

Society for the Study of Pregnancy and Birth (SSPRB)

2026 VIRTUAL SYMPOSIUM

Beauty and the Sublime in Gestation and Coming into Being: Art and the Aesthetics of Pregnancy and Birth

www.ssprb.org



PROGRAM

June 4-6, 2026

Virtual Event

SSPRB

Images: *Pomegranate Baby*, oil on canvas, Wenji Billow, copyright 2013, All Rights Reserved. *Marble plaque showing childbirth*, Classical Rome, CC BY 4.0; *Nebula bubbles*, Gerd Altmann, Pixabay; *Water drop*, photograph, hamad M, copyright 2005, All Rights Reserved.

Welcome to the SSRPB's 2026 Virtual Symposium!

The Society for the Study of Pregnancy and Birth (SSPRB) is excited to present its 2026 Virtual Symposium Program. This symposium brings together an international community of scholars across many fields, including the arts and architecture, humanities, midwifery studies, psychology, and the social sciences. In the fall of 2025, the SSRPB received many abstract submissions on its 2026 theme: *Beauty and the Sublime in Gestation and Coming into Being: Art and the Aesthetics of Pregnancy and Birth*. Submitters included scholars across a wide range of fields, as well as artists and practitioners. Over the past few months, we have developed a rich program that we hope will spark new interdisciplinary collaborations and ideas.

The program is organized in a linear fashion in line with a symposium format that does not include concurrent sessions typical of a conference. However, due to a large number of presentations, we have our keynote event and 10 main sessions spread across three days. This scheduling attempts to accommodate presenters located around the world and in different timezones. We list the presentation times in both Pacific Daylight Time (PDT) and in Coordinated Universal Time (UTC). Please note that some of the times listed in PDT occur in the middle of the night. A large number of our presenters come from Europe, Africa, and Australia; thus, it was necessary this year to prioritize the UTC timezone over PDT when creating the schedule.

We understand that participants may not be able to attend all sessions as would be typical in a shorter one day in-person symposium. We expect and welcome attendees and participants to pop in and out of sessions as best fits their own schedules and time zones. All participants and attendees should carefully note the time zones when planning their attendance at sessions. There will be recordings available of all presenters who opt in to have their recordings made public on the SSRPB's YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/@SSPRB).

Please note that this is not the final draft of the program, though it is highly accurate in its present form. Due to last minute unexpected changes, we foresee that there may be a few minor adjustments made to the program and schedule, so please check back for the final version, which will be published by May 20, 2026.

This year, the registration fee for attendance is \$20 through the registration site Luma. The symposium will be held through Zoom and all participants will receive three different Zoom links (one for each day of the symposium) through Luma after registration: <https://luma.com/3dt2p6k0>.

We thank many people for their help in bringing together the SSRPB's second symposium. First and foremost, we thank our participants for their interest in sharing their research and work related to birth and natality with our community. We are this year

deeply grateful to Lauren Bice, DNP, CNRA and Sheila Lintott, PhD for serving as our 2026 Co-Keynote Speakers. We thank our abstract review team, which this year included Doreen Balabanoff, Marianne Delaporte Kabir, Anna Hennessey, Martina Hynan, Beatrice Sasha Kobow, and Cassandra Sciortino. The event would also not be possible without the help of our moderators and symposium facilitators: Anna Hennessey, Martina Hynan, Beatrice Sasha Kobow, Swantje Martach, Adewale Onagbesan, Sarah Runnstrom and Cassandra Sciortino. Additionally, we thank Swantje Martach for her help in securing our keynote speakers, and Antoni Batchelli for his behind-the-scenes technical help in organizing the virtual symposium. Finally, we thank all of our SSPRB Advisory Board members for their willingness to serve on the Board and for their continued support of the Society.

We wish all attendees of the SSPRB's 2026 Symposium a wonderful journey across a wide range of topics related to art and the aesthetics of pregnancy and birth! We are grateful for all of our participants and attendees, thank you for attending this symposium and we look forward to your presence in this space.

Please check out future events through our website at: <https://www.ssprb.org>. You may also sign up to receive our Substack Newsletter, which releases updates on events and listings of the SSPRB: <https://ssprb.substack.com>.

