

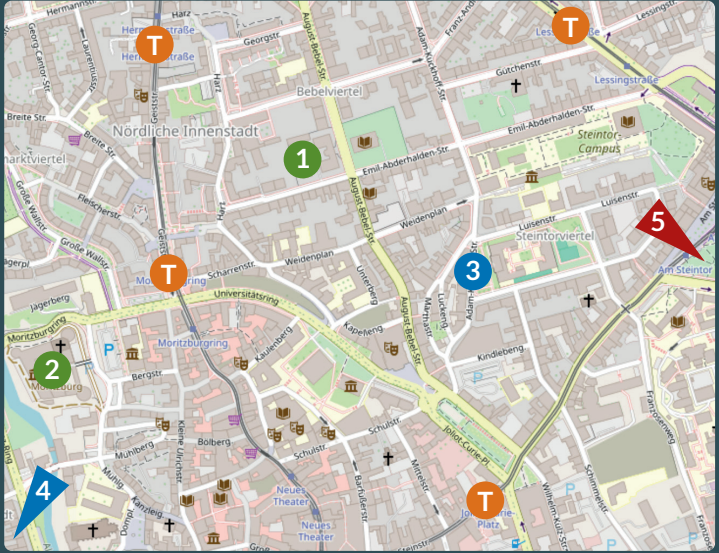
ABOUT

In recent decades, an important body of scholarship has exposed the “hidden” intellectual, social, domestic, and emotional labour women have contributed to the careers and public reputations of male colleagues, relatives, and partners. Nonetheless, one phenomenon remains notably under-researched: the dynamics of couples.

This workshop offers a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary exploration of this phenomenon in modern political, intellectual, professional, artistic, entrepreneurial, and religious cultures. It brings together scholars of varying disciplines (including history, musicology, literary, politics, art history, museum studies, parliamentary archives) and career stages from across Western, Central, and Eastern Europe, as well as from Asia and Australia, to investigate the phenomenon of collaborative couples on a global scale.

Our focus is the mid-eighteenth to early-twentieth centuries—a time of accelerated social and technological change, expansion of rights, and reconfiguration of professions, civil society, and nation-states. The workshop will analyse collaborative couples active within academia, politics and welfare, social and political movements, the arts and entertainment industries, as well as colonial and imperial settings. Papers will not only investigate legal marital partnerships, but queer and same gender couples. By adopting an inclusive framework which explores synergies and differences across the *longue durée*, we will deepen our understanding of the intersections of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, and sexuality in the making—and devaluing—of collaborative endeavours, as well as their collective impact on modern society more widely.

The workshop includes a public roundtable on the so-called “Mathilda-Effect”. Both events are designed to inject a much-needed historical perspective into debates about women’s opportunities, rights, care work, and emotional labour—especially important in the face of the present backlash and attempts of re-traditionalization.



- 1 – Georg-Forster-Haus
- 2 – Kunstmuseum Moritzburg Halle (Saale)
- 3 – Hotel Martha-Haus
- 4 – Hotel Ankerhof
- 5 – Train station Halle (Saale) Hbf
- T – Tram stops

ORGANISERS

Katharina Eger M.A., Dr. Sven Jaros (both Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg), PD Dr. Katrin Steffen (Nord-ost-Institut, Lüneburg), Dr. Zoë Thomas (University of Birmingham)

CONTACT INFORMATION

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VENUES

WORKSHOP:	ROUNDTABLE:
Georg-Forster-Haus	Kunstmuseum Moritzburg Halle (Saale)
Emil-Abderhalden-Straße 7a	Friedemann-Bach-Platz 5
06108 Halle (Saale)	06108 Halle (Saale)

 couples.hypotheses.org

Title Illustration: Marie and Pierre Curie, he holding up a glowing specimen of radium. Colour lithograph by Vincent Brooks, Day & Son after J. M. Price [JMP], 1904. Wellcome Collection. Source: Wellcome Collection. License: Public Domain Mark.

Leaflet Design: Marta Bartkowska



POWER COUPLES?
Collaborations at Work and at Home, c. 1750–1920s

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP
MAY 11TH – 13TH 2026



PROGRAMME

Monday, May 11th

15.00 Introduction (Zoë Thomas, Sven Jaros)

15.15 COLLABORATIVE COUPLES IN ACADEMIA

Chair: Brigitte Stenhouse (Milton Keynes)

Meghan Roberts (Brunswick/Maine) / **Mathias Valverde** (Strasbourg), Inventing the Scientific Power Couple in Eighteenth-Century France

Chantal Weber (Cologne), Separated, but Together – the Lives of Anna and Siegfried Berliner in the Shadow of World War I

