

**TACT Webinar (Touch, Arts, Affects)**  
**3rd series**

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**Wednesday 5 February (5pm-6.30pm CET)**

**Marit Grøtta (Oslo): “Touching Photographs: The Role of Portrait Photographs in Proust, Kafka, and Woolf”**

In the writings of Proust, Kafka, and Woolf, we find numerous scenes in which the characters look at portrait photographs in affective ways. They engage physically with the pictures, touching them and kissing them. Yet these scenes are ambivalent; they also depict feelings of frustration and highlight the challenge of relating to a visual “double”. This talk discusses the haptic dimension of portrait photographs in Proust, Kafka, and Woolf and the “love of the medium” in modernist literature. The aim is to understand how portrait photographs brought about new way of relating to others. A key idea is that the touch is crucial for the experience of analog photographs, whereas the digital pictures surrounding us today to a lesser degree invite touching. The talk is based on my book, *Reading Portrait Photographs in Proust, Kafka and Woolf: Modernism, Media and Emotion* (Edinburgh University Press, 2024).

**Respondent: Carole Maigné (Lausanne)**

Link: [meet.google.com/ovg-zfyr-myg](https://meet.google.com/ovg-zfyr-myg)

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**Wednesday 12 March (5pm-6.30pm CET)**

**Àger Pérez Casanovas (Barcelona): “Touching Access: A Deweyan, Sensorial Approach to Disability Justice Groups”**

This paper reimagines disability justice activism through the overlooked yet powerful lens of the sense of touch. Grounded in Dewey’s social theory and Disability Justice principles, it argues that collective access—conceived as a deeply embodied, sensorial phenomenon—shapes group formation and democratic engagement. Drawing on nonvisual artist Carmen Papalia’s “open access” manifesto and his touch-centered *Pain Pals* project, alongside Amanda Cachia’s curatorial activism, the analysis challenges traditional notions of normativity as abstract state impositions on bodies. Instead, it posits that democracy emerges from a collective sensory regulation among bodyminds that honors every individual’s access needs. By foregrounding tactile experiences, this work reveals new dimensions of political participation, suggesting that the very act of touching becomes both a metaphor and a concrete mechanism for inclusive, embodied activism.

**Respondent: Vivienne Matthies-Boon (Radboud)**

Link: [meet.google.com/zsx-zszt-jui](https://meet.google.com/zsx-zszt-jui)

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**Wednesday 9 April (5pm-6.30pm CET)**

**Erica Fretwell (Albany): “Out of Touch: Towards a Haptic Episteme”**

The haptic is a term with a distinctly slippery texture: a perceptual modality (coined by psychologist Max Dessoir in 1892) tactile in nature but irreducible to touch; the visceral surplus of affect (Tina Campt); fugitive sociality (Stefano Harney and Fred Moten); a queer historiography (Elizabeth Freeman); the embodied copresence of image and viewer (Laura U. Marks). While these various accounts fruitfully pressure the conflation of modernity and visuality, this talk attempts to collate the nineteenth-century historical conditions – including the invention of embossed print type for blind readers; psychophysical studies of the senses; the rise of the object lesson in pedagogical theory – that made haptic perception a thinkable concept in the first place. Building on the scholarship of Mark Paterson and David Parisi, this account sketches out an “aesthetics from below” (Gustav Fechner’s term) that tethers the fin de siècle psychology laboratory to the Montessori classroom as a space for experimenting with the haptic foundations of knowledge and, conversely, the epistemological contours of hapticity.

**Respondent: Thomas Constantinesco (Sorbonne)**

Link: [meet.google.com/aoa-vgab-qok](https://meet.google.com/aoa-vgab-qok)

**Contact** : Caroline Pollentier (Sorbonne Nouvelle, IUF) & Rachel Aumiller (Radboud): [caroline.pollentier@sorbonne-nouvelle.fr](mailto:caroline.pollentier@sorbonne-nouvelle.fr); [rachel.aumiller@ru.nl](mailto:rachel.aumiller@ru.nl)

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