



## **Decadence: Flows of Abundance and Decay**

University of British Columbia

Department of Art History, Visual Art and Theory (AHVA)

43rd Annual Graduate Student Symposium

March 5–6, 2020

Exhibition Opening March 5, 5–7 PM

**Deadline for Submission of Papers:** December 27, 2019

*Décadence itself is nothing to be fought: it is absolutely necessary and belongs to every age and to every people – Friedrich Nietzsche<sup>1</sup>*

Originating in the Latin roots *de*, meaning “apart/down” and *cadere*, meaning “to fall,” *decadence* came to signify decay, or a fall from a more vital state. Since, *decadence* has taken on a plurality of often contradictory meanings.

Coming into vogue near the end of the nineteenth century, the word *decadence* gestured toward decay in morality, religiosity, and spirituality in the areas of politics, literature, and aesthetics. The anti-traditionalist attitudes and enthusiasm of the writers and artists who came to define the decadence movement inspired a period of artistic output marked by perceived spoil, the *fin de siècle*. The decadent consciousness prioritized individual experience, rejected false promises of progress and welcomed excessive and sumptuous imagery. Beyond its radical embrace by creatives as a method of cultural production in the *fin de siècle* French context, the concept of *decadence* was and continues to be hijacked by the right-wing to criticize democracy and call for “purified” societies. Recent scholarship has worked to reclaim decadence, examining it as “an ingenious style complex, wise, full of nuances and refinements, forever extending the limits of language, borrowing from all technical lexicons, taking colours from every palette and notes from every musical instrument.”<sup>2</sup>

The Department of Art History, Visual Art and Theory (AHVA) at the University of British Columbia is pleased to invite submissions for the 43rd Annual Graduate Symposium *Decadence: Flows of Abundance and Decay* to be held on Thursday, March 5 and Friday, March 6, 2020.

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<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Will to Power* ed. Walter Kaufmann, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1967), 25.

<sup>2</sup> Théophile Gautier, introduction to *Les Fleurs du mal* by Charles Baudelaire, trans. C. Nissen (Paris: Lévy, 1869), 16–17.



*Decadence: Flows of Abundance and Decay* will examine decadence as a generative force in understanding past and contemporary culture and politics. We invite papers from all periods of art history and related disciplines. Possible topics may include:

- Excess, consumption, decay, and decline
- Abjection and boundaries of the body
- Commodification and the accumulation of capital
- Desire, temptation, and extravagance
- Pleasure and fetishization
- Labour, production, and exploitation
- Self-indulgence, obsession, vice, and addiction

The AHVA Graduate Symposium organizing committee invites proposals for twenty-minute paper presentations. Current and recently graduated Master of Arts, Master of Fine Arts, doctoral and postdoctoral students, and students from various humanities fields whose research engages this year's theme are encouraged to apply. Applicants should submit an abstract of no more than 300 words with the title of the paper, along with a separate document that includes a 250-word bio, to [grad.symposium@ubc.ca](mailto:grad.symposium@ubc.ca) by December 27, 2019. Please include your full name, affiliation, and contact information in your bio. As a blind panel will review all submissions, please ensure that your name and the title of your paper are included in your letter of introduction, but that your name and other identifying marks do not appear in the abstract. *Decadence: Flows of Abundance and Decay* will include a concurrent exhibition keeping with the theme of the symposium from March 5–6, 2020.