

Fleshing Out Words: Poetry on Objects, from Classical Epigrams to Modern 'Light Poems'

9th March 2019

University of Warwick

Funded by the Humanities Research Centre

Call for Papers

Keynote Speaker: Prof. Richard Hunter

Guest speaker: Robert Montgomery

With his 'light poems', Robert Montgomery demonstrates how poetry can be a billboard, a tattooed body or even a gift to exchange for coffee: this interplay between word and object was already a quintessential feature of Graeco-Roman 'epigrammatic' poetry, which could be scratched or carved into walls, statues and stones. In our modern era of 'Instagram poets' and the quotation-culture of tweets, bits of poetry are spread across urban landscapes and social networks in the most varied forms, ingeniously combining words and objects, and making us aware of our inheritance of ideas developed in different ways in classical antiquity, linking poetry, materiality and objects.

The ancient epigram, a poetic form conscious of its 'writtenness' which originated as inscription (on gravestones, monuments and other objects) and which in fascinating ways lives on in our contemporary society, foregrounds questions about the materiality of texts in ways that we will take as a point of departure for this inter-disciplinary conference. When poetry is engraved on stones, scratched into walls, written on an object, how does the nature and use of that object affect our interpretation of the text? To what extent and how does the medium on which a poem is viewed influence the reader/viewer's perception of it? This conference aims to investigate the shift between the epigram as embodying an inseparability of text and materiality, as conceived in the classical period and in the Renaissance (Neo-Latin epigram), and the modern re-interpretation of poetry on objects.

We invite abstracts on topics including, but not limited to:

- Theoretical/ philosophical perspectives on poetry and materiality;
- The epigram book/ epigram as inscription;
- Continuities and differences between the conception of object and text in ancient/Renaissance epigrams and the new material expressions of modern poetry;
- (Responses to) the visual context/visuality of epigrams;
- The extent to which readings of ancient and/or Renaissance epigram might spur new perspectives on the contemporary production and consumption of poetry;
- The extent to which 'epigram' is a useful category/ recognizable poetic form in the modern world;
- The emergence of the Neo-Latin epigram.

We invite abstracts of up to 300 words for 20-minute papers. Please send all abstracts and a short biography to fleshingoutwords.warwick@gmail.com by **Monday 24th September 2018**.

Following the conference, we intend to submit proposal to the Warwick Series in the Humanities (with Routledge) for a collected volume.

