

**Panel 14**  
**Banville and Art**

**Intermediality and Affect in John Banville's Experimental Fiction**

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The Booker-Prize winner John Banville continuously experiments with his fiction through intermediality, which is deployed as a literary device that points to the intersection and interaction between text and painting, cinema, music, and other media forms within his literary and artistic works. Although the interplay between verbal narrative and visual art has been extensively analysed, particularly in the wake of “the intermedial turn”, Banville’s deployment of intermediality and its affective force are still underexplored and merit deeper scrutiny. In this essay, I attend to the dynamic interplay between literary text, paintings, photographs, film, and music in three of Banville’s experimental fictions—*The Sea* (2005), *Ancient Light* (2012), and *The Blue Guitar* (2015)—which prominently engage with intermediality and its articulation of ineffable affect. By comparing and exploring how retired art historian Max Morden in *The Sea*, actor Alexander Cleave in *Ancient Light*, and the failed painter in *The Blue Guitar* each narrate their varying affective memories by referencing or simulating different media forms and how these experiments evoke the readers’ aesthetic empathy, I highlight the vital role of musicality and argue that, while visual arts are frequently and explicitly mobilised in Banville’s fiction, musicality functions more subtly, where it is interwoven into the rhyme of the prose and the cadence of narrative progression. Ultimately, the musicality, in cooperation with visual arts, not only shapes the narrative form but also serves as a crucial medium that represents the characters’ affective memories and elicits the readers’ affective responses.

**Biography**

Ni Zengxin is a PhD candidate in English literature at the School of Humanities, Nanyang Technological University. Her research interests lie mainly with contemporary Irish fiction, narratology, and affect studies. She has published a few articles and attended academic conferences in China, Singapore, Ireland, Japan, and the UK (online).