THE CYCLE OF LIFE IN ART, LITERATURE AND SCIENCE
(COVENTRY, 1 JUL 16)

Institute for Creative Enterprise (ICE Building), Coventry University Puma Way, Coventry, UK, CV1 2NE, July 1, 2016

The Cycle of Life in Art, Literature and Science Symposium

Hosted by the Visual Art Research Group (VAR), Faculty of Art and Humanities, Coventry University

The 400th anniversary of William Shakespeare’s death takes place in 2016. To mark this important event and as part of the international celebrations that will be taking place, Coventry University is hosting a conference entitled ‘The Cycle of Life in Art, Literature and Science’, taking as a starting point Shakespeare’s Seven Ages of Man speech from his play As You Like It.

Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon has also commissioned the artist Jonathan Waller to paint seven new pictures on the theme of the Seven Ages. Shakespeare is buried in the church and it is visited by more than a quarter of a million people each year. The pictures will hang in the church between April and September 2016. After the conference a coach will be made available to transport participants to Stratford-upon-Avon to see the works in situ.

Context

Early Modern England witnessed the Renaissance, the age of exploration, the start of a movement away from rural life towards expanding urban centres, the early development of industry and the establishment of a merchant middle class. However, life expectancy was only 42 years and considerably lower in the urban environments. Women were often considered inferior to men and had limited rights. There were few single people and everyone was expected to marry. These marriages were frequently made for social and financial gain rather than for romantic love. Although As You Like It is a comedy about romantic love, Shakespeare wrote the seven ages speech against this backdrop. Noticeably, he highlighted the negative or shadow side of the archetype for each age, rather than the ideal.

Life is very different today. Little of the world remains unexplored and access to it – either physically or virtually – is commonplace. Countries have become more multiracial and multicultural. Additionally, the boundaries between gender roles have become blurred and sexual diversity is now more acceptable. Cures for disease, sci-
Scientific discoveries and genetic engineering make possible the extension of life. Radical enhancement and transhumanism challenge us to go even further beyond the naturally given. At the same time the planet’s resources are being used up and the environment is in crisis. With these things in mind can we still find meaning in Shakespeare’s evocation of the ‘seven ages of man’ and how might we reinterpret concepts of natural life-cycles in our own time?

This interdisciplinary symposium explores meanings, perceptions and the scholarly and creative reception of cycles of life in art, literature and science in historical and contemporary cultural contexts. The aim is to bring together a wide range of scholars from different disciplinary backgrounds, including those with interests in the History of Art, English Literature, Shakespeare, Theatre, Early Modern History, Classical Studies, Medical Science, Psychology and the Social Sciences.

Any further questions or enquiries should be directed to andrea.hannon@coventry.ac.uk

Programme

09.00 Registration and Coffee. ICE Foyer
10.00 Welcome by Juliet Simpson - Digital Art Studio
PANEL 1 Setting the Scene Chaired by Juliet Simpson - Digital Art Studio
12.15 Lunch and time to view The Seven Ages Exhibition
PANEL 2 Aspects of Ageing Chaired by Lynsey McCulloch - Digital Art Studio
13.30 ‘Ageing and the Cycle of Life in Rubens’ Self-Portraiture’, Dr Katerina Georgoulia.
15:00 -15:30 Tea and Coffee
PANEL 3 Confronting Death Chaired by Jonathan Waller - Digital Art Studios
15.30 ‘Ends Badly’, Andrew Beck.
16.00 ‘Last Scenes: Painter’s Last Paintings’, Jean Boggs.
16.30 -17:00 Plenary – an opportunity to discuss the day’s proceedings.
17.00 Symposium ends
17:15 Drinks Reception - Drapers Bar
6:45/7:00 Dinner for Speakers, Chairs and Organisers only (Optional please note this is not subsidised, but a great opportunity for further networking)

BOOKING INFORMATION

£30 full time employed/institutionally funded.
£20 concessions/students.
£10 Coventry University staff and students

To reserve/book your place please contact:
Andrea Hannon, Research Assistant for Visual Art andrea.hannon@coventry.ac.uk

or visit: https://visualartsresearch.wordpress.com/2016/02/09/the-cycle-of-life-in-art-literature-and-science-friday-1st-july-2016-coventry-university-united-kingdom/

REFERENCE: