



LABRC

London Arts-Based
Research Centre

THE FUNCTION OF BEAUTY

**A Transdisciplinary
Conference**

**APRIL 22-23, 2026
ONLINE**

**Organised by:
The London Arts-Based Research Centre**



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Function of Beauty
Online Conference, April 22–23, 2026

Conference Programme

Kindly note that all timings are listed according to the presenter's Time Zone

Zoom link to access sessions:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83676915672?pwd=G5lkarNVS8ohW1jhe09oEEU2ZK7WcY.1>

Day 1:
April 22, 2026

10:30–12:00: Panel 1 — Beauty as Transformation: Identity, Myth, and Reimagined Worlds

Moderator: Emmy Vye

Kevin Martens Wong Zhi Qiang

"Gilgamanggantra: Creolising Muscle Dysmorphia through Mythic Recomposition"

Ihab M. Hanafy and Reham A. Sanad

" Digital Media and Sustainability: The Role of Technology in Supporting Sustainable Design and Art"

Jelena Pataki Šumiga

"Beauty as a Tool of Biopolitical Desire for Control in Scott Westerfeld's *Uglies*"

Rodolphe Pauvert

"Commodifying Crisis: The Aesthetic Economy of Consumption"

14:00–14:45: Panel 2 — The Dark Aesthetics of Beauty: The Grotesque, the Gothic, and the Ornamented Body

Moderator: Roula-Maria Dib

Ljubica Matek

"Thanato-Aesthetics in Nineteenth-Century Gothic Literature"

Anna M. Engel

"The Grotesque Mirror: Exploring the Politics of Aesthetics and the Grotesque Feminine"

16:00–16:45: Plenary Session

Moderator: Roula-Maria Dib

Claude Barbre

"Not a Lip, or Eye, We Beauty Call: The Aesthetic Doppelganger of Beauty and Ugliness"

Day 2:
April 23, 2026

14:00–15:15: Panel 4 —Beauty and Cultural Meaning

June-Ann Greeley

"What the World Needs Now is Beauty: Poetic Vision and Cultural Reflection"

Dayna Daniely

"The Paradox of Beauty: Jealousy, Objectification, and Social Identity"

Padmini Sukumaran

"Symmetry and Śṛṅgāra: Structure and Sensuous Experience in Classical Aesthetics"

16:00–17:30: Panel 5 — Material Beauty and Moral Vision

CoCo Ree Lemery

"Transfiguring Refuse: Beauty and the Ethics of Waste"

Diana Rios

"Beauty Politics of Melanin and Representation"

Habib Zanzana

"The Ethics of Solidarity and the 'Ugly Beautiful'"

Christopher Lee Chang

"Beauty as Moral Perception: Reflection, Devotion, and the Covenant of Seeing"

18:00–19:30: Panel 6 — Sacred Beauty and Archetypal Imagination: Myth, Silence, and Radiance

Moderator: Arden Waterman

Jody Uyanik

"A Ray of Sunshine: The Role of Radiant Beauty in Healing Practices"

Alexandra Fidyk

"Silence: Tending an Archetypal Core of Beauty"

Adrian Price

"Beauty in Chaos: Storms, the Unconscious, and Transformation"

Kelly Fraser

"Wearing Inanna: Myth, Adornment, and Sacred Identity"

Abstracts and Bios

10:30–12:00: Panel 1 — Beauty as Transformation: Identity, Myth, and Reimagined Worlds

Moderator: Emmy Vye

1. Kevin Martens Wong Zhi Qiang, 13th Kabesa / Indigenous Chief of the Kristang people and National University of Singapore

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"Gilgamanggantra: Creolising Muscle Dysmorphia through Mythic Recomposition"

Abstract: This paper is an autoethnographic examination of my own personal experience in negotiating, processing and creolising the experience of having muscle dysmorphia, which I was diagnosed with in October 2023 after eight years of serving as the publicly visible and first openly gay and neurodivergent Kabesa or Indigenous Chief of the Kristang Creole-Indigenous people of Melaka, Singapore, Perth and Kuala Lumpur. My constellation of other neurodiverse traits cause me to experience muscle dysmorphia or gilgamanggantra in Kristang symbolically in addition to physically, such that distortion does not remain confined to bodily size perception but extends into how I am generally unable to perceive my own magnitude, power, beauty and strength and those of others across intellectual, relational, institutional and psychoemotional domains. Left unintegrated, my muscle dysmorphia previously allowed others, especially closeted straight men and institutions in Singapore, to take advantage of me, forcing me to perceive myself as ugly, scrawny, predatory, aggressive, cruel or overreaching; in this paper, I explore how since August 2019, I have subverted my prior lack of understanding and the social stigma that accompanies gilgamanggantra into a governing aesthetic principle within my leadership and artistic practice of Kristang dreamshining or near-nude somatic performance art and research, where I subject all forms of strength, power, Chiefly and scholarly authority and exhibitions of my own body, desire and sexuality, whether physical, intellectual, relational or emotional, to hyper-conscious analysis, calibration and impact assessment through my Stacked-Sequence Synesthesia. In reframing muscle dysmorphia as a heightened attunement to scale, I thus argue that what was once a site of shame becomes an engine for an alternate function of beauty as an ethical regulator of magnitude, where to be beautiful, in this sense, is to know one's force precisely enough that it does not collapse inward into self-erasure or outward into domination.

