

A heart complete, by Miša Hejná (previously published in *Asterales. A Journal of Arts and Letters* 2, 2025).



# Interdisciplinary Conference on **Communicating Love and Desire** (ICoLaDe)

27<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> May 2026, AU

## Call for papers

While love and desire are often treated as personal and private matters, they are also sites of conflict, negotiation, and power [3;7]. Historically, controlling expressions of desire has been used to enforce social hierarchies, gender norms, and colonial power [3;7]. Even today, conflicts over consent, domestic violence, LGBTQ+ rights, and cross-cultural misunderstandings reveal the urgent need to better understand how love and desire are communicated. Addressing these questions is not only of academic interest but also has practical relevance for public health, education, migration policy, and social cohesion. This three-day conference aims to bridge disciplinary divides to illuminate how better communication about love and desire can help address these real-world challenges.

While love can be and has been seen as different from desire [11], there are important overlaps between the two. Different types of love incorporate different types of desire [11;13;20]. Yet, many questions remain unanswered about how different types are (mis)communicated. Some of these questions, which will be targeted by the conference, are the following:

1. How are different types of love and desire (mis-)communicated?
2. How do we communicate love and desire *successfully*?
3. Is communicating love and desire limited only to human-human interactions? If not, what significant cross-species and cross-communicator differences emerge?
4. How are discourses of love utilised for greater societal good?

**Abstracts of 200-500 words (excluding references) should be submitted via EasyChair by the end of 2025 (31st December 2025, midnight, CET).**

- EasyChair submission portal will be available on the conference website soon
- Conference website: <https://misahejna.wixsite.com/icolade>

Oral presentations, poster presentations, and video essay presentations will be supported.

ICoLaDe is going to be a hybrid conference, with a registration fee of 1000 DKK for in-person participants. The fee covers catering for all three days (excluding an evening dinner).

A collected volume of contributions will be edited as a follow-up on the conference.



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### ***How are different types of love and desire communicated?***

Love and desire permeate our existence and have been argued to be universal across cultures [11]. But are love and desire communicated in the same ways across cultures? If so, what are the universals of communicating love and desire? While the current research suggests that there are important overlaps [11], it has also been acknowledged that some aspects of the field are heavily skewed towards WEIRD samples [20]. Thus, most of our understanding of how love and desire are communicated may not enable us to reach larger-scale cross-cultural conclusions. The conference will particularly welcome papers that will contribute to this area, especially with respect to potential miscommunication. Another aim of this conference is to explicitly reflect on the representation of different types of love and desire within and across different disciplines. A closer look at diverse disciplinary approaches reveals that some scholars/disciplines focus on one rather than the other in the absence of the other [11;20]. The third typologically oriented aim of the conference therefore is to bring scholars together who do not tend to consider the role of both in their work.

### ***How do we communicate love and desire successfully?***

When we communicate different types of love and desire, what makes the communication process successful? Less work exists in this area, although the implications of understanding successful communication of love and desire can have broader-scale societal impact [2;7-9], especially in the current times of political upheavals and uncertainty.

### ***Is communicating love and desire limited only to human-human interactions?***

While it could be said that love is at the core of being human [16], love is nevertheless not limited to human-human interactions. Firstly, relationships with different forms of attachment exist between human and non-human animals [10;14] as well as human animals and non-animals, such as plants and AI [4;6]. Pet-directed speech [5] and most recently the emergence of bonding relationships with AI [17] provide relevant examples. With the advent of highly developed interactive AI, the world of dating apps has also seen the use of AI in shaping the users' interactions with potential human partners [18]. The third goal of the conference is to reach an overview of academic and societal questions we should be asking ourselves in this area of communicating love and desire.

### ***How are discourses of love utilised for the greater societal good?***

Finally, the last question of the conference builds on the previous three. Some scholars have suggested that love studies and love discourses are crucial in tackling many of the wicked problems [1;19], including for instance discrimination and global climate change [15]. But how exactly can scholars working on communicative aspects of love and desire contribute towards greater societal good? What are some of the practical steps we can take.

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