Call for Papers
Irreverence: The Third Annual Critical Femininities Conference

The Centre for Feminist Research at York University invites abstracts for the third annual Critical Femininities Conference on the theme of "Irreverence." The conference will take place virtually on August 17-20, 2023.

To be irreverent is to show disrespect where respect is demanded, to be flippant in the face of serious situations, and to satirize what others hold sacred. In western culture, the mother, the virgin, and the queen are figures of femininity that are often held sacred, exemplifying the entrenchment of idealized feminine characteristics such as domesticity, piety, and (hetero)sexual or moral purity. But for decades, irreverence has been woven into camp and poststructuralist approaches to femme theory, which insist that femme is an intentionally ironic performance of this idealized white, cis-heterosexual femininity (Albrecht-Samarasinha 1997; Case 1988; Duggan & McHugh 1996). Irreverent attitudes toward femininity—especially white, heterosexual, and colonial femininities—are also integral to other queer cultures and modes of critique: in recent years, hypersexual and outrageous impersonations of the sacred feminine figures the Virgin Mary and Queen Elizabeth (I and II) have been presented on the mainstage of TV's *Rupaul's Drag Race.* In this way, irreverence has wrought countercultural styles of femininities that relate to punk, drag, sex work, working-class, Indigenous, and racialized sensibilities (Bailey 2014; Chepp 2015; McCann 2016; Padaan 2023).

As the mainstreaming of femme has converged with postfeminist culture, the exaggerated feminine aesthetics associated with femme and other feminine subcultures are increasingly normalized and celebrated, leading to phenomena like: the success of reality TV stars and social media influencers; the rise of bimbo theory; and the imminent resurgence of Barbie. While such phenomena are often scrutinized as anti-feminist and frivolous, they also create space for queer and femme joy, and potentiate both the conceptualization of gender affirmation and the extension of critical femininity discourse beyond LGBTQ+ contexts. At the same time, these phenomena raise questions about: the appropriation of Black cultures and sex worker aesthetics without recognition or political solidarity; the sexism, racism, and fatphobia embedded in western beauty culture; and postfeminism's undermining of feminist politics (Banet-Weiser 2018). Roxane Gay's "bad feminist" framework offers one way to navigate such contradictions, acknowledging that we may, occasionally, break with feminist dogma in recognition of our flawed humanity and the pursuit of personal joy.

Importantly, Sara Ahmed's (2010) figures of the "feminist killjoy" and "affect alien" demonstrate that irreverence is not always gleeful or flippant. On the contrary, it can render serious political critique. As critiques of anti-Black racism, settler colonization, imperial capitalism, and cisheteropatriarchy have become a part of mainstream political discourse and more embedded within cultural and artistic institutions, the ways in which irreverence has historically sustained queer of colour critique, art, fashion, and literature have become more visible, drawing greater attention to how irreverence encourages both the critique of white, western, cishet femininity, and a focus on femininities that exist outside of this normative ideal.

With this, we invite submissions on irreverent femininities for our third annual Critical Femininities Conference. Possible themes may include (but are not limited to):

- Drag culture, media, and the recent moral panics surrounding drag shows
- Respectability politics as it relates to queer, trans, poor/working class, Indigenous, postcolonial, racalized, disabled, fat, and/or sex worker femininities and cultures
- Subjugated knowledges and popular and/or low theory/culture/art, including zines, reality television, street art, animated series, and more
- Internet cultures, social media, and online forms, including selfies, memes, and more
- Bimbo theory and aesthetics
- Femme counterpublics
- Feminist, femme, and postfeminist approaches to beauty culture and politics
- Fashion and style, including camp, Y2K, vintage, clowncore, and more
- Appropriation of and/or solidarities with working-class, racialized, queer, Indigenous, and sex worker aesthetics and communities
- Queer and trans BIPOC critiques and cultures of femininities
- Transnational cultures of femininity
- Indigiqueer and Two-Spirit cultures/cosmologies of femininity
- Punk and other sub-cultures and ethos as related to femininities
- Proto-irreverent femininities and/or irreverent feminine lineages
- Decolonial, postcolonial, and Indigenous critiques and cultures of femininities
- Critical interventions and reinterpretations of reverence and the sacred in relation to whiteness, imperialism, colonialization, sexuality, purity culture, sex work(ers), disability, trans femininities, and more
- Queer, Trans, and/or BIPOC art, literature, and performance

Submission Guidelines

Submissions can take the form of sole-authored or co-authored academic papers, experimental or artistic presentations, including autotheory, personal narrative, artist talks, visual art and film, poetry, music, storytelling, life-writing, and performance. We welcome submissions from graduate students, emerging and established scholars, artists, and those working beyond the university. Please send submissions to criticalfemininities@yorku.ca by **May 10, 2023**.

For single presentations:
Please submit a 250-word abstract that indicates your main argument or focus and the format for your presentation and a 100-word bio (50-word bio for multiple authors). Single presentations should be 15-20 minutes in length and will be organized into thematic panels.

For panel presentations:
Please submit a 250-word abstract that indicates the main theme and format of the panel presentation and 50-word bio for each presenter (minimum of 3 panelists). Group presentations should be no longer than 60 minutes to allow time for Q&A.