Celina Barszczewska (Poznań), Bożena Stelmachowska and Wanda Brzeska as a “Power Couple” in Polish Intellectual Culture of the Interwar Period

Marie Linos (Amiens), A Union of Souls and Minds? Intellectual Companionship Marriages Among Anglophone Couples of Scholars (1860–1920)

17.15 Coffee break

17.30 NAVIGATING THE MECHANISMS OF MODERNITY

Chair: Anne Kluger (Halle)

Zsuzsa Török (Budapest), Branding Emília: Editorial Partnership and Marital Collaboration in Családi Kör (1860–1880)

Nathan Cordon (Birmingham), The Workmans Awheel: Curating Feminine Athletic Celebrity at the Dawn of the Twentieth Century

Magdalene Klassen (Baltimore), The Labour of Scandal: Jack and Lucille Johnson’s European Tour, 1912–1920

Tuesday, May 12th

9.00 COUPLES WITHIN SOCIAL / POLITICAL MOVEMENTS

Chair: Matthias Freidank (London/Halle)

Marie Bak (Aarhus), Serving Each Other: The Collaborative Marriage of Matilde and Fredrik Bajer

Irina Pelea (Bucharest), Writing Revolution Together: Japanese Anarchists Itō Noe and Ōsugi Sakae on Prostitution as Economic Survival and the Fight for Abortion Rights

Anna Nakai (Tokyo), Marriages, Affair (with Communism), Exile: Gertrud Bortstieber’s Early Transformation

10.30 Coffee Break

11.00 WORKING TOGETHER IN POLITICS AND

PHILANTHROPY

Chair: Katja Castryck-Naumann (Leipzig)

Martin Spychal (London), “The two Mr Grotes”: The Political Power Couple of the 1830s?

Céline Leglaive-Perani (Paris), Power Couples in Philanthropy. The Case of Jewish Couples in Paris, 1850–1920

Aimée Fox (St. Andrews), “Sediment and not Substance”: The Intellectual and Political Partnership of Una and Richard Pope-Hennessy, c. 1910–1923

12.30 Lunch Break

14.00 COLLABORATION WITHIN COLONIAL /

IMPERIAL CONFIGURATIONS

Chair: Yvonne Kleinmann (Halle)

Rajesh Prasad / Pradip Lamba (Delhi), Beyond the Zenana Walls: Indian Reform Couples and the Reimagining of Collaborative Authority in Colonial Bengal, 1820–1890

Tahmina Aslanova (Baku), Invisible Architects: Azerbaijani “Power Couples” and Gendered Collaboration in the Late Russian Empire

Corinne Ball (Adelaide), Ruling the Ring. Wielding the Reins of Power in an Australian Circus, 1890–1914

15.30 BEYOND THE MUSE AND GENIUS DISCOURSE:

COLLABORATION IN ARTS AND CULTURES

Chair: Zoë Thomas (Birmingham)

Chanda Vander Hart / Günter Stummvoll (Krems), Public Muses or Strategic Business Partners? Reframing the Marriages of Johann Strauss II

Anna Piotrowska (Kraków), Rigó Jancsi and Clara Ward-Chimay: Scandal, Performance, and the Making of a Power Couple in Fin-de-Siècle Europe

Martyna Zielinska (Paris), Catharine W. B. Ward and Henry S. Ward: Transatlantic Marriage and American Soft Power in British Photography and Publishing (1893–1913)

17.00 Coffee Break

19.00 Public Roundtable

WHO CARRIES? WHO SHINES? ON COLLABORATIVE WORK AND UNEQUAL RECOGNITION IN ACADEMIA, CULTURE, AND SOCIETY

Johanna Gehmacher (Vienna), **Katrin Steffen** (Lüneburg) & **Christine Fornoff-Petrowski** (Oldenburg)

Moderation: **Olaf Peters** (Halle) & **Katharina Eger** (Halle)

Venue: Kunstmuseum Moritzburg Halle (Saale)

Simultaneous interpreting for English speaking guests will be available.

The event will be followed by a reception.

Wednesday, May 13th

8.30 BEYOND THE COUPLE: WIDOWS AND LEGACY

BUILDING

Chair: Katrin Steffen (Lüneburg)

Francesca Antonelli (Bologna), After the Power Couple: Sociability, Friendship, and Memory among Widows of French Savants (1790s–1840s)

Caolfhionn Ní Bheacháin / Angus Mitchell (Limerick), The Forging of Alice Stopford Green: From “Power Couple” Partnership to Independent Activist and Scholar

Sven Jaros (Halle), Seweryna Duchińska after Franciszek. Narrating a Collaborative Couple through Biography (1893–1905)

Elise Garritzen (Helsinki), From Power Couples to “Power Widows”: Collaborative History Writing after Death

10.30 End of workshop