

Visual Practices across the University:

an experimental workshop on health and visual methods and materials at Durham

Co-hosted by the Visual and Material Lab (Discovery Research Platform for Medical Humanities at Durham University) and Centre for Visual Arts and Culture at Durham University (CVAC).

Tuesday 19th September 2023, 10-4, Durham University (venue tbc).

- What does 'visual methods' mean to you and your research and/or teaching?
- What 'counts' as an image or visual object in your discipline or field of study?
- How do different disciplines make, use, teach and talk about images or visual objects?
- How might images and image-making practices offer common ground for establishing collaborative relationships across research institutes and academic departments in order to address pressing human health challenges?

This experimental workshop brings together Durham researchers working with visual methods and materials in relation to health across the university. We understand 'health' in its widest possible sense as encompassing physical, mental, social and environmental health, and potentially relating to a range of themes including (but not limited to) embodiment, care, community, wellbeing, illness and injury, trauma and pain, and biomedical and clinical practice. We define 'visual practices' similarly broadly as encompassing both the methods and objects of research; 'images' and 'visual objects' might include (but are not limited to) maps, graphs, teaching models, diagrams, data visualisations, digital media, photographs, films, collages, video and photo diaries, paintings, drawings, and graphic novels. We are interested in – among other things – the evidentiary claims made of visual methods and materials, and how understandings of what constitutes 'evidence' might vary across disciplines.

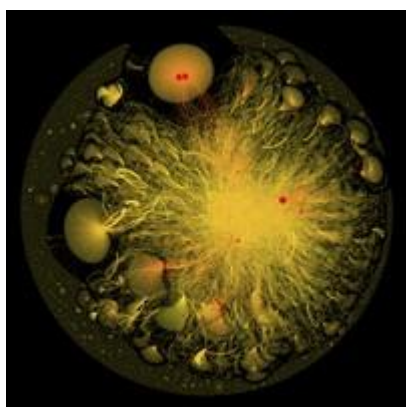


Image: Graphic visualisation of tweets containing #breastcancer. Credit: Eric Clarke, 2016. Wellcome Collection.

This workshop borrows its title from James Elkins' *Visual Practices across the University*, an exhibition, undergraduate course and book (2007) exploring the varied ways in which images are deployed across a diverse range of academic disciplines (with particular emphasis on looking beyond the humanities disciplines normally associated with image-based research). Citing the increasing 'fragmentation' of the contemporary university, Elkins proposes that a university-wide discussion of images (which does not flinch from engaging with technical and often discipline-specific language) might facilitate teaching, learning and research across disciplinary boundaries.

The purpose of this event is to:

- facilitate participants in thinking about images and image-making practices outside the parameters of their own disciplines.
- scope interest in visual methods and materials in health-related research across the university.
- seed new collaborations across institutes and disciplines.
- identify Durham staff at all career stages interested in working with the Visual and Material Lab (part of the new Discovery Research Platform for Medical Humanities at Durham University).
- Guide the Visual and Material Lab and CVAC in planning future collaborative events, projects and outputs.

We welcome participants from across Durham university, from all disciplines. You do not need to have a prior association with the Institute for Medical Humanities (IMH) or the Centre for Visual Arts and Cultures (CVAC).

If you are interested in participating in this workshop, please email Fiona Johnstone (fiona.r.johnstone@durham.ac.uk) with your name; your research area, discipline or field of study; and a line or two about what 'images', 'visual objects' or 'visual methods' means to your research and what you hope to gain from participating.

Workshop participants will be asked to provide a) an image and b) a short text (c. 250 words) that responds to the question "What do images, visual objects or visual methods mean to you and your work?"

The Visual and Material Lab is part of the new Discovery Research Platform for Medical Humanities at Durham University. The Platform is supported by a £9 million grant from the Wellcome Trust (2023-2030) awarded to Durham's Institute for Medical Humanities to transform the humanities' contribution to health research.

The Centre for Visual Arts and Culture (CVAC) at Durham University promotes interdisciplinary research on visual culture.

This workshop builds on previous collaborative events co-hosted by IMH and CVAC exploring the intersections of health and visual culture, including the workshop Visual Culture in Medical Humanities (2015).

For further details see: <https://www.durham.ac.uk/research/institutes-and-centres/visual-arts-cultures/events/visual-practices-across-the-university/>