Bio: Tuan Raja Naga Ultramar Kevin Martens Wong Zhi Qiang is the thirteenth and current Kabesa, Cowboy of Heaven or Chief of the Creole-Indigenous Kristang people of Melaka, Singapore, Perth, and Kuala Lumpur, and the director of Kodrah Kristang, the community's language and cultural revitalisation initiative. Kevin is one of the youngest native speakers of the critically endangered Kristang language, one of only three teachers of the language worldwide, the main formal curriculum and materials developer for Kristang language teaching, the primary scholarly authority on contemporary Kristang language, identity, history, and epistemology, and the principal architect of the rapid and dramatic twenty-first-century revival of Kristang as a living, self-governing Creole-Indigenous Southeast Asian civilisation. Kevin has further acquired national and

international recognition for his work as a radically transparent, independent, interdisciplinary, and decolonial scholar, educator, writer, and artist, as the first openly gay, polyamorous, atheist, neurodivergent, and visibly body-positive Chief of the Kristang, and as the first Singaporean ethnic community leader operating fully independently of the Singapore state. He is currently completing his PhD in linguistics on a grammar of the revitalised variety of the Kristang language at the National University of Singapore.

2. Ihab M. Hanafy and Reham A. Sanad, Al Zahra College for Women

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"Digital Media and Sustainability: The Role of Technology in Supporting Sustainable Design and Art"

Abstract: Sustainability, in its comprehensive sense, concerns human well-being and quality of life without harming the environment or compromising the future of humanity and coming generations. However, the design context of sustainability concerns creating designs that offer both aesthetic value and functional utility without harming or degrading the environment. With the rapid development of digital technology and multimedia, it has become possible to use digital media to achieve sustainability goals by introducing innovative solutions in art and design. This study aims to investigate the concept of sustainability, with a focus on digital art and design, as a vital and significant topic in the modern era. Besides, it highlights the role of digital media in promoting sustainability by reviewing models that demonstrate its contribution to supporting sustainable design. The study's significance lies in addressing and emphasising alternative methods for multimedia designers, researchers, and students to achieve a balance among artistic innovation, functional utility, and the preservation of natural resources in contemporary society.

Bios: Ihab Hanafy is an Egyptian visual artist and Professor of art and design in the Department of Design at Al-Zahra College for Women in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman. His artistic practice is grounded in experimentation, through which he explores innovative expressive and aesthetic visual approaches. Throughout his career, he has produced a diverse body of work ranging from sketches to fully realized paintings, employing a variety of media including graphite pencil, charcoal, pastel, watercolor, and oil paint. His artistic vision emphasizes the expressive and figurative dimensions of visual composition, reflecting a deep engagement with the emotional and symbolic qualities embedded within artistic forms. He is actively involved in the contemporary visual arts movement and has held 23 solo exhibitions in Egypt, England, and the Sultanate of Oman. In addition, he has participated in more than 60 group exhibitions and has received 24 awards in the fields of drawing and painting. His artworks are included in several public and private collections in Egypt, England, the Sultanate of Oman, Saudi Arabia, and Canada. He maintains a strong academic research profile in the fields of art and design, with 23 published research papers in international peer-reviewed journals and academic conferences.

Reham A. Sanad is an associate professor of design in the faculty of Applied Arts, Damietta Uni Egypt, with a PhD in Design Technology from the University of Leeds, UK, a master's degree in Colour and Textiles, and a bachelor's degree in Textile Printing. She has extensive

academic and professional experience in design education. Her research focuses on colour, pattern design, design management, and fashion and textile studies.

3. Jelena Pataki Šumiga, University of Osijek, Croatia

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"Beauty as a Tool of Biopolitical Desire for Control in Scott Westerfeld's Uglies"

Abstract: This paper explores the biopolitical desire for control in Scott Westefeld's YA dystopian series Uglies, imposed through mandatory surgical enhancements performed on teenagers. YA dystopia has become one of the most prominent genres in the twenty-first century, which explores key socio-political and cultural issues of our time. Often employing Foucault's theory of biopolitics, YA dystopias exhibit a plethora of violent ways in which modern society controls and exploits individuals. These include physical and sexual abuse, torture, alteration, and self-harm. Scott Westefeld's quadrilogy, encompassing Uglies (2005), Pretties (2005), Specials (2006), and Extras (2007), shows a dystopian society in which individuals must undergo surgical alterations of their bodies to fit the social standard. Presented as a solution to inequality, prejudice, and the epidemic of deadly eating disorders, the beautification process belies a severe biopolitical oppression. Namely, not only does the surgery make everyone beautiful in appearance but it also damages their brain to make them docile, thus turning beauty into a biopolitical tool of control. Through systemic conditioning of minors and by ostracising those who do not undergo the surgery as "uglies," the government forces its young population to desire these cosmetic enhancements that turn them into subjects. Despite being published twenty years ago, Westerfeld's series' film adaptation in 2024 and the growing recognition of the effect of social media on the minors' brain development make this dystopia an ever-timely topic of discussion when it comes to detrimental effect of beauty standardisation. Keywords: YA dystopia, biopolitics, beauty, desire for control, Scott Westerfeld, Uglies Bio: Jelena Pataki Šumiga is a TA at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Osijek, Croatia, where she teaches courses in old English literature and contemporary British dystopia. Her main fields of research are Anglophone dystopia, fantasy, and YA literature. She is a member of the Utopian Studies Society Europe, the YA Studies Association, and a co-editor of the scholarly blog Fractals: The Shapes of Popular Culture. She headed a research project "Violence in Popular Culture and Contemporary Adaptations" (2024-2025) and organised a conference "Mediating Violence: Contemporary Adaptations and Popular Culture" at her Faculty. She is also a conference interpreter and literary translator, with more than seventy popular fiction novels translated from English to Croatian for several Croatian publishers and theatres.

