

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 and MA Piera Mazzaglia

ABSTRACT

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 could 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 the 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. Following Janning the acquisition, accumulation and exchange of “things” (i.s. artifacts) is central to the social, cultural, gender or queer identities and relationships that tie people together and drive their behavior.



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 the experiences and expressions of love through written artifacts and material objects are culturally and socially variable, and for this reason are very much influenced by social class, level of education and gender. For example, while individuals "from above," often more educated and socially privileged, may express their love through carefully composed love letters formal poetry, 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 living the concept of manifestations of love open as we do not want it to be restricted to some specific narratives only.

The contributions will therefore focus not only on the role of written artefacts and material objects in constructing, maintaining and strengthening the relationships but also in investigating how social classes shape and influence the expression and materialisation of love and feelings. We do not consider class differences as obstacles but rather as tools which allow us to investigate the expression of love on a broader and more varied spectrum of analysis, which is not limited to gender nor class and level of education.



Conference Programme

MONDAY 29TH SEPTEMBER 2025

Room D239

14.00 Eva L. Wyss (University of Koblenz, Germany) / Piera Mazzaglia
(Justus Liebig University, Germany) – Introduction

FRAMING INEQUALITY IN MANIFESTATIONS OF LOVE

14.30 Michelle Janning (Whitman College, Washington, USA)
Inequality and Materiality in the Curatorial Work of Love:
A Social Science Perspective

15.15 *Coffee Break*

15.45 Jonathan Gibson (The London Open University, UK)
Love, Rings and Literature: Elizabethan Posy Rings,
Gender and Social Status

16.30 Andrea Rapp (Technical University, Darmstadt, Germany)
(In)equality in Love Letter Manuals

17.15 Nadine Dietz (Goethe University, Frankfurt, Germany)
Love between Art and Everyday Life - Literariness in Private Love Letters

18.20 *Guided Tour of the Liebesbriefarchiv*



TUESDAY 30TH SEPTEMBER 2025

CONSUMERLY LOVE

Room D239

9.00 Sally Holloway (University of Warwick, UK)

The 'Tender of myself':

the Rise and Fall of the Written Proposal of Marriage in England

9.45 Eva L. Wyss (University of Koblenz, Germany)

Writing Love in a Pre-Designed World:

The Impact of Multimodal Consumer Culture on Expressive Freedom

10.30 *Coffee Break*

11.00 Piera Mazzaglia (Justus Liebig University, Germany)

Love on Social Media: the Case of Digital Love Letters

12.00 *Lunch break*

MATERIALITY & VALUE IN LOVE OBJECTS

Room H009

14.00 Ania Malinowska (University of Silesia, Poland)

Objects at the End of Love:

Performing Sadness with Things



14.45 Karen Sonik (Auburn University, USA)

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

15.30 *Coffee Break*

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

Heart Representations in Portugal:

A Comparative 'Theatre of Social Display'

19.00 *Conference Dinner*

WEDNESDAY 1ST OCTOBER 2025

Room H009

(IN)DIFFERENCES IN LOVERS ART

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

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

9.45 Annika Nickenig (Free University Berlin, Germany)

Inscribing love, prescribing distinction on the Rhetoric of Love in
Letter Writing Manuals from 17th to the 19th Century

10.30 *Coffee Break*

11.00 Jannik Saal (University of Koblenz, Germany):

A Linguistic Examination of Intimacy and Sexuality
in Prison Letters from the 20th century

11.45 Jenny Körber (University of Hamburg, Germany)

Signs of Love. Inscriptions on the Body
between Gender and Devotion

12.30 *Lunch Break*

14.00 Philipp Hegel (Akademie der Wissenschaften und
der Literatur Mainz, Germany)

Quoting Love

14.45 Final Discussion

15.30 *Postlude Coffee & Check-out*

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

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