstract and figurative, created through constant translation and mistranslation.
The Way of the Cross recreates the path Christ did to Mount Calvary carrying his cross. Its purpose was to remind devotees the last moments of the life of Christ known as the stations. This presentation studies the devotion and patronage of the Way of the Cross in New Spain, more specifically the chapels that were built in Mexico City at the end of the seventeenth century. This analysis makes a valuable contribution to Latin American art and architectural history by recreating, with visual and documentary evidence, buildings that were destroyed in the nineteenth century.

I will establish, through primary documents in Mexican archives, a list of patrons, painters, sculptors and architects involved in this urban project, as well as the periods of activity, and the reasons that led to their destruction. Furthermore, this reconstruction allows rethinking the urbanism of a particular area of the city and its relation with the Franciscan order, specifically the Third Order, and the socio-economic relationship with patrons.

In a very specific part of the city, this sacred itinerary coexisted with the profane life going on in the Alameda, one of the most outstanding recreational gardens of the city.

The case of the Way of the Cross of Mexico City confirms that this practice and its visual imagery followed a parallel development in Europe and America; it questions the topic of center-periphery that traditionally situates America in the latter position.
Alena Robin holds a MA and PhD in art history from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. She has also been a Postdoctoral fellow at the Université de Montréal. She is currently Associate Professor in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at the University of Western Ontario in the Spanish program, where she teaches Hispanic visual culture. Her research interests focus on the representation of the Passion of Christ in New Spain, theories of art and artistic literature in Spain and Latin America, historiography of painting in New Spain, and issues of conservation and restoration of cultural heritage.

Her talk is related to the content of her recently published book, Las capillas del Vía Crucis de la ciudad de México: arte, patrocinio y sacralización del espacio, by the Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas/ UNAM (2014). She also published articles in different scholarly journals such as RACAR, Goya, Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Atrio: Revista de historia del arte, Via Spiritus: Revista de História da Espiritualidade e do Sentimento Religioso. She also coedited a special issue on Latin American Art for RACAR in 2013 with Luis de Moura Sobral (UdeM).

Her current research project revisits New Spanish painting in the eighteenth century, for which she received a SSHRC Insight Grant.

Closing Reception
7:00 - 9:00
Marble Table next to the FOFA Gallery (EV1.409)
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