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4. Rodolphe Pauvert, Université de Poitiers (France)

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"Commodifying Crisis: The Aesthetic Economy of Consumption"

Abstract: The so-called "lipstick effect" suggests that in times of economic crisis, consumers turn to affordable beauty products as symbolic substitutes for inaccessible luxuries. Frequently invoked in media and business discourse, this concept has become a powerful narrative of resilience within the beauty industry. Yet its empirical and theoretical foundations remain fragile. This paper critically reassesses the lipstick effect through a combined discourse and data-driven analysis of the Italian cosmetics sector during the 2008–2009 financial crisis and the 2011–2013 sovereign debt crisis. Drawing on sectoral retail data from Cosmetica Italia and macroeconomic indicators, I demonstrate that lipstick sales in Italy did not exhibit a systematically counter-cyclical pattern. While certain cosmetic categories showed relative resilience, lip products did not outperform the sector as a whole, nor did they anticipate economic downturns. Rather than functioning as a reliable economic indicator, the lipstick effect emerges as a media construction rooted in a 2001 corporate statement and amplified through journalistic repetition. Its success lies less in statistical robustness than in its narrative efficiency: it condenses complex consumption patterns into a compelling story of "small luxuries" and emotional compensation. Situated within the conference axis "Contemporary Challenges and Debates – The Commodification of Beauty", this paper contributes to critical perspectives on beauty industries and consumer culture by demonstrating how economic narratives participate in the commodification of beauty itself. By situating the lipstick effect within a broader family of informal economic "indices" (hemline index, popcorn index, etc.), I argue that the commodification of beauty operates not only through products, but through interpretative frameworks that transform aesthetic consumption into economic symbolism. Beauty thus becomes both commodity and metaphor—an object of purchase and a discursive tool for managing collective anxieties about crisis, value, and desire in contemporary consumer culture.

Bio: Rodolphe Pauvert is Professor (Maître de conférences hors classe) of Italian Studies at the University of Poitiers and a member of the research unit MIMMOC (Memory, Identities, Marginalities in the Contemporary Western World). His research focuses on contemporary Italian civilization through a multidisciplinary approach combining economics, political science, law, history, and discourse analysis. His doctoral work examined the Italian cosmetics industry and strategies of economic reconquest, leading to broader research on beauty, advertising discourse, visual culture, and the political uses of representation. He has published extensively on the language and imagery of cosmetics advertising, the interaction between economy and identity in Italy, and the dynamics of marginality and exclusion in public discourse. More recently, his work has explored academic democracy, institutional transformations, and the epistemology of crisis in a globalized context. He has organized several international conferences, including "Democracy at the University" (Poitiers, 2025–2026). A member of the French National Council of Universities (CNU), he serves as an expert at national, European, and international levels for several academic and evaluation bodies, including higher education and research assessment agencies and major funding programmes. He combines scientific expertise with extensive international academic leadership.

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14:00–14:45: Panel 2 — The Dark Aesthetics of Beauty: The Grotesque, the Gothic, and the Ornamented Body

1. Ljubica Matek, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Osijek, Croatia ljubica.matek@gmail.com

"Thanato-Aesthetics in Nineteenth-Century Gothic Literature"

Abstract: In "The Philosophy of Composition" (1846) E. A. Poe has established beauty as the point of origin of poetry (literature) and death of a beautiful woman as "unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world" (1986: 36). But, what Poe established as a purely aesthetic principle applied to produce the desired literary effect can be said to reveal more macabre sociocultural implications. The talk will consider three nineteenth-century Gothic literary texts, Poe's "The Oval Portrait" (1842), Browning's "My Last Duchess" (1842), and Jorgovanić's "Love on a Bier" (Croatian: "Ljubav na odru", 1876), to show that the idea of beauty of a dead woman arises from the masculine desire to possess and silence women. In all three literary texts art functions as the key symbol of male power and female objectification and silencing. In Poe's short story, the wife is obliged to sacrifice her beauty and vitality for her husband's art; in Browning's poem artworks caution future wives against disobedience; in Jorgovanić's story, the painter's obsession with a dead woman pushes a young model to suicide as the only way to capture his interest. In all three texts female beauty and death are intertwined producing a form of thanato-aesthetics, according to which a woman is beautiful if she is silent and submissive, an object of male gaze. The idea that female beauty reaches its apotheosis in death and in artistic representation reinforces the patriarchal dynamics, which denies female personhood by highlighting women's duty to gratify male desires for control and possession at all cost.

Bio: Dr. Ljubica Matek is Associate Professor in the Department of English and the Director of the Centre for Popular Culture at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Osijek, Croatia. She teaches courses in literature at undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate levels. She was a Fulbright Fellow at the Study of the U.S. Institute in Contemporary American Literature at the University of Louisville, Kentucky in 2008, an Erasmus+ teaching fellow at Lancaster University in 2019, and an Erasmus+ research fellow at the Complutense University of Madrid also in 2019. Her research interests are broad and include Gothic literature, eco-fiction, film, and popular culture. She is the author of "English Literature in Context. From Romanticism until the Twentieth Century" (Osijek, 2020).

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2. Anna M. Engel, Independent Researcher

"The Grotesque Mirror: Exploring the Politics of Aesthetics and the Grotesque Feminine"
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Abstract: This project seeks to explore the grotesque feminine archetype and mythological representations through the lens of modern aesthetic standards. Part of an ongoing documentary project, The Grotesque Mirror asks women to embody the grotesque feminine figure they find themselves reflected in to explore how that perceived ugliness impacts how

women live their lives. Told through short vignettes of women acting out their interpretation of mythological figures, this project seeks to empower women to embrace the parts of themselves that society has deemed ugly; this project serves as a reclamation of uncontrollable grotesque power, shifting the narrative from something to fear and shun into something to embrace. Mythological figures include Medusa, the sirens, the Ophiotauros, and Baba Yaga. This project is grounded in Jungian, Hillmanian, and Campbellian ideas of archetypes, personal and cultural myths, and the power of narratives. Through analysis of making the film, working with the women, and their personal journey's this projects asks audiences to look inward and turn what they have been told is ugly into untouchable power.

