Fabrications: Designing for Silk in the 18th Century (London, 5 Mar 16)

The Courtauld Institute of Art, Mar 05, 2016
Deadline: Sep 4, 2015

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Joubert de la Hiberderie's Le Dessinateur d'étoffes d'or, d'argent, et de soie (1765) was the first book to be published on textile design in Europe. In preparation for the publication of an English translation and critical edition of the text this one day conference calls for papers that will analyse, critique, contextualise, review or otherwise engage with the Le dessinateur in the light of its themes: production, design, technology, education, botany and art. Joubert's manual argues for both a liberal and a technological education for the ideal designer. Such a person must, he argues, have detailed knowledge of the materials, technologies and traditions of patterned silk in order successfully to propose new designs; he or she must also have taste and an eye for beauty, which call, he says, for travel in order to see both the beauties of nature and those of art gathered in the gardens and galleries of Paris and the île de France.

We invite contributions from historians - of the book, of art and design, of science, of technology, and of matters social, industrial and economic. General questions we hope the conference will consider are: Who did Joubert hope to address through his book and to what end? What was the international reach of the book? And what other texts were its competitors? What does Le Dessinateur tell us about the status, role and skills of the designer? How did attitudes to gender inform Joubert's notion of design and manufacture? How did his ideal designer compare to what we know about the careers and livelihoods of designers at Lyons and elsewhere? What relationship did Joubert envisage between design and technology, drawing and weaving? We welcome proposals that address silk in its uniqueness and also those attentive to its relations of difference and similarity to other textile technologies. Finally, we welcome submissions from writers and critics on contemporary textiles interested in thinking about issues of fabric threaded through concerns and examples from the past.

Whatever the historical perspective, we call for submissions that engage with the priorities and explicit arguments of Joubert's text and also those that look at it awry: for example, with a view to the phenomenology as well as the technology of production, or with respect to the cut, tuck and fold as well than the plane in design, with regard also to the iterations of pattern in use as well as the invention of singular design motifs, or to give one last example, in relation to tradition and memory as well as novelty and fashion.

Please send your proposed title, a brief 150 word abstract and a short CV to Katie Scott (katie.scott@courtauld.ac.uk) and Lesley Miller (le.miller@vam.ac.uk) by Friday 4th September. Some financial support for travel expenses may be available.

Organised by Professor Katie Scott and Lesley Miller (The Courtauld Institute of Art).

Reference:

CFP: Fabrications: Designing for Silk in the 18th Century (London, 5 Mar 16). In: ArtHist.net, Jul 5, 2015 (accessed Nov 2, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/10709>.