Thank you for your interest and support!
Society for the Study of Pregnancy and Birth (SSPRB)

2026 Symposium of the Society for the Study of Pregnancy and Birth (SSPRB)
June 4-6, 2026: A Virtual Event

DAY 1: THURSDAY, June 4th

SSPRB Welcoming Remarks and Keynote Discussion (8:00am-9:30am PDT / 3:00pm-4:30pm UTC)


Welcome: Anna Hennessey, PhD, Society for the Study of Pregnancy and Birth (SSPRB)

Co-Keynote Speakers: Lauren Bice, DNP, CRNA and Sheila Lintott, PhD

Keynote Speech:

***Aesthetics,
Carework,
and Loss***

Lauren Bice, DNP,
CRNA and
Sheila Lintott, PhD



SESSION 1 (9:45am-11:30am PDT / 4:45pm-6:30pm UTC)

Aesthetics and Artistic Practice

Moderator: Anna Hennessey, Society for the Study of Pregnancy and Birth

- (1) Alexandra Carter, San Diego based artist
“The Body as Floodplain: A Visual Poetics of Pregnancy and Birth”
- (2) Linda Luv, Multimedia artist and artistic researcher
“Gestation as Performance: The Aesthetics of Everyday Care and the Feminist Sublime”
- (3) Magdalena Furmaniuk-Kopel, University of the National Education Commission, Krakow
“The Fabric of Labour: Ways of Conceptualizing Pregnancy in Contemporary Polish Soft Sculpture”
- (4) Irimi Athanassakis, Artist and interdisciplinary scholar
“POIESIS. Making a baby. Or not.”

SESSION 2 (11:45am-1:30pm PDT / 6:45pm-8:30pm UTC)

Aesthetics in the Philosophy of Birth and the Phenomenology of Coming into Being

Moderator: Cassandra Sciortino, University of California, Berkeley

- (1) Beatrice Sasha Kobow, University of Salzburg
“Visiting Icons of Hyper-Maternity and the Sublime Experience of Birth with Kant and Cavarero”
- (2) Barbara Renzi, Berlin School of Business and Innovation
“The Body of Grace: The Feminist Sublime and the Aesthetics of Gestation in the Virgin Mary”
- (3) Cristina Moraru, National University of the Arts “George Enescu”
“Gestational Aesthetics: Beauty, Materiality, and the Phenomenology of Coming into Being”
- (4) Anna Hennessey, Society for the Study of Pregnancy and Birth
“Sensation and Emotionality in the Aesthetics of Pregnancy and Birth”

DAY 2: FRIDAY, JUNE 5th

SESSION 3 (2:00am-3:45am PDT / 9:00am-10:45am UTC)

Nonwestern Frameworks for Rethinking Aesthetics

Moderator: Adewale Onagbesan, University of Lagos

- (1) Magdalena Ohaja, University of Galway
“The Aesthetics of Pregnancy and Childbirth in Nigeria”
- (2) Adewale Onagbesan, University of Lagos
“Maternity Care Service and Fetal Loss in Colonial Lagos, 1867-1960”
- (3) Dalia Mostafa Abdulrahman, Cairo University
“Dangerous Mothers: Birth, Violence, and the Sublime in the Hathor–Sekhmet Myth”

SESSION 4 (4:00am-5:45am PDT / 11:00am-12:45am UTC)

The Tactile, Nonvisual, Symbolic and Surreal in the Aesthetics of Pregnancy, Birth, and Motherhood

Moderator: Beatrice Sasha Kobow, University of Salzburg

- (1) Virginia Marano, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology
“Touch, Autonomy, and the Non-Visual Aesthetics of Pregnancy”
- (2) Angelique Joy, School of Art, RMIT
“Re-coding the Mother Image: Neuroqueer, Post(M)other Speculations, *or*; The Post(M)other Manifesto”

- (3) Victoria Souliman, University of Sydney; and Mimi Kelly, PhD, University of Melbourne
“Uncanny Maternal: Pregnancy and Birth in the Photographs of Lucile Boiron and Yvonne Todd”
- (4) Serena Mundy, Christ’s College, Cambridge
“Oranges as Perinatal Talismans in the Florentine *Desco da Parto*”

SESSION 5 (6:00am-7:45am PDT / 1:00pm-2:45pm UTC)

Literary and Textual Analysis in the Aesthetics of Pregnancy and Birth

Moderator: Beatrice Sasha Kobow, PhD, University of Salzburg

- (1) Lucie Nizard, University of Geneva
“Their Eyes Met”: First Encounters with the Newborn as a Rewriting of the *Coup de foudre*”
- (2) Andrea-Bianka Znorovszky, University of Lleida
“The Many Colours of Marian Pregnancy in the Iberian Peninsula during the Middle Ages: Space, Materials, Devotion”
- (3) Torben Hanhart, University of Bern
“Born of God: Pregnancy and Parturition in Early Modern Images of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost”
- (4) Caterina Pan, Paris-Lodron University of Salzburg
“Monstruous and Aesthetic: The Vertigo of Pregnancy in Kate Zambreno’s *Drifts*”