Bio: Anna Engel is a multi-hyphenate artist who works in a range mediums from film to words to paint. As a filmmaker, she has worked on projects for Netflix, Amazon, and Showtime; recently, Anna has produced the docu-series "Motherlands", which explores the wisdom of the crone around the world. A recent graduate from Pacifica Graduate Institute's Depth Psychology and Creativity program, Anna weaves mythology into her creative endeavors, weaving her artistic and academic practices together, as seen in her work "The Grotesque Mirror" and her upcoming project "Procne's Prologue"

16:00–16:45: Plenary Session:

Claude Brabre "Not a Lip, or Eye, We Beauty Call: The Aesthetic Doppelganger of Beauty and Ugliness"

Abstract: Alexander Pope once wrote, "'Tis not a Lip, or Eye, we beauty call/ But the joint Force and Full result of all." In comparison, the French have a term "Jolie laide" which translated to English means "pretty/ugly"- a term of endearment meant to describe something that is unconventionally beautiful. Addressing such contrasts, the British psychotherapist John Richman posits a view that the world can be experienced by the artist and audience as successively ugly and beautiful simultaneously, and an initial sense of what may be perceived as ugly can reflect unacknowledged internal tensions in individuals and cultures. In contradistinction, beauty can be an escape from those very tensions that are often experienced as anxiety, guilt, and pain. As Anton Ehrenzweig notes about Rickman's perspective, we can see that "the two polar feelings of beauty and ugliness are not so far apart as they may appear to be" (Ehrenzweig, 1999). Adam Phillips says it well: "If I am simply on a walk, the rock face is an obstacle; if I am a painter, it is not" (Phillips, 1992). John Richman points out that the etymology of the word "ugly" (Icelandic ugg) points to the experience of fear, dread, terror, and disgust, and suggests that the feeling of ugliness rests not only on cultural transmissions, but also on unintegrated guilt and anxiety feelings projected onto a person, object, or situation. Our feelings of right and wrong, attraction and disgust, can direct our experience of what is ugly or beautiful toward repressed, inarticulate symbolism, in short noting that the feeling of ugliness, by serving to contain repressed contents on the verge of becoming conscious, is similar in its function to that of feelings of uncanniness which Freud explained from a return of repressed experiences. We can find ugliness and disgust in some objects without a trace of any pure aesthetic ugliness (Kuplen, 2015). As Rickman points out, creative and destructive forces are in active interplay: "The artist provides more than a momentary consolation for our miseries; he or she goes behind the veil which screen the source of our dejection and brings back evidence for the triumph of the creative impulse over

the forces of destruction” (Rickman, 1940). The artist does this not by the denial of pain, dread, and fear, but by facing it with a determination to live into it. In the presentation we will draw from John Rickman's psychology of beauty and ugliness—in particular his theories of ugliness and the creative impulse drawn from his own encounters with collective trauma. Just as Rickman strongly posits that an application of the arts and aesthetic theory is vital to the clinical imagination and the life of psychotherapy, we can see that these very theories on the nature of aesthetic experience can serve as a lens to particular perspectives about cultural ideals and values when influenced by aesthetic conflicts and distortions. Finally, reflective of Erich Fromm’s distinction between self-love and selfish love, we will see how Rickman’s theories illuminate aesthetic distortions in our worldviews and social beliefs, influencing our perception of self and other.

Bio: Claude Barbre, Ph.D., L.P., is Distinguished Full Professor, The Chicago School of Professional Psychology. He is Course-Lead Coordinator of the Psychodynamics Orientation, and lead faculty in Child and Adolescent Studies. He is also the Vice-President Board Member and a Supervisor at the Chicago Center for Psychoanalysis, Chicago IL. Dr. Barbre served for 12 years as Executive Director of The Harlem Family Institute, a New York City school-based, psychoanalytic training program. Author of prize-winning articles, books, and poetry, Dr. Barbre is a five-time recipient of the international Gradiva Award for “outstanding writing in psychoanalysis and the arts.” He is also the recipient of the 2022 Distinguished Psychoanalytic Educator Award from IFPE for “outstanding contributions to psychoanalytic education,” and the 2022 Joanna K. Tabin practice in Chicago Award for Exceptional Public Service, presented by CCP. He is in private practice in Chicago, IL.

Day 2:

April 23, 2026

14:00–15:15: Panel 4 —Beauty and Cultural Meaning

1. **June-Ann Greeley, Sacred Heart University Fairfield CT USA**
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"What the World Needs Now is Beauty: Poetic Vision and Cultural Reflection"

