Session at History and Authority (Canberra, 28-29 Jul 16)

Australian National University, Jul 28–29, 2016
Deadline: Apr 1, 2016
hrc.anu.edu.au/events/history-and-authority-political-vocabularies-modern-age-july-2016-call-papers

Robert Wellington, Australian National University

Conference: History and Authority: Political Vocabularies of the Modern Age

Session: Visual Vocabularies of History and Authority
Session Chair: Robert Wellington, Australian National University

The aesthetics of political discourse matter now as never before. In the information age, the visual rhetoric of governance and dissent transfers instantaneously and duplicates exponentially across the globe. The power of objects and images to convey political ideologies has an ancient lineage, with portraits of the deified emperors of ancient Greece and Rome sent to the farthest reaches of their empires by way of coins, statues and other monuments. It was these remains of the classical world that inspired a renewed emphasis on secular political imagery at the dawn of the modern age in Europe. Princes of the church and state sought to buttress their claims to power through the buildings, monuments and works of art that they commissioned. In the eighteenth century, Enlightenment artists and intellectuals used the arts to support new political agendas and to destabilize the authority of the old regime. By the mid-nineteenth century the avant-garde challenged the conservative structures of visual discourse that remained in the academies of painting and sculpture that had survived the age of revolutions. This conventional narrative of Western art as a vehicle for political expression has been the foundation of social histories of art.

This session seeks papers that interrogate the visual vocabularies of political authority found in images, objects, and buildings of the modern age (broadly conceived, 1400-present). Papers might address histories of contemporary political imagery with reference to historical precedents or vice versa. Those who seek to challenge or problematize Marxist readings of art and visual culture with reference to non-western material; the deconstruction of master narratives of art history; and post-colonial debates about centers of power and their peripheries will be especially welcome.

Please send an abstract of 300 words and a short CV to Robert Wellington (robert.wellington@anu.edu.au) by April 1 2016.

Reference:

CFP: Session at History and Authority (Canberra, 28-29 Jul 16). In: ArtHist.net, Mar 12, 2016 (accessed

Nov 20, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/12436>.