



Beauty and Gender: A Psychoanalytic Perspective

Presented by COWAP North America and The Washington Baltimore Center for Psychoanalysis

Please join us for 3 sessions:

Session 1:

Saturday, May 9, 2026

11:00 am – 12:30 pm EST

Via Zoom

Beauty and the Maternal Body

Speakers:

Patricia Alkolombre, PhD and
Catherine Mallouh, MD

Session 2:

Saturday, June 27, 2026

11:00 am – 12:30 pm EST

Via Zoom

Fashion from a Gender Psychoanalytic Perspective

Speakers:

Patricia Gherovici, PhD and
Margarita Cereijido, PhD

Session 3:

Saturday, July 25, 2026

11:00 am – 12:30 pm EST

Via Zoom

Changing Notions of Beauty: The Importance of Culture and Technology: “Whose Face is it Anyway? Beauty in the Age of High Technology”

Speakers:

Rhonda Garelick, PhD,
Margarita Cereijido, PhD and
Atsumi Minamisawa, MD, PhD

Captions Available In All Languages

1.5 CME/CE per session (4.5 CME/CE total)

Description of Series:

Freud stated that “Psychoanalysis, unfortunately, has scarcely anything to say about beauty.” Freud (1930), *Civilization and Its Discontents*, SE 21, p. 83. Nevertheless, he believed that beauty served an important role in society, organizing dangerous forces.

The demand that women appear beautiful—slim, symmetrical, youthful, and sexually available yet controlled— can be understood as an effort to control the fear of vulnerability. Through history beauty ideals have been shaped by—and in turn reinforce—notions of gender, and women have subjected themselves to endless painful procedures in order to conform to those ideals.

The changing nature of beauty expectations invites us to reflect on the subjective nature of gender. This series seeks to enhance our psychoanalytic understanding of these issues by exploring them from several perspectives, in close conversation with the audience.

Presentation Descriptions:

Session 1: Beauty and the Maternal Body - Patricia Alkolombre and Catherine Mallouh:

The images of the maternal body and pregnancy throughout history reflect the different ideals of beauty and aesthetics that prevailed in each period. These ideals are expressed in painting and sculpture, and later in images, whether photographic or digital, and in various media.

These images reflect the place of women in each culture, their maternal role and the different vicissitudes they experience. From paintings of Madonnas holding their babies—and hiding their pregnant bodies—to the present day, where women take photographs of their bellies during pregnancy. Or they paint their own experiences of pregnancy, as Frida Kahlo did when she captured her miscarriage in a painting as a way of processing it. We will approach these topics from a psychoanalytic perspective.

Learning Objectives: Participants will be able to: 1. Describe how society's ideals of maternal bodies have changed through time from a psychoanalytic perspective.
2. Identify women's ambivalent feelings about their pregnant bodies from a psychoanalytic perspective.

Session 2: Fashion from a Gender Psychoanalytic Perspective - Patricia Gherovici and Margarita Cereijido:

This session explores fashion from a gender psychoanalytic perspective, approaching it not as decoration, but as an interface between the individual's internal and external worlds. Fashion can help contain, protect, and organize psychic experience. It can also help individuals inhabit different subjectivities and moods.

From war bonnets to crown jewelry, cocktail dresses to loincloths and bikinis, fashion can be seen as a space where identities—such as gender and social status—as well as desires, are inscribed and communicated.

Alternating between restrictive styles that reshape and constrain the body and transparent, revealing aesthetics, fashion plays a role in navigating the tensions between self-expression and compliance. The session explores how fashion participates in the formation of subjectivity, and how these dynamics reverberate in our clinical

Learning Objectives: Participants will be able to: 1. Identify two psychological functions of fashion.
2. Identify how women's beauty ideals have changed since the Middle Ages from a psychoanalytic perspective.

Session 3: Changing Notions of Beauty: The Importance of Culture and Technology: "Whose Face is it Anyway? "Beauty in the Age of High Technology"- Rhonda Garelick, Margarita Cereijido, and Atsumi Minamisawa:

This session explores, from a psychoanalytic perspective, how throughout history beauty ideals have been shaped by—and in turn reinforce— notions of gender. The session highlights the role of the cultural values and technologies available at different moments.

From prehistoric Venus figures emphasizing fertility, to the classical pursuit of youth, symmetry, and perfection, to contemporary beauty increasingly mediated by digital culture, beauty ideals have continually shifted, reflecting the values of their times.

Today, technologies—including digital platforms, cosmetic procedures, and appetite-suppressing drugs—promote beauty ideals that often involve the inhibition of desire. We will explore how these forces may both enable and constrain women's multiple desires. We will also reflect on the subjective nature of gender. Rhonda Garelick, our main speaker, will talk about "Whose Face is it Anyway?" Beauty in the Age of High Technology."

Atsumi Minamisawa will talk about Mori, A Unique Visual Communication among Japanese adolescents.

Learning Objectives: Participants will be able to: 1. Identify two constant characteristics of women's beauty ideals through history from a psychoanalytic perspective.
2. Identify two ways in which technology has changed beauty ideals from a psychoanalytic perspective.

Presenter Bios:

Patricia Alkolombre, PhD, is a Full Member of Argentine Psychoanalytic Association, current Chair of the Psychoanalysis and Biotechnology IPA Subcommittee, and former overall Chair of the Committee of Women and Psychoanalysis (2021-2025). She is the author of the book, *Desire and Passion for a Child: Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Reproductive Technologies* (Routledge, 2023), and co-author of *Changing Sexualities and Parental Function in the 21st Century* (Routledge, 2017). She is also co-author of *Psychoanalytic Explorations of What Women Want Today: Femininity, Desire, and Agency* (Routledge, 2022).