Abstract: Notably in the academy, but really throughout contemporary culture, the concept of Beauty seems to have been diminished or relativized, regarded as less rigorous and less practical for 'real world' living. Beauty has fallen victim to charges of bourgeois sentimentality, ineffable relevance, and intellectual mediocrity. Famously, Hans Urs von Balthasar, the Swiss philosopher and priest who is considered one of the most important Catholic theologians of the 20th century, lamented that the world has been too willing to reject the promise of beauty, even though the word itself remains current in popular parlance. Von Balthasar wrote that beauty is an 'uncontained splendor' which cannot be managed by human reason, for it erupts boundaries and disrupts definitions and limitations. Beauty enjoys an autonomy that defies human authority, and has the capacity to incite and animate human imagination as well as the creative impulse: "the way of beauty" can move the beholder of beauty beyond the borders of reason and logic and

materiality and encourage both the consciousness and the soul to transcend the limitations of mortal existence. Yet, as von Balthasar insists, the post-modern ethos, especially in the west, persists in a fluctuating rejection of beauty, which thereupon also can result in a loss of the ability to love. Without beauty, without the reach for transcendence that beauty inspires, people become closed within themselves and lose the capacity to be open to others, to be in relation with others (to love) and, for some, with God. The complication, of course, is that for many individuals, an awareness of beauty begins with the concrete and the physical: while beauty in its truest sense is more than physical prettiness or visual charm, sentient experiences of beauty should not be casually discounted. Indeed, even spiritual writers about the *via pulchritudinis* understand that most human beings commence their experience of beauty with the senses. As St. Augustine recognized, all of creation is delightful to the senses and exudes beauty: such beauty, St. Augustine insists, is the 'confession' of creation that bears witness to the reality of the Creator, the One 'who is beautiful' and 'unchangeable'. For St. Augustine, it is only reasonable that the beauty of the created things inspires contemplation on the Creator of such beauty, and spiritual teaching in Islam articulates a very similar perspective: a notable Hadith teaches that God is beautiful and loves beauty. It is the beauty of the material world that speaks first about the One Who is Beautiful, and it is such beauty that initiates the *via pulchritudinis* along which the mind and the spirit traverse toward transcendence. My paper will be an exploration of the matter of beauty in terms of the *via pulchritudinis* that guides the individual soul toward both personal flourishing and collective movement toward the Divine, as articulated especially in Christian and Islamic teachings.

Bio: Professor of English at Sacred Heart University. Research and publications in medieval (English and Latin) literature; medieval and contemporary spirituality; interfaith dialogue, and gender and spirituality.

2. Dayna Daniely, Fort Valley State University danielyd@fvsu.edu "The Paradox of Beauty: Jealousy, Objectification, and Social Identity"

Abstract: Societal perceptions of beauty connote attractiveness with specialized treatments and favors, believing that those who possess beauty are graced with a benevolence that allows them to transcend the vicissitudes of life easily. Research indicates that there is certainly truth to these assertions, as studies suggest that when comparing equal qualifications, attractive people tend to receive promotions and raises at higher rates than their colleagues, who are perceived to be less striking. Moreover, other findings impute that attractive individuals tend to be deemed to be more approachable, kinder and likeable, based solely on their physical attributes. However, the paradox of beauty contradicts these conventions, particularly for women. Attractive women may frequently experience unprovoked toxic and predatory behaviors, from jealous strangers, friends, romantic partners and relations, including public and private humiliation rituals. Whereas the intention of these acts may be to demoralize, destabilize or deprive the individual considered attractive of self-esteem or social standing, when these practices become intemperate, escalation of these attitudes may result in significant physical, emotional, verbal and/or sexual abuse of the target. This study examines the paradox of beauty in the analysis of the death of Cassie Boone, a mixed-race young woman of

Caucasian descent from South Carolina, whose jealous associates and paramours after subjecting her to humiliation rituals, including objectification and torture, lynched her.

Bio: Dr. Dayna Daniely is an Associate Professor of History at Fort Valley State University, located in Fort Valley, GA, USA. Her research interests primarily include the lynching of atypical victims, including women, children and intra-racial mob violence.

**3. Padmini Sukumaran, Kean University padmini.sukumaran@gmail.com
"Symmetry and Śṛṅgāra: Structure and Sensuous Experience in Classical Aesthetics"**

Abstract: Is beauty a topic of objective form or subjective experience? I propose through "Symmetry and Śṛṅgāra: Structure and Sensuous Experience in the Function of Beauty" that beauty emerges through the dynamic interplay between symmetry as structural order and Śṛṅgāra as aesthetic experience. The public has, across disciplines, associated symmetry with beauty — from mathematical proportion to visual harmony — thereby suggesting that beauty resides in balance, regularity, and form. Nevertheless, such accounts alone cannot explain the intensity with which we feel, desire, and remember beauty is felt. Upon turning to the Sanskrit aesthetic theory of Śṛṅgāra that *Nāṭyaśāstra* articulates, I examine how our human species does not merely perceive beauty, but also experiences it through emotion, longing, and relationality. Specifically, vipralambha (love in separation) reveals that beauty is often intensified not through perfect presence, but through distance, deferral, and imaginative engagement. By placing symmetry and Śṛṅgāra in dialogue, "Symmetry and Śṛṅgāra: Structure and Sensuous Experience in the Function of Beauty" reconceptualizes beauty as neither purely objective nor purely subjective, but as an emergent phenomenon that arises from the interaction between formal structure and affective response. Whether in visual art, literature, or the performing arts, beauty depends not only upon harmony and proportion, but also on the ways in which these are felt, disrupted, and emotionally inhabited. "Symmetry and Śṛṅgāra: Structure and Sensuous Experience in the Function of Beauty" ultimately tableaus that the function of beauty lies in its capacity to unite order and longing — thenceforth transforming structure into experience.

Bio: Dr. Padmini Sukumaran earned her doctoral degree in English Literature from St. John's University in 2015; and her Dissertation is entitled, "The Inner Fairy: Reason and Imagination in The Faerie Queene and A Midsummer Night's Dream." She teaches World Literature, Seventeenth Century Prose and Poetry, College Composition at Kean University, Caldwell University, and the Union College of New Jersey. Padmini's Scholarly Areas of Specialization are Medieval and Early Modern Romance, Fairy-Tales, Theatre, Metafiction, Metatheatre, Dramatic-Performance, Aesthetics, Storytelling, Magic, and Psychoanalysis. She really relishes each opportunity to present in London Arts-Based Research Centre conferences!

