**Call for Applications: Faculty Fellows**

**The Humanities Center at Carleton**

**Faculty Research Seminar, 2020-21**

***Art Matters***

*Seminar Director:* ***Susan Jaret McKinstry*** *(English)*

The Humanities Center seeks “to interrogate the relationship between humanistic study and artistic, ethical, and political issues in the contemporary world.” Across humanities disciplines, our work is reflective about what has happened, grounded in the present, and speculative about what might come. How does art matter in that process? The seminar title seeks to frame art as both matter – material, visual, auditory, or embodied – and mattering, as a force that shapes, performs, and often radically alters human behavior and culture. Art can explore all potentialities for human life; scholars across academic disciplines often use art as evidence. The seminar will consider the implications of how art matters in our diverse fields and forms of research.

The arts highlight the intersection of cultural history and individual or communal life, envisioning the past, present, and future in diverse forms that are analyzed by scholars in academic research across all fields. In using works of art as case studies, our disciplinary conceptions of place, time, self, and event meet, often tangle, and produce myriad forms of knowledge. Disciplines outside arts and literature regularly use the arts as evidence: Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* in Psychology, Philosophy, and Political Science; works by Wallace Stegner and John Steinbeck in ENTS, History, Sociology, and Economics; music from Bach fugues to rap and hip-hop in Religion, American Studies, Gender Studies, Cognitive Science, and CS; photographs, paintings, political cartoons, advertisements, and films in History, Political Science, Religion, Psychology, Anthropology, and Sociology.

Across disciplines, eras, and cultures, scholars study how art fosters connection and resistance within and beyond national, cultural, or historical boundaries. Performative rituals can be used formally, in religions and institutions, to sustain cultural norms; or informally, in protests and rebellions, to resist and radically alter them. Art illustrates historic periods, individual and group identities, and social movements, providing a nexus between the past and the future by expanding a moment into transhistorical arcs. Jesse Green’s recent *NYT* article, “How Today’s Queer Artists Are Revising History” (12/4/19), considers how artists link documentary and desire to make gender theory and queer culture historic, visual, compelling, counterfactual, and transformative; Stephano Massini’s 2012 play *The Lehman Trilogy* (directed by Sam Mendes in 2018 and currently on Broadway) uses the 19th-century lives of three Lehman brothers to address American immigration history, acculturation, global economics, urbanization, technology, and familial and financial inheritance. Visual and written work, whether categorized as scholarly, creative, documentary, journalistic, or self-expressive, is understood and often required to connect lived experience and public commentary. Recent first-person writing such as Teju Cole’s *Open City* (2011), Carolyn Forché’s *What You Have Heard is True* (2019), Hisham Matar’s *A Month in Siena* (2019), and Valeria Luiselli’s journalistic *Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in 40 Questions* (2017) and its alternative *The Lost Children Archive* (2019) intermix art, autobiography, history, cultural theory, anthropology, sociology, and psychology to interpret cultural life in the present moment and to incite social change. Art matters in our research, in our social lives, and in global culture.

Some questions we might address:

* What is art, and what does art do?
* How does art revise – or shape – our understanding of real events?
* How is the nature or boundary of art challenged in representations (or acts) of particular historical or political events?
* Why does art matter as a method of investigation? Why, in other words, use art to investigate scholarly concepts?
* How does art function as evidence?
* How does art shape epistemology, or epistemology shape art?
* What is the relationship between event, experience, and expression?
* In scholarship, what is the relationship of personal history, disciplinary history, and cultural history? How does it change, for the subject and/or for the scholar?

We welcome proposals from scholars in any discipline or area whose research engages with this topic. Together we will create an interdisciplinary, global reading list, engage in lively debate, and share our writing or art in progress during the seminar.

Some possible readings:

Benjamin, Walter. “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” 1935.

Burke, Peter. *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of images as Historical Evidence*. Cornell University Press, 2001.

Butt, Gavin. “Happenings in History, or, the Epistemology of the Memoir.” *Oxford Art Journal*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 2001, pp. 115-126. Oxford University Press.

Garoian, Charles. “In the Event That Art Occurs.” *Visual Arts Research*, Vol. 39, No. 1, Summer 2013, pp. 18-34. University of Illinois Press.

Greene, Jesse. “How Today’s Queer Artists are Revising History.” *New York Times* *Style Magazine*, December 4, 2019.

Hagstrom, Fred. *Deeply Honored*, 2011.

Hillis-Miller, J. “Narrative.” *Critical Terms for Literary Study.* University of Chicago Press, 1990.

Luiselli, Valeria. *The Lost Children Archive*, Penguin Books, 2019. *Tell Me How it Ends: An Essay in 40 Questions.* Coffee House Press, 2017.

Mitchell, W. J. T. *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images*. University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Swirski, Peter. “Towards a New Epistemology.” *Between Literature and Science: Poe, Lem and Explorations in Aesthetics, Cognitive Science, and Literary Knowledge*. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000.

Turner, Victor. “Social Dramas and Stories About Them.” *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 7, No. 1, On Narrative, Autumn, 1980, pp. 141-168.

**The Seminar will meet** regularly during the 2020-21 academic year to discuss common readings and individual research and the creative work of participants. Fellows receive $2000 for their participation; in addition, the Seminar as a whole has a book budget of $500 total. In the year following the Seminar (2021-22), participants will also: (1) present the fruits of their work in this seminar (typically through a public panel discussion featuring the research projects of each participant) in the *Dialogos* series, and (2) if desired, plan an event (mini-conference, guest lecture, reading group with a visiting scholar, exhibition, or etc.) to encourage further reflection on the Seminar theme.

**Application Process:**

To apply, potential Fellows should send **a two-page proposal** (usually around 1000 words) to lpearson@carleton.edu before **midnight on Monday, Feb. 24, 2020**.

In the proposal, applicants should indicate:

1.) their specific research project, and the ways in which the Seminar would enhance their work;

2.) the nature of the contributions they might bring to the collaborative work of the group; and

3.) a title and description of the project to be worked on during the Seminar year: Is the project an article, a chapter, an artists’ statement? Applicants may also indicate the stage of the project and where it might be at the end of the year.

*Deadline: Monday, Feb. 24 at midnight*

Send your application to Lori Pearson, lpearson@carleton.edu

**Selection Process:**

Approximately 4-6 Faculty Fellows will be chosen by the Humanities Center Advisory Board in consultation with the Seminar Directors, with preference given to faculty from a variety of disciplines. Faculty of all ranks and academic disciplines (and, where applicable, staff) with a scholarly interest in the subject are invited to apply.

By far the most important **criterion for selection** is the quality of the application, and specifically the quality of the project itself. Considerations include the excellence of the proposal as the Board perceives it: the thesis, the specificity of the project (article, chapter, exhibit, recital…), the likelihood that the individual will make significant progress toward completion of the project during the grant period, the sophistication of the arguments, and the pertinent preparation of the individual to undertake the project.

In addition, the appropriateness of the project is important: Does the project significantly reflect the theme of the Seminar? Based on the proposal, would the applicant contribute significantly to the group? Would the project interact constructively with others in the group?

**Questions and requests for feedback** are most welcome. Please contact the Humanities Center Director (Lori Pearson) and any members of the Advisory Board: Arnab Chakladar, Clara Hardy, Adeeb Khalid, Alex Knodell, Sandra Rousseau, David Tompkins, and Cherlon Ussery.