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National Gallery of Art



Updated November 24, 2020 (Original Release Date: October 1, 2020)

Jennifer Roberts of Harvard University to Present the 70th Annual A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts in Spring 2021



Jennifer Roberts, Elizabeth Cary Agassiz Professor of the Humanities in the department of the history of art and architecture at Harvard University, will give the 70th annual A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts in 2021. Photo by Roxana Perdue

Washington, DC—The Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts (CASVA) at the National Gallery of Art has announced that Jennifer Roberts, Elizabeth Cary Agassiz Professor of the Humanities in the department of the history of art and architecture at Harvard University, will give the 70th annual A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts in 2021.

The lecture series, entitled *Contact: Art and the Pull of Print*, will premiere virtually in spring 2021.

In her six-part lecture series, Jennifer Roberts will focus on printmaking. Printing is an art of physical contact, involving transfer under pressure between surfaces – a direct touch that can evoke multiple

forms of intimacy. And yet it is simultaneously an art of estrangement: it requires the deferral, displacement, and distribution of artistic agency, and it trades in reversal and inversion. The double implication of the term "pull" speaks to this paradox: prints arise from a certain *towardness*, an attraction between material bodies, but "to pull a print," in studio parlance, means to peel it from its matrix, breaking the plane of generative contact and releasing it into a field of dissemination. Although printmaking today is often considered to be a marginal, anachronistic practice, this fundamental paradox of print makes it remarkably timely, and accounts for its outsized – if largely unacknowledged – role in contemporary art of all media. Strategically downplaying the traditional emphasis on replication as the essence of print, these lectures will focus on the material and spatial metamorphoses of the printmaking process and trace their social and conceptual implications: pressure becomes a tool for confronting questions of oppression; reversal creates structures for negotiating difference; the paradox of the pull serves to reframe our seemingly dematerialized social life. Focusing on American and European art since 1960, the lectures will address the work of such artists as Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Corita Kent, David Hammons, Hock E Aye VI Edgar Heap of Birds, Christiane Baumgartner, and Glenn Ligon.

Lecture Titles:**Lecture 1:** Pressure**Lecture 2:** Reversal**Lecture 3:** Separation**Lecture 4:** Strain**Lecture 5:** Interference**Lecture 6:** Alienation**About the A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts**

Since 1949 the preeminent A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts have presented the best in contemporary thought and scholarship on the subject of the fine arts. The program itself is named for Andrew W. Mellon, founder of the National Gallery of Art, who gave the nation his art collection and funds to build the West Building, which opened to the public in 1941.

Past speakers have included Sir Kenneth Clark, T. J. Clark, Thomas Crow, E. H. Gombrich, Michael Fried, Mary Miller, Helen Vendler, Irene Winter, Alexander Nemerov, Hal Foster, Vidya Deheja, and, most recently, Wu Hung. Yve-Alain Bois, who was originally scheduled to present the 69th annual A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts in spring 2020, will deliver his lecture series on axonometry in fall 2022. For a full list of past lecturers, visit www.nga.gov/research/casva/meetings/mellon-lectures-in-the-fine-arts.html.

About Jennifer Roberts

Jennifer L. Roberts is Elizabeth Cary Agassiz Professor of the Humanities and Johnson-Kulukundis Family Faculty Director of the Arts at Harvard University's Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study.

Focusing on British and American art from the colonial period onward, she has particular interests in print history, material studies, the theory and practice of making, and the history and philosophy of science. Roberts is the author of three books spanning American art from the 1760s to the 1970s: *Mirror-Travels: Robert Smithson and History* (2004), *Jasper Johns / In Press: The Crosshatch Works and the Logic of Print* (2012), and *Transporting Visions: The Movement of Images in Early America* (2014). She is coauthor of the textbook *American Encounters: Art, History, and Cultural Identity* (2007). Her current book project, *The Matrix: Contemporary Art and the Life of Print*, explores the way in which artists after 1960 embraced the physical and philosophical fecundity of printmaking processes. She received her AB in English and art history from Stanford University (1992) and her PhD in history of art from Yale University (2000).

Update: November 24, 2020

Previously announced dates have been removed because of logistical pressures resulting from the Gallery's reclosure.

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Updated September 22, 2020 (Original Release Date: May 1, 2019)

[Yve-Alain Bois Will Give the 69th Annual A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts in Fall 2022](#)

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