16:00–17:30: Panel 5 — Material Beauty and Moral Vision:

1. CoCo Ree Lemery, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

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"Transfiguring Refuse: Beauty and the Ethics of Waste"

Abstract: What if beauty begins at the moment we decide something is no longer useful? This presentation explores the function of beauty as an act of reclassification, specifically the transformation of waste into objects of reverence, utility, and care. Through a series of interviews with artists, designers, and makers who work with discarded materials, I investigate how beauty operates not as surface decoration, but as a catalytic force that shifts perception. When trash becomes treasure, what actually changes, the material, or us? At the center of this inquiry is my own functional work using one of the world's most common kitchen discards, onion skins. Typically swept into compost or trash without thought, onion skins contain luminous color, fibrous strength, and surprising structural potential. Through experimental processes, I preserve, layer, and bind them into sculptural furniture and lighting, objects that retain both the memory of their former life and their new function. By pairing my practice with recorded insights from other waste based practitioners, this talk argues that beauty performs three essential functions in the context of discard. It reassigns value, extends emotional durability, and interrupts systems of disposability. Beauty slows us down. It invites contemplation. It encourages stewardship. Rather than treating sustainability as purely technical or moral, this presentation positions beauty as its most persuasive instrument. In the presence of something unexpectedly beautiful once considered trash, we are moved to reconsider not only material hierarchies, but cultural ones. If waste is a failure of imagination, beauty may be its repair.

Bio: CoCo Lemery is a furniture designer, educator, and founder of Studio Kloak, a sculptural furniture practice rooted in radical material transformation. She has designed furniture and lighting for some of the largest brands in the United States, with millions of her products placed in homes worldwide. After years in corporate design, she shifted her focus toward developing work that merges environmental responsibility with emotional resonance. Her current practice centers on reclaiming locally sourced waste and transforming overlooked discards such as onion skins and woodshop waste into functional works of art. By combining traditional woodworking with experimental bio based materials, she creates objects that challenge assumptions about value, permanence, and beauty. Lemery is a Professor of Furniture and Industrial Design, where she guides students to interrogate systems of production, authorship, and sustainability through hands on making and critical inquiry. Her work explores how beauty can foster attachment, care, and ecological awareness, positioning design not merely as problem solving, but as cultural reframing.

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2. Diana Rios, University of Connecticut
diana.rios234@gmail.com
"Beauty Politics of Melanin and Representation"

Abstract: Rizo (2020) is an award-winning short film spotlighting the limited capacity of mainstream film and television to acknowledge and include Afro-Latino actors. This research takes a critical look at beauty politics as they are illustrated in a Latina-directed film starring an Afro-Latina actor. Biases of the collective unconscious, manifested as institutional racism, feed ignorance and act to exclude professionals of color from work entry and career opportunities. Cristina goes on casting calls, trying to break into the Hollywood film industry. She is a freshly-minted graduate and her ingénue confidence must mature toward realization and decision making based on self-worth and self-value in order to reach fuller potential. In a turning point experience, there is a particular character role open for a Latina with Spanish language abilities. It is uncomfortably clear that the young, white, male casting director only considers European looking (white) Hispanic females with straighter hair ("pelo bueno", good hair). To add insult to racial bias injury, the casting crew is perplexed about her appearance, her Afro-Latinidad, and cannot grasp her blackness, black phenotype, and the naturally curly hair, "pelo rizado", that is part of the Latino heritage spectrum. As well-educated creatives, yearning to produce relevant, more inclusive media, naturally beautiful Cristina and allies join together to launch their own production company. There will continue to be a need for independent creative outlets that challenge mainstream beauty values and aesthetic worthiness since (un)conscious biases against people of color and black phenotypical characteristics are deeply rooted across many societies.

Bio: Dr. Diana I. Rios is faculty at the University of Connecticut. USA. Her research, teaching and academic service includes media, women, gender, ethnicity, cross-cultural communication, online pedagogy, and Latino/Latin American Studies

3. Habib Zanzana, The University of Scranton

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"The Ethics of Solidarity and the 'Ugly Beautiful'"

Abstract: This paper investigates how the "Aesthetics of solidarity" can mask the lived experience of juvenile precarity, connecting 17th-century Spanish drama with the literary and cinematic history of post-war Italy. Deploying the concept of the "small witness," it interrogates the material costs silenced by institutional narratives of rescue, arguing that an ethics of beauty requires accountability to the "ugly" sacrifices hidden beneath history's surfaces. The first section analyzes the "ugly beautiful" in Cervantes's *Los baños de Argel*. The child martyr's suffering is transformed into spiritual spectacle validating Counter-Reformation dogma, an aestheticization that silences the material reality of his confinement. This dynamic is not confined to the early modern period. The second section shifts to the "Treni della felicità" in post-WWII Italy. Reading Viola Ardone's *Il treno dei bambini* and its film adaptation by Cristina Comencini (Netflix 2024), the paper identifies a sensory divide: the beauty of the Northern wheat fields and violin music are set against Neapolitan precarity. Central is the pawn receipt, a material witness found by the adult Amerigo revealing his mother's years of invisible labor. The paper argues that Amerigo's beautiful Northern success was funded by his mother's ugly survival tactics. The child experiences the North as liberation, but the adult must reckon with its foundation in maternal deprivation. In both cases, the "aesthetics of solidarity" rely on an "ugly beautiful" that showcases the vulnerable subject while obscuring the systemic precarity that necessitates intervention. My analysis concludes that authentic ethical beauty must account for the silent sacrifices witnessed only by the material traces they leave behind.