SESSION 6 (8:00am-9:45am PDT / 3:00pm-4:45pm UTC)

Marginalized Representations of Birth and the Medical Sublime

Moderator: Anna Hennessey, PhD, Society for the Study of Pregnancy and Birth

- (1) Shana Klein, Kent State University
“A Pregnant Pause: The Quieting of Pregnancy in Victorian-American Art and Culture”
- (2) Emma Oslé, University of Virginia
“Birth Work as Art Practice: Coralina Rodriguez Meyer and Andrea Chung”
- (3) Cláudia Pimentel, University of Porto
“Beyond Pastoral Beauty: A Clinical-Aesthetic Analysis of the Maternal Sublime in a Medicalized Birth Environment”
- (4) Filipa Lowndes Vicente, University of Lisbon
“Prepartum, partum, postpartum: 20th century women artists working on birth”

SESSION 7 (10:00am-11:45amPDT / 5:00pm-6:45pm UTC)

Art, Aesthetics, and Pre and Perinatal Psychology

Moderator: Anna Hennessey, Society for the Study of Pregnancy and Birth (SSPRB)

- (1) Birgit Heimback, Midwife
“Illustration as an epidemic practice of midwives – artistically visualizing knowledge about childbirth”
- (2) Nerea Bella, Universitat Jaume I
“Archetypal Motherhoods in Contemporary Art: Visual Models, Ideological Structures, and the Philosophical Stakes of Maternal Imaginaries”
- (3) Flavie Rames, Independent Researcher
“Images of pregnancy and childbirth from the 1960s to the 1990s. A story of domination and emancipation?”
- (4) Bettina Duesmann, Midwife; and Karlton Terry, Pre and Perinatal Arts Educator
“The Holy Myth of Human Conception - Implicit Memory Expressed in Art and Architecture”

DAY 3: SATURDAY, JUNE 6th

SESSION 8 (4:00am-5:45am PDT / 11:00am-12:45am UTC)

The Aesthetics of Birth Rituals

Moderator: Swantje Martach, American University of Sharjah, UAE

- (1) Nobuntu Penxa-Matholeni, Candidate, Stellenbosch University
“*Emva kocango*: The Aesthetics and Sacred Continuum of Birth, the Umbilical Cord, and Death among amaXhosa“
- (2) Rosalia Namsai Engchuan, Artist, curator, and researcher
“Midwife Ontologies: Yu Fai and the Cosmopolitics of Postpartum World-Making“
- (3) Anka Dür, Architect and midwife
“A Room for Birth and Senses: Redesigning the Birth Environment“
- (4) Charlotte Brielle, Founder and Director, Wombs of the World
“Culture Is Dynamic, Birth Is Universal: Bridging Ceremony and Clinical Care in a Hypermedicalized World“

SESSION 9 (6:00am-7:45am PDT / 1:00pm-2:45pm UTC)

The Aesthetics of Posthuman Mothering

Moderator: Swantje Martach, American University of Sharjah, UAE

- (1) Eda Sütunç, Istanbul-based interdisciplinary artist
“Ecological Surrogacy: Reimagining Pregnancy Beyond Reproduction”
- (2) Sara Niroobakhsh, Artist and research scholar, New York University, Abu Dhabi
“Rewriting Motherhood: Intersubjectivity and Technological Intimacy in Contemporary Practice”
- (3) Sucharita Sarkar, DTSS College of Commerce, Mumbai
“The Ethical, Political and Aesthetic Potentials of Posthuman Maternities”
- (4) Maria Fannin, University of Bristol
“Aesthetics of the Almost Ethical”

SESSION 10 (8:00am-9:45am PDT / 3:00pm-4:45pm UTC)

The Aesthetics of Birth and Pregnancy through Photography

Moderator: Anna Hennessey, Society for the Study of Pregnancy and Birth

- (1) Filippo Yahia Masri, University of Genoa
“Bodies in labour: femininity and natural childbirth in Lisetta Carmi's photographs”
- (2) Anneliese Ostertag, Goethe University Frankfurt
“Piercing the *Volkskörper*; Or the Body that Doesn't Belong: On Pregnancy and Violent Care”
- (3) Kristin Weber, University of Stuttgart
“Postpartum Bodies – Potentials of visualizing social realities”
- (4) Antonina Gugala, University of Warsaw
“From Demi to Riri, to Natasza: Visualizing the Pregnant Body in Contemporary Press Photography”

SSPRB CLOSING REMARKS (10:00am-10:15am PDT / 5:00pm-5:15pm UTC)

Anna Hennessey, PhD, Society for the Study of Pregnancy and Birth (SSPRB)

Thank you for coming and we look forward to seeing you in the future!

www.ssprb.org

SSPRB