

# CENTER FOR SCIENTIFIC STUDIES IN THE ARTS

A COLLABORATION BETWEEN NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY AND THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

*Panel discussion on*

## Material Studies in Visual Arts: The Role of Objects in Writing Histories

This panel, sponsored by the Northwestern University / Art Institute of Chicago Center for Scientific Studies in the Arts (NU-ACCESS), will examine how objects, when interrogated through the multiple lenses of a conservator, an art historian, an anthropologist, and a historian, can provide new information and fresh approaches to write theirs (and our civilization's) histories.

**Monday, November 5, 2018**  
**2-4 pm**

**Location: Segal Design Institute ITW Classroom, 1-350**  
**2133 Sheridan Road**  
**Evanston Campus**

- 2:00–2:10**     **Francesca Casadio**, Introductions  
(Grainger Executive Director of Conservation and Science, The Art Institute of Chicago; Co-Director, Northwestern University/Art Institute of Chicago Center for Scientific Studies in the Arts)
- 2:10–2:30**     **Erma Hermens**, Technical Art History: Celebrating the Act of Making  
(Professor in Studio Practice and Technical Art History, History of Art Department, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Amsterdam; Senior Researcher, Technical Art History, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands)
- 2:30–2:50**     **Claudia Swan**, "Encounter Objects": Materiality and the Global Baroque  
(Associate Professor, Northwestern University, Department of Art History)
- 2:50–3:10**     **Mark Hauser**, Plantation Waterways: Materiality, Archaeology and Analysis Used to Uncover Histories of Slavery  
(Associate Professor, Northwestern University, Department of Anthropology)
- 3:10–3:30**     **Peter Miller**, A Critical History of Technical Art History  
(Dean, Bard Graduate Center)
- 3:30–4:00**     **Jay A. Clarke**, *Moderator and Respondent*  
(Rothman Family Curator of Prints and Drawings, The Art Institute of Chicago)

**RSVP:** [scienceforart@northwestern.edu](mailto:scienceforart@northwestern.edu)

## ABSTRACTS AND BIOS

**Erma Hermens**

***Technical Art History: Celebrating the Act of Making***

Technical Art History is a relatively young strand of art history and, by its very nature, interdisciplinary and object-based. By combining art historical research and science, we try to look over the shoulder of the artist at work, to gain a true understanding of the act of making in all its facets. The creative process and the material dynamics and contexts throughout the life of the object, and of its appearance as we know it, now are at the centre of our research. Through several fascinating case studies of 16th and 17th century practices and paintings, mostly from the collection of the Rijksmuseum, I will reflect on novel insights and the possibilities and limitations of Technical Art History.

Professor Erma Hermens is a leading scholar in the field of Technical Art History (TAH). She is a senior researcher in TAH at the Rijksmuseum, working with the museum's curators, conservators and scientists, and occupies the Rijksmuseum Chair in Studio Practice and TAH at the University of Amsterdam, after nine years as Associate Professor at Glasgow University, where she developed one of the first Masters in TAH. Her research is object-based with an emphasis on the act of making in all its facets: historical, artistic, and artisanal materials and practices; art technological source research; workshop choreographies and embodied knowledge; and cross disciplinary artistic collaboration and exchange in the 16th- and 17th-century workshop. She works largely with interdisciplinary teams, combining contextual research of objects with scientific analytical data. Present projects (funded by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research, NWO) include: CT for Art: from Images to Patterns (IMPACT4Art); Imaging, Identification and Interpretation of Glass in Paint (I<sup>3</sup>Glassp); and Colored grounds in Netherlandish 16th and 17th-century painting.

**Claudia Swan**

***"Encounter Objects": Materiality and the Global Baroque***

In the context of global exchange, a number of locally sourced objects were transported and came to be collected at far removes. Porcelain is a prime example: while Chinese porcelain found its way into Persian and Ottoman courts long before the expansion of European trade routes east in the seventeenth century, it was in the Baroque era that millions of pieces of porcelain were brought to Europe. There, this new form of luxury object was avidly sought after—and emulated—in local materials. Hence Dutch Delftware, an earthenware product whose blue and white glazing mimics and adapts the example of Asian porcelain. Like porcelain, Asian lacquerware made a strong impression on European collectors and artisans, and was likewise imitated in local materials. One of the sorts of objects I have been studying (from a historical rather than technical perspective) is what I call "encounter objects": objects produced as a result of encounters with foreign materials and artistic means. These range from Delftware and Amsterdam lacquerware to elaborate chandeliers made in the Netherlands for the Ottoman sultan and the Japanese shogun and from textiles woven in Europe of raw Asian silk to

ivorywork made in Ceylon to gratify Christian audiences in Europe. The aim of this brief talk is to emphasize the necessity of studying the materiality of those objects that circulated in the early modern global networks and analyzing the material encounters they so often performed.