Bio: Short Bio. I am a professor of Arabic, French and Spanish, and World Literature at the University of Scranton. I hold a Ph.D. in Hispanic Literature. I have published on Francophone African Literature; the picaresque; domestic violence and social responsibility in contemporary Spanish cinema; technology and the teaching of critical languages; and on puppets and pedagogy. I have also published on women's spiritual biographies, Cervantes's Don Quixote, and on the kaleidoscope of cultures in contemporary Italian literature. My most recent publications read as follows: The first is titled, Gender in French Banlieue Cinema, Intersectional Perspectives, Lexington Books, 2024. The second is titled, Christian de Chergé's Spiritual Writings, Orbis Books, April 2025.

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4. Christopher Lee Chang christopher@artresearchinstitute.org

"Beauty as Moral Perception: Reflection, Devotion, and the Covenant of Seeing"

Abstract: Across philosophy and psychology, beauty has often been treated either as an aesthetic property of objects or as a subjective response within the observer. This paper proposes a third approach: beauty as a relational event that emerges through attentive perception. Drawing on Kabbalistic metaphysics, depth psychology (James Hillman), and relational neuroscience (Diana Fosha), the presentation develops a framework from The Book of Reflection in which beauty functions as a form of moral perception. In this view, beauty appears when awareness becomes reflective—when the observer encounters the world not as an object to master but as a presence to meet. Within the symbolic language of the Kabbalah, beauty corresponds to Tiferet, the sefirah associated with harmony, compassion, and the integration of opposites. Beauty emerges when the transcendent dimension of reality reconnects with the lived world. From a psychological perspective, this moment parallels what Diana Fosha describes as transformance—the innate drive of living systems toward greater coherence and relational aliveness. Beauty, in this sense, reorganizes perception and deepens connection. The paper proposes a simple philosophical structure for this process: Reflection + Devotion = Revelation. Reflection allows us to see without domination. Devotion sustains our willingness to remain in relation. When these two movements meet, beauty appears as a disclosure of meaning within the world. Beauty therefore performs a vital cultural function: it restores the capacity to see the world as worthy of care. In this sense, beauty does not merely decorate life; it reawakens our responsibility to it.

Bio: Christopher Lee Chang is a writer, artist, consultant, coach, and psychotherapist working at the intersection of depth psychology, moral imagination, and cultural repair. His work explores how inner life, trauma, art, and civic reality shape one another—especially in moments of social fracture and historical transition. Drawing on influences such as James Hillman, Diana Fosha (AEDP), René Girard, James Dewey, and classical mystical traditions, Christopher's research asks how love, conscience, and imagination function not as abstractions, but as living forces that govern culture, leadership, and belonging. His paintings—often large-scale, layered, and ritual in process—serve as parallel inquiries into descent, covenant, and the soul's capacity to remain present to complexity without collapse. Christopher is the author of several forthcoming books, including Falling in Love with an American and The Book of Reflection, and the creator of the Jerusalem Fumes Midrashim series. The Art Research Institute was founded to give this work a home beyond traditional academic, therapeutic, or artistic silos—one that honors rigor without losing soul.

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18:00–19:30: Panel 6 — Sacred Beauty and Archetypal Imagination: Myth, Silence, and Radiance

1. Jody Uyanik Jody.Uyanik@my.pacifica.edu

"A Ray of Sunshine: The Role of Radiant Beauty in Healing Practices"

Abstract: As the youngest of five daughters of the God of Medicine and as a granddaughter of Apollo the Sun God, the little-known goddess, Aegle, whose name means Radiant Beauty, was part of a divine family of health and wellness gods and goddesses in Ancient Greek mythology. Although there is scant evidence of her in the written record, this presentation will analyze song lyrics, lines of poetry, and other sources to consider what her mere presence can tell us about how Greeks viewed beauty as an essential component of healing. Through the use of imaginal dialogue techniques pioneered by Carl G. Jung, the presentation will attempt to go beyond the written record and engage with the goddess and her family to seek additional insights on the topic.

Bio: Jody Uyanik is a PhD Candidate at Pacifica Graduate Institute specializing in Integrative Therapy and Healing Practices. Having completed her masters in foreign service at Georgetown University, Jody also serves as adjunct faculty at George Washington University where she teaches interdisciplinary courses on cultural and human geography.

2. Alexandra Fidyk, University of Alberta fidyk@ualberta.ca

"Silence: Tending an Archetypal Core of Beauty"

Abstract: "The primacy of human nature in the process of individuation" is an idea not to be interpreted outside the particularities of place—local, global, cosmic. As complimentary opposites, art and science are beholden to creativity just as feeling and thinking are beholden to bodied-perception. Likewise, humans and more-than-humans exist in relation with air, water, food (earth), and gravity. Each interdependently contributes to the other's existence. Thus, sensorial and mathematical sides of any creative act co-exist, where variation arises from our directionality in the world—subjective "seeing" along an arc of complementaries. From this standpoint, how might varied positions come into conversation for the numinous and "the work of individuation"? Stepping away from "culture" and "science" understood from the dominant, settler, or Western colonial perspective, and working with images stemming from an archetype central to numinous experience, I offer a theoretical and aesthetic exploration of Silence through lyric text. Silence here is understood as "active experience," "force" (Dauenhauer, 1980, p. vii), a "secure symbolizing field" (Goodheart, cited in Bradway & McCoard, 2008, p. 8), "mystical" (cited in Pagels cited in Markell, 2002, p. 108), "quintessential" element (Wilmer, 2000, p. 182), the "root of all existence" (Ritchlin, 2008, p. 78), "witness" (Ammann, 1991, p. 97)—a healing image. Silence as primordial—animate, paradoxical, and cosmogonic—has "a weight that we do not find in any word"; "It is heavy with everything that we have lived, are living now and everything that we shall experience" (Sciacca in Fiumara, 1990, p. 105; Fidyk, 2006). In describing the centrality of