Catherine Mallouh, MD, is a Training and Consulting analyst and faculty member at the San Francisco Center for Psychoanalysis. In addition to her analytic work, she specializes in the treatment of pregnant and postpartum women. In 2022, she published "Primary Maternal Preoccupation: Disturbance in Pregnancy and the Postpartum" in the *Journal of Infant, Child & Adolescent Psychotherapy*. She also has an interest in film, and in 2023 published on the film *Roma*: "Women's psychic and social vulnerability in Pregnancy and Pregnancy Loss" in Fort Da. She was a discussant on a panel at the 2025 IPA Congress in Lisbon: "The third and the violence it brings in pregnancy and assisted reproduction." She is a member of the Committee on Women and Psychoanalysis of the International Psychoanalytic Association (COWAP). She has a private practice in San Francisco.

Patricia Gherovici, PhD, is a psychoanalyst, analytic supervisor, and recipient of the [2020 Sigourney Award](#). She is co-founder and director of the [Philadelphia Lacan Group](#) and [Associate Faculty](#). Her single-authored books include [The Puerto Rican Syndrome](#) (Winner of the Gradiva® Award and the Boyer Prize; Other Press: 2003.) [Please Select Your Gender: From the Invention of Hysteria to the Democratizing of Transgenderism](#) (Routledge: 2010) and [Transgender Psychoanalysis: A Lacanian Perspective on Sexual Difference](#) (Routledge: 2017).

She published with Chris Christian. She edited with Manya Steinkoler on [Lacan On Madness: Madness, Yes You Can't](#) (Routledge: 2015), [Lacan, Psychoanalysis and Comedy](#) (Cambridge University Press: 2016), and most recently, [Psychoanalysis, Gender and Sexualities: From Feminism to Trans*](#) (Winner of the Gradiva® Award for Best Edited Collection; Routledge: 2023), and the [Routledge International Handbook of Psychoanalysis and Gender](#) (Routledge, forthcoming in 2026.)

Margarita Cerejido, PhD, is a Training Analyst at the Washington Baltimore Center for Psychoanalysis. She has written and taught on the areas of gender, culture, and prejudice. Recent publications include [What Do Women Want Today?](#) (with Ellman and Goodman), Routledge May 2022, and [Changing Notions of the Feminine; Challenging the Psychoanalyst's Prejudices,](#) Karnac, 2018. She is the North America Co-Chair of the Committee on Women and Psychoanalysis at the International Psychoanalytic Association (COWAP). She is the Co-Chair of the Committee of Women and Girls of the American Psychoanalytic Association (COSWAG). She is in private practice in Washington, D.C.

Rhonda Garelick, PhD, is the founding director of the Institute for Public Humanities and the Arts at Hofstra University, where she is also the John Cranford Adams Distinguished Professor of Literature. She is the author of four monographs, including the forthcoming ["Why Fashion Matters"](#) (Yale University Press) and ["Mademoiselle: Coco Chanel and the Pulse of History"](#) (Random House).

Rhonda writes the ["Face Forward"](#) column for the Style Section of [The New York Times](#), where she explores fashion, aesthetics, and politics. Her writing has also appeared in [W Magazine](#), [The Wall St. Journal](#), [The Washington Post](#), [Vanity Fair](#), [The Los Angeles Times](#), [New York Magazine](#); and many other venues. Rhonda is a Guggenheim fellow and a fellow of the New York Institute for the Humanities. She received her PhD and BA from Yale University.

Atsumi Minamisawa, MD, PhD, is a candidate of the Contemporary Freudian Society (Washington, DC branch) in private practice. She is currently a Visiting Associate Professor at Kyoto Prefectural University of Medicine, where she teaches psychodynamic psychiatry. She completed her psychoanalytic psychotherapy training both in Japan and at the Tavistock Clinic in London. With a transnational background and professional experience in three countries, her psychoanalytic interests include cultural differences and transgenerational trauma related to immigration.

References:

Balsam RH. Misogyny and the female body. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*. 2022;42(7):579-589.

King V, Gerisch B, Schreiber J. "... to really have everything completely perfect": on the psychodynamics of contemporary forms of body optimization. *Psychoanalytic Psychology*. 2020;37:148-157.
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Townsend P. A place for beauty in the therapeutic encounter by Dorothy Hamilton. Published by The Harris Meltzer Trust, London, 2021; xvii +125 pp, £18.99 paperback. *British Journal of Psychotherapy*. 2022;38:195-197.

Pihlaja E. "Where, meantime, was the soul?" The uncanny as an aesthetic image of impossibility. *American Imago*. 2024;81:133-154.

Registration Link: https://wbcp.memberclicks.net/reg_beauty_gender_series_spring_2026

Registration Deadline for 1st Session: Wednesday, May 6, 2026, at 4:30pm EST

Registration Fees (per session) · All fees non-refundable

WBCP Members	\$42.50 (1.5 CME/CE)
WBCP Students and Candidates	No Fee (1.5 CME/CE)
2025-2026 WBCP Fellows	\$60 (1.5 CME/CE)
WBCP Friend and Fellowship Alumni Members	\$50 (1.5 CME/CE)
Non-Members	\$60 (1.5 CME/CE)
International Attendees	\$10 (No CME/CE)

Margarita Cerejido, PhD, Program Organizer

CVs Available Upon Request

There is no known commercial support for this program.

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