



## Inscribing Love. The Medial, Multimodal and Material Manifestations of Love from Below and Above

September 29th -  
October 1st 2025

Organized by Prof. Dr. Eva L. Wyss  
& MA Piera Mazzaglia



“  
**Doubt thou the stars are fire;  
Doubt that the sun doth move;  
Doubt truth to be a liar;  
But never doubt I love.**  
”

— William Shakespeare, Hamlet, Act II, Scene II

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If you have any further questions,  
please get in touch with our organising team.

This interdisciplinary workshop explores the practice of 'inscribing' love as a lens for studying diverse cultural practices related to love. It examines medial, multimodal and material expressions of love as signifying acts — ranging from textual and visual representations to embodied and material articulations — both from everyday lived experiences (from below) and in institutional, literary, and philosophical frameworks (from above) that can also be related to subjectivity, identity and power.

Over the different historical epochs, material objects and written/inscribed artefacts have been used to convey love in varied contexts and social strata. For this reason the medial, multimodal and material manifestations of love must not be limited to “the narratives of the perspectives of famous and wealthy individuals and intellectuals”, but also be extended to the transmissions and manifestations of love by those from more modest societal strata and backgrounds (high/low strand, class & education), whose means of expressing affection may differ significantly in form and context.

Indeed, as everyday history points out, the perspectives of so-called “everyday” people represent equally important historical narratives “from below” for the study of history and of cultural practices and social dynamics, and for this reason shall no longer be neglected. According to Janning, the acquisition, accumulation and exchange of “things” (e.g., artifacts) are central to social, cultural, gender or queer identities and relationships that tie people together and drive their behavior.



# Conference Programme

Monday, Sep. 29 2025  
Room D239

14:00

## Welcome Address

Prof. Dr. Dr. hc. Stefan Neuhaus

## Introduction

Prof. Dr. Eva L. Wyss (University of Koblenz, Germany)/  
Piera Mazzaglia (Justus Liebig University, Gießen, Germany)

## FRAMING INEQUALITY IN MANIFESTATIONS OF LOVE

14:30

## Inequality and Materiality in the Curatorial Work of Love:

### A Social Science Perspective

Michelle Janning (Whitman College, Washington, USA)

15:15 Coffee break

15:45

## Love, Rings and Literature: Elizabethan Posy Rings, Gender and Social Status

Jonathan Gibson (The Open University, England)

16:30

## (In)equality in Love Letter Manuals

Andrea Rapp (Technical University, Darmstadt, Germany)

17:15

## Love between Art and Everyday Life - Literariness in Private Love Letters

Nadine Dietz (Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany)

18:20

## Guided Tour of the Love Letter Archive (Liebesbriefarchiv, cf. [liebesbriefarchiv.de](http://liebesbriefarchiv.de))

Tuesday, Sep. 30 2025  
Room D239

## CONSUMERLY LOVE

09:00

## The 'Tender of myself': The Rise and Fall of the Written Proposal of Marriage in England

Sally Holloway (University of Warwick, UK)

09:45

## Writing Love in a Pre-Designed World: The Impact of Multimodal Consumer Culture on Expressive Freedom

Prof. Dr. Eva L. Wyss

10:30 Coffee break

11:00

## Love on Social Media: The Case of Digital Love Letters

Piera Mazzaglia

12:00 Lunch break

## MATERIALITY & VALUE IN LOVE OBJECTS Room H009

14:00

## Objects at the End of Love: Performing Sadness with Things

Ania Malinowska (University of Silesia, Poland)

14:45

## Gigamesh and Enkidu's "Brotherly Love"? Exploring the Language of Love in the SB Gilgamesh Epic and Other Narratives from Mesopotamia

Karen Sonik (Auburn University, USA)

15:30 Coffee break

16:00

## Heart Representations in Portugal: A Comparative 'Theatre of Social Display'

Claudia Pimentel & Alexandra Pinto (University of Porto, Portugal)

19:00 Conference dinner

Wednesday, Oct. 1 2025  
Room H009

## (IN)DIFFERENCES IN LOVERS ART

09:00

## From Avant-Garden of Eden to Sober Fantasies: The Love Songs and Photographs of Yoko Ono and John Lennon

Ya'ara Gil-Glazer (Tel-Hai College, Israel)

09:45

## Inscribing Love, Prescribing Distinction. On the Rhetoric of Love in Letter Writing Manuals from the 17th to the 19th Century

Annika Nickenig (Free University Berlin, Germany)

10:30 Coffee break

## Signs of Love. Inscriptions on the Body between Gender and Devotion – regrettably, this talk will not take place

Jenny Körber (University of Hamburg, Germany)

11:00

## Quoting Love

Philipp Hegel (The Academy of Sciences and Literature, Mainz, Germany)

12:00 Lunch break

13:00 Final discussion

14:00 Postlude coffee & check-out

Especially in romantic, erotic or sexual relationships, objects play a key role in conveying love towards a beloved person as they provide a more material abstract nature to abstract feelings and a form of documentation of the romantic bond itself. Though both experiences and expressions of love through written artifacts and material objects are culturally and socially variable, they are very much influenced by social class, level of education and gender.

While individuals 'from above', who are often more educated and socially privileged, may express their love through carefully composed love letters, formal poetry, and precious gifts, giving preference to high-quality and more valuable materials, those 'from below' might rely on more accessible and modest forms of medial, multimodal and material manifestations that represent their affection and convey their love. For this reason, we are particularly interested in examining different forms of romantic expressions of affection, moving away from a more traditional point of view strictly focused on love letters.

The contributions herein will therefore not only focus on the role of written artefacts and material objects in constructing, maintaining and strengthening relationships, but also on investigating how social class shape and influence the expression and materialisation of love and feelings. We do not consider class difference as an obstacle but rather as a tool which allows us to investigate the expression of love on a broader and more varied spectrum of analysis, which is neither limited to gender nor class or level of education.