silence to Sandplay Therapy, for example, Markell (2002) writes, those who enter into sandplay—the "silent workshop of the psyche" (Bradway & McCoard, 2008), a "wordless ritual" (Ryce-Menuhin, 1992, p. 31)—experience "the process of imaging awake" (p. 112). Such seeing echoes eastern ontologies and offers necessary perspectives alongside indigenous ones (Williams, Roberts, & McIntosh, 2012; Cajete, 2000), conjoined with Jungian praxis. Considered is the way "meaningfulness always contains an absence as well as a presence" (Smith, 1999, p. 71)—an ecology often overlooked, especially critical in creative processes. Such unseen presence might be understood as the ingredient for spelling the numinous, for beauty, where we experience a brief suspension in the flow of time, when the "mythic moment and the present moment become coincident" (Markell, 2002, p. 39). Spelling offers other ways of being in the world—abiding, yielding, and attending—practices required during perilous times.

Bio: Alexandra Fidyk, award winning educator and scholar, poet and philosopher, serves as full professor in the Faculty of Education & Program Lead in the Trauma-Sensitive Practice Graduate Certificate Program, University of Alberta, Canada. As a transdisciplinary researcher, she engages with youth and teachers on issues of place, suffering, health, and love through body, relational, and creative-centred processes. Her writing and imagining continue to be influenced by the long sky of Saskatchewan. Her current scholarship is tending the intersectionality of trauma, arts, and analytical psychology. Contact: fidyk@ualberta.ca

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3. Adrian Price adrianprice825@gmail.com

"Beauty in Chaos: Storms, the Unconscious, and Transformation"

Abstract: This presentation explores the cyclone as a figure of beauty in chaos: a living form through which new ways of being and relating become perceptible amid modern institutional fragmentation. Bringing Ilya Prigogine's "islands of coherence" into dialogue with the unconscious, the aesthetic philosophy of yūgen, depth ecopsychology, and collective poetic inquiry, it asks how emerging forms of relation to self, others, and world gather into visibility through image, resonance, and shared symbolic life. The cyclone appears here as a material archetype of self-organizing form: matter dreaming itself into pattern. Its circulation offers an image of how an unseen center becomes perceptible indirectly, through recurrence, rotation, and partial revelation. Yūgen names the beauty that lives just beyond full perception, where hiddenness intensifies presence and suggestion carries more force than completion. Depth ecopsychology contributes to a view of nature as a resonant mirror, where material processes and psychic life illuminate one another. Collective poetic inquiry extends this movement into the social field, functioning as a shared mode of perception through which emerging realities are sensed, mirrored, and articulated. Grounded in arts-based poetic inquiry conducted through mixed-method psychometric research on emptiness and presencing-based group facilitation, this paper proposes beauty as a mode of disclosure through which shared symbolic life can constellate new forms of being and relating. In this sense, beauty functions as a collective mirror for what is arising within a changing world.

Bio: Adrian Price has a background in sociology and psychological science, with a master's degree focused on symbolic interactionism and the social shaping of meaning. In earlier mixed-method psychometric research on emptiness, she used conceptual metaphors, poetry, and dream imagery as qualitative interview tools to help define and operationalize an experience that often resists ordinary language. She is interested in how image, symbol, and shared poetic process can help make difficult-to-articulate realities more perceptible, and how these processes open new ways of relating to self, others, and world. Adrian Price is a Presencing Institute hub member and facilitator, where she brings a depth psychology approach to collective writing and reflection. She also works to make research more accessible and usable in relation to borderline personality disorder, with particular interest in emptiness and identity disturbance. She is a board member of the Florida Borderline Personality Disorder Association, contributes to research translation work with the Australian Borderline Personality Disorder Foundation, and is a member of the International Society for the Study of Surrealism.

4. Kelly Fraser, Pacifica Graduate Institute

"Wearing Inanna: Myth, Adornment, and Sacred Identity"

Abstract: Could perfume making and wearing be a form of psychological inquiry? Could perfumery be a feminist technology? Drawing on archetypal psychology, transdisciplinarity, and Jungian Active Imagination, Wearing Inanna uses the olfactory system to uniquely reimagine the Sumerian myth of the goddess Inanna. She is often known for her descent into the underworld, yet she is more than her death on the hook. Through seven perfume blends, a mythological field is entered, presenting an opportunity to reclaim the patriarchal imaginal field through a traditional beauty practice. Wearing Inanna proposes that intentional beauty rituals create a dynamic knowledge-making ecology that embodies myth, enabling many archetypal energies to coexist.

Bio: Kelly Fraser is Stylist of the Psyche. She is a fashion researcher, Depth psychologist, and multi-disciplinary curator whose practice treats clothing as a living citation and an alchemical field for memory, identity, and transformation. Her creative psyche dances fluidly between styling, writing, and curating to explore how archetypal matter surfaces in dressing rituals and how collective dreams appear in trend forecasting. With thirteen years in the fashion industry and roots in theatre, jazz, and ballet, her work aims to rebel against surface ornament. Confrontational yet sometimes playful, her work alchemizes raw personal pain into a witness to the unseen, both personally and collectively. Kelly has a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration from San Francisco State University. She is pursuing her Master of Arts in Depth Psychology and Humanities at Pacifica Graduate Institute. She has a penchant for matcha (!), her cat-son Prince, and for lots and lots of flowers