

Living Versailles (Canberra, 17–18 Mar 17)

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Mar 17–18, 2017

Deadline: Oct 30, 2016

Robert Wellington, Australian National University

Enchanted Isles, Fatal Shores: Living Versailles

On the occasion of the Versailles: Treasures from the Palace exhibition at the NGA, which brings major works of art from the Palace of Versailles to Canberra, this conference showcases the latest ideas about the lives of past people and objects, as well as the living culture of Versailles today.

Staged in Canberra, which like Versailles is a planned capital city, centre of government and culture, this is a unique opportunity to explore the enduring influence and resonance of Versailles, its desires and self-perceptions of modernity, from film to fashion to architecture. Gathering a generation of scholars whose work is shifting our perceptions of the art, culture and life of ancien-régime Versailles and its reception, this is the occasion for fresh and challenging research, and new perspectives on canon-defining works.

1664 is formative in the history of Versailles—the year a modest hunting lodge began to be transformed, to become a centre of art, fashion and power in Europe for more than a century. The dream of Versailles as an enchanted isle for the French aristocracy came to a grisly end with the 1789 revolution. Only two years later, the first fleet of British colonists came to settle on the east coast of Australia, on what Robert Hughes famously dubbed ‘the fatal shore’. Life at Versailles changed irreparably just as it would for those who lived in, and migrated to, Australia at the close of the eighteenth century.

Versailles was not the static creation of one man but a hugely complex cultural space, a centre of power, of life, love, anxiety and creation, as well as an enduring palimpsest of aspirations, desires and ruptures. The splendour of the castle, and the masterpieces of art and design it contains, masks a more sordid history. The conference’s theme, Enchanted isles, fatal shores, encourages examination of the tensions between splendour and misery, insiders and outsiders, display and privacy that framed life at Versailles.

Venue: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, with additional events at the Australian National University and the University of Sydney

Conveners: Mark Ledbury, Power Professor of Art and Visual Culture, University of Sydney; Robert Wellington, Lecturer, ANU School of Art Centre for Art History and Art Theory; and Lucina Ward, Senior Curator and coordinating curator for the exhibition, National Gallery of Australia

For conference enquiries email Versaillesconference@nga.gov.au or phone +61 2 6240 6432

Call for papers

Conference conveners seek proposals to deliver 20-minute papers addressing the subject of the conference; those that address the key themes below are especially welcome.

Key themes:

The 'lives' of Versailles

Virtual Versailles

Adaptations and destructions

Challenging period terms

The private and the public

'Le sale et le propre'

Versailles and Paris

Being there

Resonances of Versailles

Versailles on film

Please send an abstract of 300 words and a short CV to the conveners at Versaillesconference@nga.gov.au by 30 October 2016.

Reference:

CFP: Living Versailles (Canberra, 17-18 Mar 17). In: Arthist.net, Sep 28, 2016 (accessed Jul 13, 2025),

<<https://arthist.net/archive/13819>>.