Session at AAH (Leicestershire, 6-8 Apr 17)

Loughborough University Leicestershire, Apr 6–08, 2017
Deadline: Jul 11, 2016

Anna Frasca-Rath

Session at the AAH 2017 Annual Conference

Modern Lives – Modern Legends. Artist anecdotes since the 18th century

In John Nichols' Biographical Anecdotes of William Hogarth (1785), one reads of how the painter died in the arms of his servant, his demise the result of overindulging in beefsteak. Seventy years later, a biography of John Flaxman tells of how the artist, in his childhood, showed his drawings to a famous painter – who asked if they were meant to represent flounders.

These are just two examples for a little-known tendency in the artistic literature of the 18th and 19th century: the re-adaptation of traditional anecdotes which had been repeated countless times since the trecento. Nichols' story clearly refers ironically to Vasari's description of Leonardo's death in the arms of the French King, and Flaxman's 'flounders' are an equally ironic take on the legend of Giotto's discovery by Cimabue. Far from simply providing entertainment, they were also an opportunity for succinct commentary on the respective artist's work – the 'Englishness' of Hogarth and the 'flatness' of Flaxman.

This session explores these revisions and re-adaptations of traditional artist anecdotes and their function in the art theoretical debates of their time. What was the purpose of such re-writings? How does this flood of new anecdotes relate and react to the rise of 'scholarly' biographical writing? Which art-theoretical subtexts were carried in these ironic deflections from tradition? And how do they intersect with the equally prominent rise of depictions of anecdotal scenes from artists' lives – Giotto painting sheep being just the most prominent example?

Papers examine these and other questions in a broad geographical context between the 18th and 20th century.

Hans Christian Hönes, The Warburg Institute (Bilderfahrzeuge Project), hoenes@bilderfahrzeuge.org
Anna Frasca-Rath, University of Vienna, anna.sophie.rath@univie.ac.at

Please email your paper proposals straight to the session convenor(s). Provide a title and abstract for a 25 minute paper (max 250 words). Include your name, affiliation and email. Your paper title should be concise and accurately reflect what the paper is about (it should 'say what it does on the tin') because the title is what appears most first and foremost online, in social media and in the printed programme.

You should receive an acknowledgement of receipt of your submission within two weeks. Do not send proposals to the Conference Administrator or the Conference Convenor.

Deadline for Paper Proposals: 7 November 2016

Reference:
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