The Matter of Mimesis (Cambridge, 17-18 Dec 15)

CRASSH (Cambridge), Dec 17–18, 2015

Marjolijn Bol, University of Utrecht

The Matter of Mimesis. Studies on mimesis and materials in nature, art and science

Conference
17 December 2015 - 18 December 2015
CRASSH (SG1&2), Alison Richard Building, 7 West Road, CB3 9DT

Conveners
Emma Spary (University of Cambridge)
Marjolijn Bol (University of Amsterdam and Max Planck Institute for the History of Science)

Summary
This interdisciplinary conference aims to bring together scholars from the sciences, social sciences and humanities in order to address material practices of mimesis. Aristotle, in one of the first definitions of the concept, argues that mimesis, or the imitation of nature, refers to both form and material. Thus far, scholarship has mostly focused on the role of form in mimetic practices, while the mimetic role of materials, despite the many disciplines in which these are central to making and knowing, remains significantly understudied.

Materials play a fundamental role in mimetic practices, from the earliest known examples to some of the most recent. Ancient ceramic vessels, for instance, some nearly four millennia old, imitate the visual appearance of other materials like metal or straw, while medieval artisans gave wood the costly appearance of marble, or made paper seem like gilded leather. The industrial revolution and chemical innovation created many new opportunities for material mimesis, crowned with the invention of plastics, which can be transformed into almost anything imaginable. Today, computer science allows us to flip pages of digital paper and navigate the visible world in three dimensions, while material science has invented biomaterials that replace the cells of our bodies, smart materials that can assume the appearance of their surroundings, and drugs that imitate the material of neurotransmitters, to name but a few. The role of materials in mimesis is by no means limited to the past: the practice will continue to have an impact in the future which cannot be foreseen.

Registration and programme at:
http://www.crassh.cam.ac.uk/events/26170

Programme

Day 1 - Thursday 17th December 2015

9.30-10.00
Registration and Coffee

10.00-10.15
Welcome and Introduction - Marjolijn Bol and Emma Spary

10.15-12.30
Session 1 - Substitution

Ann-Sophie Lehmann (University of Groningen): Closing the mimetic gap, or the galalithe problem. Material imitation as scientific, creative, and social practice

Zuzanna Sarnecka (University of Cambridge): Firing porphyry in the Renaissance ceramic kiln

Jenny Rampling (Princeton University): Substituting alchemy: the quid pro quo of experimental reconstruction

Hanna Wirta Kinney (Oxford University): The fleshiness of bronze: eighteenth-century copies by Massimiliano Soldani Benzi and Pietro Cipriani

Discussion

12.30-13.45
Lunch

13.45-15.30
Session 2 - Making Material Knowledge

Pamela Smith (Columbia University): Transforming matter and making art in a sixteenth-century workshop

Marta Ajmar (Victoria and Albert Museum): A culture of material mimesis: thinking and making trans-materially in Italy, 1400-1600

Lisbet Tarp (Aarhus University): Fertile stones: hybrid stones between matter and form in the collection of Ole Worm (1588-1654)

Discussion

15.30-16.00
Coffee

16.00-17.45
Session 3 - Added-value

Erma Hermens (University of Glasgow): Mimicking the 'real thing': material manifestations

Richard Checketts (University of Leeds): 'Without intellect or will': materials and mimesis in the Cappella Altieri in S. Maria Sopra Minerva in Rome

Jack Lynch (Rutgers University): Real fakes and fake fakes: materiality in literary forgery
Discussion

18.00-19.00
Keynote Lecture

Mark Miodownik (University College London): Bio-inspired materials

19.30
Conference Dinner

Day 2 - Friday 18th December 2015

10.00-12.15
Session 4 - Materializing the Impossible

Miri Rubin (Queen Mary, University of London): Title to be confirmed

Valentina Pugliano (University of Cambridge): Fake specimens in the Renaissance

Britta Dümpelmann (Freie Universität Berlin): ArtFiction. Materiality and material mimesis as the genuine language of nonpolychrome Northern Renaissance sculpture

Maria Lumbreras (Johns Hopkins University): "Con el oro e matizes de la dicha ymagen": sacred matter and its replicas in early modern Seville

Discussion

12.15-13.45
Lunch

13.45-15.00
Session 5 - Preservation

Jeroen Stumpel (Utrecht University): Patterns of endurance: material and survival in the history of art

Anna Maerker (King's College London): Title to be confirmed

Sophie Kromholz (University of Glasgow): Things aren't what they seem - material compromises in the conservation of ephemeral art

Discussion

15.00-15.30
Coffee

15.30-17.30
Session 6 - Mimesis Beyond 'Matter'?

Pietro Conte (University of Lisbon): Excessive similarity? Hyperrealism and its materials in pheno-

menological perspective

Emilie Gehl Skulberg (University of Copenhagen): The Illustris Project: mimesis and the simulation of the cosmos

Erik Rietveld (University of Amsterdam): The skillful body and affordances for material mimesis

Leah Anderson (l'École cantonale d'art du Valais): Reflections on place

Discussion

17.30
Closing Remarks

Sponsors:
Netherlandish Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO)
CRASSH

Reference:
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