

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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HOUSTON, TEXAS

VITAL CONSTITUTIONS: THE APPEARANCE OF "HEALTH" IN HISTORY
INTERDISCIPLINARY GRADUATE CONFERENCE
DEPARTMENT OF ART HISTORY | RICE UNIVERSITY

What is "health?" A healthy society? A healthy planet? The Department of Art History at Rice University is pleased to announce its inaugural interdisciplinary graduate conference, *Vital Constitutions: The Appearance of "Health" in History*, which takes place on Saturday, October 14, at the Moody Center for the Arts on the Rice University campus.

Conceptions of health and the healthfulness of bodies, societies, and environments, are sprawling. *Vital Constitutions* aims to facilitate an open and interdisciplinary dialogue about representations and realities of care and condemnation across time and geography as related to imaging in art, art history, and visual culture; architecture, anthropology, and beyond. A group of nine emerging scholars and artists will share their research and practices during three panels: "Biology, Politics, and Mutation," "Building, Memory, and the Forsaken," and, "Ritual, Remedy, and Form." We encourage the public to not only attend the presentations but also participate in a town hall style discussion that will conclude Saturday's programming. This portion of the conference will be led by invited panelists Dr. Suzannah Biernoff, Erika Blumenfeld, and Dr. Jairo Moreno—whose research engages subjects such as mixed-ability communities, the Anthropocene, and music history, respectively—who will speak on their work, respond to the panels, and encourage conversation.

Planning *Vital Constitutions* included attention to its own role as an academic conference. We hope that the line-up and format help expand ideas of such gatherings. In addition to the presentations, ample coffee breaks will offer audience members and participants a chance to visit key parts of the conference: an exhibition of visual art and a temporary non-circulating library located in the Moody Center Lantern Room. This complementary space will, we hope, offer 'food for thought.' The Moody Center, a site straddling the border of the campus and the city, is an apt metaphor for our goal to engage Houston at large and layer perspectives.

The conference and exhibition are free, but seating is limited. Please RSVP on our website vitalconstitutions.com. Further details and updates to the conference schedule can also be found at both vitalconstitutions.com and our Rice University blog at vitalconstitutions.blogs.rice.edu/. The Moody is wheelchair accessible.

Invited Roundtable Participants:

Dr. Suzannah Biernoff

Senior Lecturer in Modern and Contemporary Visual Culture in the Department of History of Art at Birkbeck, University of London

Erika Blumenfeld

Transdisciplinary Artist, Artist-in-Residence, NASA's ROSES PDART Grant

Dr. Jairo Moreno

Associate Professor in the Department of Music at the University of Pennsylvania

The *Vital Constitutions* Interdisciplinary Conference is generously supported by the Department of Art History and the GradStarter Initiative at Rice University. We are also grateful for our relationship with the Moody Center for the Arts.

Images pertaining to the exhibition are displayed below.

For press inquiries, please contact vitalconstitutions@gmail.com.



Vital Constitutions: The Appearance of "Health" in History Image List



Emily Verla Bovino (Mobile Irony Valve Productions), photograph from performance documentation: US Route 90 in rearview mirror of KIA hatchback during test-drives of choreographed audio-drama *Better to Lose Your Head Than Use It* (RK-LOG Episode Two, 2011 - 2017), Marfa, Texas, April 2017.



Emily Verla Bovino (Mobile Irony Valve Productions), *Better to Lose Your Head Than Use It* (RK-LOG Episode Two), *RADBARPLATHR* exhibition main room with computer station for access to episode web platform, University of California, San Diego, Structural and Materials Engineering Building (SME) Gallery.



Christina Novakov-Ritchey, Still from *Svakodnevno, nastavljamo da pitamo* (Everyday, we keep asking), 2017.
Valja Prerast, Serbia



Christina Novakov-Ritchey, Still from *Melting Our Fear*, 2016.
Belgrade, Serbia



Hanna Washburn, *Choleric*, 2017. Recycled clothing on stretchers, 24 x 36 inches.



Hanna Washburn, *Phantom Limb 2*, 2017.
Recycled clothing and wood, 20 x 16 x 4 inches.

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