

Bard Graduate Center's 2018–19 Theme: "When is After?"

When *is* After? Periodization may not be father to the man, but it is to anyone trying to tell a story about the past. Without "before" or "after" how would we tell stories, determine causation, or assign responsibility? But knowing when to begin the beginning or end the end is an art in itself—or, as T.S. Eliot thought, "an occupation for a saint." Nevertheless, or perhaps as a direct consequence, we students of the past spend far too little time thinking about the reasons why we choose one starting point over another. In the worst case, we don't even ask this question at all, but unthinkingly repeat what we've been told—by others who may themselves not have asked the question.

For an institution pre-occupied with making and knowing, "When is After?" takes on specific shapes. It is bound up with the lives of things and, just as much, with their afterlives. Histories from things and art histories of things must, equally, take a stand on exactly when the change of phase occurs that defines an explanatory context. As objects have become a more familiar type of source, and as consumption, re-use, and emotion have become roads more frequently taken, "after" has become a more essential component of a properly panoramic perspective.

As Bard Graduate Center celebrates its twenty-fifth year the project of looking back in order to move forward in more interesting ways is one that we embrace. In the *Research Forum* we have launched the "Re-Visions" feature, in which talks and book chapters are re-combined so as to reveal them as answers to new questions. "Counter-histories" is the next to appear, suggesting that we might say, with a nod to Faulkner, that "After isn't ever over. It isn't even after."

Finally, following last year's theme "What is Distance?", "When is After?" marks the next step towards BGC's goal of creating a library of fundamental questions for students of the cultural sciences.