

**CFP: Objects of Affection: Towards a Materiology of Emotions.
Interdisciplinary Conference, May 4-6, 2012 (Princeton University)**

CALL FOR PAPERS



**OBJECTS OF AFFECTION:
TOWARDS A MATERILOGY OF
EMOTIONS**

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONFERENCE

May 4-6, 2012

Program in Russian & Eurasian Studies

Princeton University

In the first issue of the journal *Veshch-Objet-Gegenstand*, which appeared 90 years ago in Berlin, the avant-gardist El Lissitzky placed the object at the center of the artistic and social concerns of the day: “We have called our review *Object* because for us art means the creation of new ‘objects.’ ... Every organized work—be it a house, a poem or a picture—is an object with a purpose; it is not meant to lead people away from life but to help them to organize it. ... Abandon declarations and refutations as soon as possible, make objects!”

Ultimately, only three issues of *Veshch-Objet-Gegenstand* would be published, but the journal’s project to cultivate object as a primary tool of social organization clearly touched upon broader concerns of its time. At the end of the 1920s, Sergei Tret’iakov, a leading theorist of Russian production art, similarly insisted on abandoning the traditional fascination with individual trials and tribulations and to concentrate instead on the biography of the object that proceeds “through the system of people.” Only such a biography, Tret’iakov maintained, can teach us about “the social significance of an emotion by considering its effect on the object being made.”

Taking the Russian avant-garde’s concern with the material life of emotions as our starting point, the conference organizers seek to assemble an international, interdisciplinary group of scholars working at the intersection between studies of affect and studies of material culture. In the last decade, these two crucial strands of social inquiry have shifted the focus of analytic attention away from the individual or collective subject towards emotional states and material substances. These interests in the affective and the tangible as such have helped to foreground processes, conditions, and phenomena that are relatively autonomous from the individuals or social groups that originally produced them. Thus interrogating traditional notions of subjective agency, various scholars have drawn our attention to “a conative nature” of things (Jane Bennet), to “affective intensities” (Brian Massumi), or to textural perception (Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick) – to name just a few of these interventions – in order to

pose questions that fall outside of dominant frameworks for understanding the epistemology of power.

Despite their growing importance, however, these diverse methods and concepts for mapping the emotive biographies of things have not yet been in a direct dialogue with one another. By focusing on the material dimensions of affect and, conversely, the emotional components of object formation, this conference aims to bridge this gap.

We invite submissions from scholars in a range of disciplines including history, anthropology, sociology, religion, politics, law, psychology, history of medicine, science studies, art, film, media and literary criticism, who are interested in exploring types of affective responses, protocols of emotional attachment, and regimes of perception that are encoded into and sustained by material substances. We welcome theoretically rigorous proposals that draw attention to new configurations of object relations as well as submissions that examine historically and culturally specific forms of affective networks built around instances of inorganic life across the world.

Please send your abstract (300 words) and a short CV to Serguei Oushakine, the Chair of the Program Committee (oushakin@princeton.edu) by **February 1, 2012**.

Those selected to give presentations at the conference will be contacted at the end of February 2012.

Final papers will be due no later than April 15, and they will be posted on the conference's website.

We may be able to offer a limited number of travel subsidies for graduate students and presenters outside the USA.

PROGRAM COMMITTEE:

Serguei Oushakine (Slavic Languages and Literatures; Anthropology, Princeton U)

Anna Katsnelson (Slavic Languages & Literatures, Princeton U)

David Leheny (East Asian Studies, Princeton U)

Anson Rabinbach (Department of History, Princeton U)

Gayle Salamon (Department of English, Princeton U)