Claudia Swan (PhD Columbia University) is Associate Professor of Art History at Northwestern University and studies and teaches northern European visual culture from 1400–1700, art and science, the history of collecting, and the history of the imagination. She is the author of *The Clutius Botanical Watercolors. Plants and Flowers of the Renaissance*, on Renaissance botanical illustrations, and *Art, Science, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Holland: Jacques de Gheyn II (1565–1629)*, which studies the intersection of empiricism and witchcraft in Holland in the early seventeenth century through the work of the Dutch artist. She has published numerous articles and book chapters on early modern art, science, and collecting and on Dutch visual culture, and writes regularly for the *Times Literary Supplement*. Professor Swan is co-editor with Londa Schiebinger of *Colonial Botany: Science, Commerce, Politics, and Image. Imagination. Cognition* (2018), and is editing forthcoming volumes on *Art & Nature* and on *Early Modern Geometries*. Swan has been a resident fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, NJ; the Max-Planck-Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte, Berlin; CRASSH, Cambridge University; and the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study. In January 2016 she was Visiting Senior Fellow at Cambridge University, and in winter 2017 Visiting Fellow at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in Amsterdam. Her forthcoming book is *“Rarities of these Lands”: Encounters with the Exotic in Early Modern Holland*. Her most recent article is “Fortunes at Sea: Mediated Goods and Dutch Trade ca. 1600,” in *Sites of Mediation*.

### **Mark Hauser**

#### ***Plantation Waterways: Materiality, Archaeology and Analysis Used to Uncover Histories of Slavery***

Recent headlines about Michigan, California, and India have disabused a public conventional wisdom that water is free of charge. Cases such as these, where human needs directly compete with institutional forces, are not new. Water, as a substance essential to production and reproduction in 18th-century Caribbean plantations, created a predicament, the resolution of which was unevenly borne by human beings held as slaves. Building on the analysis of household goods, I present an assemblage-based analysis of slave life comparing “water-ways” at two plantations occupied during Dominica's brief sugar boom (1760–1830). I combine material characteristics of objects used to capture and transform water with their biographies in a landscape, circulations in peripheral flows, and supporting roles in social relations. Pottery and glass used to store, capture, and serve water were part of the creative strategies used by enslaved laborers to resolve some of the predicaments of slavery.

Mark Hauser is a historical archaeologist who specializes in materiality, slavery and inequality. These key themes intersect in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Atlantic and Indian Oceans and form a foundation on his research on the African Diaspora and Colonial Contexts. As an archaeologist who studies how people adapt to landscapes of inequality and contribute to those landscapes in material ways, he employs ethnohistorical, archaeological,

and archaeometric approaches. His current research examines The Global Life of Things between the Indian Ocean and the Tropical Atlantic between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He is author of *An Archaeology of Black Markets* along with over two dozen articles. His second book project, tentatively entitled, *Mapping Water on The Nature Island* is based on eight years of archaeological and historical research conducted with the aid of the National Science Foundation and the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research.

**Peter Miller**

***A Critical History of Technical Art History***

The rise of technical art history has something to do with both the history of art history and the history of material culture studies. In this paper I will not address this point. Instead, I will reinsert technical studies of objects into a deeper story that is also a wider story. Beginning with the example of how Peiresc studied objects at the beginning of the chronological period we are examining, and turning to André Leroi-Gourhan towards its end, we will see that techniques of object analysis were regularly practiced and that this approach did not lead away towards a separate discipline of technical study but “back” towards the fundamental questions of the human.

Peter N. Miller is Dean and Professor of Cultural History at the Bard Graduate Center in New York City. He is the author of four books on the Provençal humanist Fabri de Peiresc (1580-1637) and a number of collaborative volumes on the history of historical scholarship. He published a book on the opera in seventeenth-century Venice, political thought in eighteenth-century Britain, and helped curate Dutch New York Between East and West: The World of Margrieta van Varick (2009). He has been awarded fellowships by the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, National Endowment for the Humanities, American Council of Learned Societies and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. He is the Principal Investigator on the project, “Cultures of Conservation” (2012-22), sponsored by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

**Jay Clarke**

***Discussion Moderator***

Jay A. Clarke is the Rothman Family Curator in the Department of Prints and Drawings at the Art Institute of Chicago. From 2009 to 2018 Clarke was Manton Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute. From 1997 to 2009 she served as a curator in the Department of Prints and Drawings at the Art Institute of Chicago. Clarke has been a lecturer in the Graduate Program in the History of Art at Williams College since 2009. She is author of *Becoming Edvard Munch: Influence, Anxiety, and Myth* (2009) and editor of *Landscape, Innovation, and Nostalgia: The Manton Collection of British Art* (2012); *The Impressionist Line from Edgar Degas to Toulouse-Lautrec* (2013); and *Hurricanes Waves: Clifford Ross* (2015). Clarke has curated exhibitions on a wide variety of artists from Albrecht Dürer to Pablo Picasso to Thomas Struth. She has published articles on Käthe Kollwitz, Max Beckmann, Edvard Munch, the art dealer and critic Julius Meier-Graefe, and the British linocut movement.

Clarke received her M.A. and Ph.D. from Brown University. In 2016, she was a Fellow at the Center for Curatorial Leadership.