Shared invention (Clermont-Ferrand, Aubusson, Limoges, 6–8 Apr 16)

Clermont-Ferrand - Aubusson - Limoges, Apr 6–08, 2016
Deadline: Jun 22, 2015

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CALL FOR PAPERS

SHARED INVENTION
FROM ANTIQUITY TO THE XXIST CENTURY

International Colloquium
Organized by Laurence RIVIALE and Jean-François LUNEAU, lecturers, Blaise Pascal University, Clermont-Ferrand (France, Auvergne)

Partnership:
Musée national Adrien Dubouché, Limoges (France)
Cité de la Tapisserie, Aubusson (France)

« Shared invention », or collective creation, is the chosen theme for an international colloquium which intends to foster the best conditions to enable art historian specialists of various periods and fields, to understand better creation in fine arts as well as production in decorative arts. In terms of works of art, in numerous cases, and throughout history, significant differences have been noted due to the making of, or the transposition, of a given genuine modello. When an artist's work of art is translated in another medium, if the craftsman is not himself the inventor, but only a docile workman, how can differences in two items made by two craftsmen according to the same design be accounted for, but by a margin of liberty and sensitivity in which the very personality of the maker expresses itself?

This very margin will be at the heart of the debate, taking into account historical, social, and cultural contexts of all the periods in question.

After the Middle Ages, during which painters and sculptors belong to a regular trade legally instituted, those whom we call "artists" tried to distinguish themselves by invention, leaving execution or transposition to craftsmen, and strived to elevate their trade to the dignity of liberal arts. For Giorgio Vasari, such a claim is satisfied by the federating term of "arts of design", which were to become "fine arts", that is painting, architecture, sculpture. "Design" has thus become the discriminating point for all academies to be founded, from the Accademia delle arti del disegno in Florence (1563) to the French Académie royale (1648), and later on, the British Royal Academy (1768). Art historians have seldom questioned this hierarchy and have more readily studied genius's creations, leaving craftsmen's production in the shadow.

But is invention only the privilege of the artist who provides the design? Can it be defined only as did Poussin, “not the conception of something genuine or entirely new, but rather a new disposition and expression satisfactory in themselves, altering an old iconographical topic in order to make a new one”, thanks to a an independent and superior mind devoted to history painting?

Recent scholarly studies have strived to understand the processes of creating, in the heart of workshops, through exceptional artistic documentation as miscellanies of modelli and inventories of human positions, collected by painters in the XVIth century, revealing the almost universal use of what has been paradoxically called “invention copy”, that is creation of a new composition by way of putting together heterodox bits from everywhere. Such a process somehow highlights the role of the patron, who may be the true inventor, as he owns designs and ideas and is responsible for the aspect of the composition from beginning to end. In this case, the so-called “artist” is but a kind of go-between, and can only be understood as a mere workman.

Has invention been “shared” in every technique and in all historical periods? In which special cases? For instance, various nineteenth or twentieth century painters have collaborated with chinaware factories, as the pupils of Paul Delaroche, Jules Ziegler, or Felix Bracquemond; but according to what kind of arrangements?

Some works of art can be termed “collective” in line with the thinking of the sociologist Howard Becker. Moreover, the way craftsmen as well as artists or patrons consider themselves and behave in society reveal the importance of social status as a key to the very aspect of compositions.

Papers, devoted to etchings or engravings, stone masonry, wall painting or paper, furnishing or fashion fabrics, chinaware, stoneware, stained glass, etc., will be welcome, especially if they emphasize, not only the margin of liberty mentioned above, but also the appropriate aspect of works of art to their destination and intended meaning.

Summaries of 2500 or 3000 characters should be submitted, along with a short CV (3 lines), before June 22nd 2015, to laurence.RIVIALE@univ-bpclermont.fr, or laurence.riviale@orange.fr, or J-Francois.LUNEAU@univ-bpclermont.fr, for an answer to be sent back in September 2015.
Languages : French, English (there will be no interpreters).

Reference:

CFP: Shared invention (Clermont-Ferrand, Aubusson, Limoges, 6-8 Apr 16). In: ArtHist.net, May 3, 2015 (accessed Nov 11, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/10180>.