Collecting and Empires (Florenz, 5-7 Nov 15)

Istituto Lorenzo de' Medici - Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz MPI, Nov 5–07, 2015

Maia Wellington Gahtan - Eva Troelenberg, Istituto Lorenzo de Medici

Collecting and Empires
The Impact of the Creation and Dissolution of Empires on Collections and Museums from Antiquity to the Present

Venue
5 – 6 November LdM Church Auditorium (San Jacopo in Campo Corbolini), via Faenza 43, 50123 Florence
7 November Kunsthistorisches Institut – Palazzo Grifoni Budini Gattai, via dei Servi 51, 50122 Florence

PROGRAMME

Thursday 5 November
Istituto Lorenzo de' Medici – San Jacopo in Campo Corbolini, via Faenza 43, 50123 Florence

8:30
Welcome and Opening Remarks – Rappresentanti degli enti coinvolti

Royal Collections in the Ancient World
Chair: Maia Wellington Gahtan

9.00
Zainab Bahrani (Columbia University, New York)
The biopolitics of collecting: Empires of Mesopotamia

10:00
Alain Schnapp (Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, Paris)
The idea of collecting from Mesopotamia to the classical world, convergences and divergences
Coffee/ Tea

11:30
Carrie Vout (University of Cambridge, Cambridge)
Collecting like Caesar: the pornography and paideia of amassing artefacts in the Roman Empire

12:30
Michèle Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens (École pratique des Hautes Études, Paris)
Princely treasures and imperial expansion in Western Han China (2nd-1st c. BCE)

Collections and questions of national identity
Chair: Daniel J. Sherman

15:00
Enrique Florescano (Conaculta, México)
The Mexica Empire: Memory, Identity, And Collectionism

16:00
Dominique Poulot (Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, Paris)
Empire and Museums: the case of Napoleon I

Coffee/ Tea

17:30
Christoph Zuschlag (Universität Koblenz-Landau, Landau)
Looted Art, Booty Art, Degenerate Art – Aspects of Art Collecting in the Third Reich

18:30
Katia Dianina (University of Virginia, Charlottesville)
The Dispersal of the Russian Art Empire

Friday, 6 November
Istituto Lorenzo de' Medici – San Jacopo in Campo Corbolini, via Faenza 43, 50123 Florence

Expanding empires - morning session
Chair: Eva Maria Troelenberg

9:00
Gerhard Wolf (Kunsthistorisches Institut, Florence)
Material versus Visual culture: Collecting, Dispersing and Display in Imperial Dynamics (400 – 1600)

10:00
Catarina Schmidt Arcangeli (Kunsthistorisches Institut, Florence)
Collecting in Venice and Creating a Myth

Coffee/ Tea

11:30
Hannah Baader (Kunsthistorisches Institut, Florence)
- title to be confirmed-

12:30
Michael North (Ernst Moritz Arndt Universität Greifswald, Greifswald)
Collecting European and Asian Art Objects in the Dutch Colonial Empire, 17th and 18th Centuries

Lunch

Expanding empires - afternoon session
Chair: Francesca Baldry

15:00
Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann (Princeton University, Princeton)
Habsburg Imperial Collecting

16:00
Ebba Koch (Universität Wien, Vienna)
The Mughal emperors as collectors: Jahangir (rul. 1605-27) and Shah Jahan (rul. 1628-58)

Coffee/ Tea

17:30
Tapati Guha-Thakurta (Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta)
The Object Flows of Empire: Cross-Cultural Collecting in Early Colonial India

18:30
Ruth B. Phillips (Carleton University, Ottawa)
Imperfect Translations: Indigenous Gifts and Royal Collecting in Victorian Canada

Aperitivo

21:00
Concert
Conservatorio Luigi Cherubini – Sala del Buonumore, Piazza delle Belle Arti 2, 50122 Florence
L'Ensemble Marâghî – Ottoman Classical Music
Music of the Habsburg Empire, directed by Maestra Daniela De Santis

