

The Production of Ornament (Leeds, 21–22 Mar 14)

Leeds, Mar 21–22, 2014

Deadline: Dec 13, 2013

Lara Eggleton, University of Leeds

Call for Papers

The Production of Ornament:

Reassessing the Decorative in History and Practice

21–22 March 2014, University of Leeds

with the support of the Henry Moore Foundation

Keynote speakers:

- Susanne Kuechler, Professor of Material Culture in the Department of Anthropology, UCL

- Alina Payne, Professor of the History of Art and Architecture, Harvard

The descriptive terms 'decorative' and 'ornamental' are in many ways synonymous with superfluity and excess; they refer to things or modalities that are 'supplementary' or 'marginal' by their very nature. In the West, such qualitative associations in made objects intersect with long-standing and inter-related philosophical oppositions between 'form' and 'matter', 'body' and 'surface', the 'proper' and the 'cosmetic'. Accordingly, this has weighed both on determinations of value in artistic media, and on the inflexions of related histories – particularly histories of 'non-Western' art, design and culture, where a wide range of decorative traditions are deemed unworthy of critical attention.

Yet such frameworks are no more historically stable than they are culturally universal. To take one very clear and 'central' counter-example, decoration in some strands of Renaissance architectural theory (Filarete, Alberti) emerged as a rigorous codification of meaning, as an essentially functional (political) language. In many ways the history of ornament may itself be seen as a process of marginalisation of such ways of thinking, and the separation of ornament from any form of social practice.

This two-day conference seeks to explore the various ways in which

ornament might be regarded as itself productive of its objects and sites. How might the technologies, techniques, and materials of ornament be related to the conception and transformation of modes of object-making? How might ornament be understood to inform its objects, disrupting the spatial categories of 'surface' and 'structure', and the temporal models in which ornament 'follows' making? What are the relations between ornament and representation, and what is at stake in the conventional oppositions between these categories? What are the roles of ornament in larger dynamics of copying, hybridisation and appropriation between things? In what ways have practices and thinking on ornament staged cultural encounters, and engendered larger epistemological and social models?

The conference will explore the production of ornament across a broad range of historical and geographical contexts. We invite proposals from researchers and postgraduates working in any discipline, as well as practitioners, conservators and curators. Proposals of no more than 300 words, along with a CV, should be sent to Dr Richard Checketts and Dr Lara Eggleton at production.of.ornament@gmail.com by Friday the 13th of December 2013.

Reference:

CFP: The Production of Ornament (Leeds, 21-22 Mar 14). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 10, 2013 (accessed Jul 13, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/6126>>.