QUEEN: REIMAGINING POWER FROM ANTIQUITY TO THE PRESENT

A Virtual Symposium
Hosted by the Gallatin School of Individualized Study, New York University
Fall 2021 (dates TBD)

The Gallatin School of Individualized Study is pleased to announce QUEEN: REIMAGINING POWER FROM ANTIQUITY TO THE PRESENT, an interdisciplinary, virtual symposium to be held in Fall 2021.

Royal and elite women in the ancient world established and maintained a powerful public presence through visual and material culture. While the principal ancient narratives tend to cast women as passive and immobile, the material record presents numerous alternative pictures that problematize this relationship of gender, agency, and mobility. Throughout the 1st millennium BCE, such women moved across the interconnected geographies of the Mediterranean and western Asia to marry into new dynasties, participate in war, and oversee the design and construction of new monuments and art works. Through their direct and indirect involvement in shaping art and visual culture, ancient royal and elite women enrich our broader, contemporary discussions on the art of power; intersections of race, gender, and agency; and the production and negotiation of political identities through art and monuments in the deep past to the present. Indeed, modern-day expressions of queenship take place beyond elite spheres, as artists, performers, and political actors have invoked and adapted aspects of ancient queenship.

This virtual symposium integrates scholarly and creative knowledge production from different perspectives that broaden the stakes and widen the impact of historical work. The symposium aims to model collaborative, critical, and public approaches to history and art by including the expertise of students, artists, performers, and educators beyond the university alongside the work of scholars and curators. This gathering hybridizes a scholarly conference with an arts exhibition, live performances, and public engagement initiatives—including Gallatin student work, drag performances, and a K-12 educational toolkit. The goal is to bring diverse perspectives from multiple disciplines, generations, and practices while filling in the gaps that exclude women and femmes out of historical and political memory. By highlighting multiple ways of knowing, we aim to foster a space that is academic, creative, political, intersectional, intersubjective, and speculative. Confirmed keynote talks include La Vaughn Belle (visual artist), Amy Gansell (Associate Professor of Art History, St. John’s University), Shelley Haley (Edward North Professor Classics, Hamilton College; President, Society for Classical Studies) and Jackie Murray (Associate Professor of Classics, Univ. of Kentucky).

We invite papers, performance proposals, and artistic projects from multiple disciplines and practitioners, and encourage submissions that address topics related to beauty, representation, agency, reception, and more (see the below list of possible topics).

Please submit a 250-500 word abstract and a cv to pek237@nyu.edu and amrhein@sas.upenn.edu by March 30, 2021.
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MOVEMENT AND MOBILITY
- Redress the stereotype of ancient women as passive and immobile
- Fill the gaps in knowledge around the political and physical movements of royal women across the eastern Mediterranean and western Asia
- Examine political, cultural, and social mobilities of ancient women

POWER AND AGENCY
- Relationships between gender and power, alongside other categories of identity
- Cultural and social roles of royal women in antiquity (i.e. priestesses)
- Royal women as patrons of art, architecture, and their own images
- Royal women as political leaders, warriors, and decision-makers
- Kinship and queenship: royal women as mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters
- Queens as goddesses, cultic objects, and divine bodies

BEAUTY, BODIES, AND REPRESENTATION
- What do powerful women or queens look like?
- Performances and postures of queenship
- Queenly attributes, costume, attire, jewelry
- Representations of royal women, including portraits, embodiments, and objects

RECEPTION
- Later Roman, Medieval, Modern, and Contemporary portrayals of and engagements with ancient queenship in art, literature, and politics
- Artists and performers who reimagine queenship and power dynamics
- Transhistorical, transnational approaches to queenship in western Asia and the eastern Mediterranean

PEDAGOGICAL, ART-HISTORICAL, AND CURATORIAL METHODS
- Feminist and critical race theoretical and methodological frameworks for considering pre-modern, historical subject matter
- Methods for studying, amplifying, and teaching stories of women and femmes in art and history
- Defining queenship across disciplines
- Other pressing themes, topics, and questions in women’s history-writing