Saturday, 7 November
Kunsthistorisches Institut – Palazzo Grifoni Budini Gattai, via dei Servi 51, 50122 Florence

Late and Post-Empire, De-Colonization and Museums
Chair: Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann

9:00
Edhem Eldem (Bogaziçi University, Istanbul)
Ottoman Imperial Collections in the Nineteenth Century: A Critical Reassessment

10:00
Eva Maria Troelenberg (Kunsthistorisches Institut, Florence)
Collecting Big: Monumentality and the Berlin Museum Island as a "World Museum" between the Imperial and Post-Imperial Age

Coffee/ Tea

11:30
Daniel J. Sherman (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill)

The (De) Colonized Object: Museums and the Other in France since 1960

12:30
Wendy Shaw (Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin)
Islam and the Legacies of Empire: Ownership of Islam in 21st-Century Museums

15:00
Roundtable
Moderated by Krzysztof Pomian (Uniwersytet Mikolaja Kopernika, Torun; Ecole des hautes Études)

For more information, contact Myra Stals, myra.stals@lorenzodemedici.it

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The creation and dissolution of empires has been a constant feature of human history from ancient times through the present day, especially if one passes from a historical to a theoretical definition of empire as an open expanding global frontier. Establishing new identities and new power relationships to coincide with changing political boundaries and cultural reaches, empires also destroyed and/or irrevocably altered social structures and the material culture on which those social structures were partly based. The political activities of empires—both formal and informal to use Doyle's definition—find their material reflection in the creation of new art forms and the reevaluation of old art forms which often involved the movement of objects from periphery to center (and vice versa) and promoted the formation of new collections. New mentalities and new social relationships were represented by those collections but they were (and are) also fostered through them.

In recent decades such issues surrounding objects and empire have become important components of our understanding of British colonialism, and to a lesser extent of anthropological approaches to colonial studies more broadly conceived. Concurrent with these developments, comparative studies of the political forms of empires have also appeared, though the baseline for such comparisons is invariably the Roman Empire, from whose imperium we derive our word, but which is ill-suited to describe post-WW-II hegemonies or even Asian historical examples. This conference seeks to cast a wider net temporally, spatially and conceptually by exploring the impact of the expansion and contraction of empires on collecting, collections, and collateral phenomena such as cultural exchange in a selection of the greatest empires the world has known from Han China to Hellenistic Greece to Aztec Mexico to the Third Reich without privileging particular political models and always with an eye to how these historical situations invite comparisons not only with each other but also with contemporary imperial tendencies.

While some scholars would argue that the term empire no longer applies to today's global and transnational environment, others have redefined 'empire' in terms of contemporary capitalism and a developing post-modern global order. Exclusively based on political and economic concerns (including identity politics) and for the most part distressingly Eurocentric, these analyses of empire or its evolution into something else yet to be defined, also neglect the impact of material culture, even though material culture studies have made great strides in recent decades by addressing issues of the migration of objects and people for both political and non-political rea-

sons. Therefore by investigating empires and imperialism in a comparative manner through the lens of collecting practices, museum archetypes and museums proper, it is hoped that this conference workshop will help shape our understanding of what is indeed imperial about our own approach to material culture.

Contribution to Scholarship: While individual empires have been studied extensively, it is only in recent decades that they have been examined from comparative political, social and cultural perspectives. It is also only recently that scholarship in history of collecting and anthropology has begun to address the role imperial expansion on collecting and museums in reference to European and particularly British colonialism. Still there is very little written on the history of collecting from any perspective outside of the European tradition or from before the Renaissance. This conference would—for the first time—approach the subject of collecting and empires from a global and inclusive comparative perspective, from which it is hoped that significant conclusions may be drawn about the social, cultural and political impact of collecting and display across the centuries and down to present times.

Reference:

CONF: Collecting and Empires (Florenz, 5-7 Nov 15). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 23, 2015 (accessed Nov 12, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/11289>.