

Shaped by Nature, Forged by Art (Evanston, 21 May 16)

Northwestern University, 1881 Sheridan Road, Evanston, IL, May 21, 2016

Registration deadline: May 13, 2016

Claudia Swan, Illinois

Shaped by Nature, Forged by Art. Image, Object, Knowledge, and Commerce in Early Modern Europe

The often complex, always productive, and sometimes vexed relationship between nature and art is a central theme of early modern European culture and of artistic production in particular. Where, in a visual culture devoted to naturalism, does art begin and nature end? If mimicking nature is the most noble of artistic aims, what is the relationship between the generative powers of art and the fecundity of nature? Long the ape of nature, art vied with nature in the early modern era to the point of outstripping it—or at least trying.

The twinned tropes of the artistry of nature and the naturalism of art populate artistic discourse and practice throughout the early modern era. This event, a two-day workshop sponsored by Myers Funds and the Department of Art History at Northwestern University, will bring together some of the most prominent early modern art historians working on this and related topics (see preliminary list of participants and titles), from Europe and North America. Most but not all of the papers will address topics in northern European early modern art theory and practice. Commentators will be invited to represent adjacent fields (history of science; medieval art history; Italian art history). The structuring questions range from those mentioned at the outset of this prospectus to: How did objects or practices that conjoined art and nature foster knowledge—natural historical knowledge, for example, or ethnographic knowledge? How did the early modern market support or otherwise respond to such works? What is the relationship between image and object, seen from the perspective of the twinned powers of art and nature? This workshop, “Shaped by Nature. Forged by Art” will enable this outstanding panel of visiting scholars to respond to these and further questions, in conversation with Northwestern faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students, and is designed to foster conversation at the highest level of one of the most central topics in early modern art history.

PROGRAM

9:00-9:30 Welcome and Introduction

Claudia Swan, Northwestern University

9:30-11:00 AM Session I

Robert Felfe, Universität Hamburg

Art and Craft in Nature's Workshop. Consequences of a Widespread Topos

Jessica Keating, Carleton College

The Mutual Dependence of Nature and Art: Nikolaus Pfaff's Rhinoceros Horn Goblet

11:30 AM-1:00 PM Session II

Marisa Bass, Washington University in St. Louis

Insect Artifice: The Origins of Entomology in the Early Modern Netherlands

Marisa Mandabach, Harvard University

Mythologizing Matter: Images of Spontaneous Generation in Rubens

2:00-3:30 PM Session III

José Ramon Marcaida, University of Cambridge

Pictorial Wit and Still Life Painting in Early Seventeenth-century Spain

Stephanie Dickey, Queen's University

Glycera's Garlands: Painting, Flowers, and the Rivalry of Art and Nature

4:00-5:00 PM Comments and Final Discussion

Peter Parshall, Commentator

5:00 PM Reception

Free and open to the public; PLEASE RSVP to mel.keiser@northwestern.edu by May 15 2016

Reference:

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