The Network of Cassinese Arts (Florence, 16-18 Mar 17)

Florence, Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, Mar 16–18, 2017
Deadline: Oct 30, 2016

Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut

The Network of Cassinese Arts in Mediterranean Renaissance Italy

Conference organized by Alessandro Nova and Giancarla Periti

From the late fifteenth to the mid sixteenth century, an impressive corpus of architecture, sculpture, and painting was created to embellish monastic sites affiliated with the Benedictine Cassinese Congregation of Italy. A religious order of humanistically trained monks whose mobility among the network of Cassinese monasteries was paramount to their spiritual reformed agenda, the Cassinese fruitfully engaged with the most eminent artists and architects of the early modern period, supporting the production of imagery and architecture that was often highly experimental in nature. The Cassinese Congregation constituted a spiritual infrastructure that spread across the northern, central and southern regions of Italy, through which not only monks but also works and models circulated, intersected, and interacted. The mobility and flow of artists, materials, and motifs tied together the reformed religious communities affiliated with the Cassinese Congregation and simultaneously connected an antique with a modern Christian artistic corpus. This system resulted in a virtual continuum linking works of architecture, sculpture, and painting, including the Byzantine church of San Vitale in Ravenna, the Norman cloister of Monreale (Palermo), and Raphael's Sistine Madonna in Piacenza.

Scholarship has presented the Cassinese monks principally as learned patrons of ambitious but locally-inflected works created by credited Renaissance masters. But such an approach has obscured the fact that these modern instances of Cassinese Christian arts existed within a larger cultural network and coexisted with others of differing value, including the management of late antique buildings, the preservation of Byzantine mosaics, and the custody of poorly made votive images in popular shrines. Not only did these lesser-known episodes assure the survival of late antique arts, and artifacts of limited aesthetic appeal, but they also provided occasions for Renaissance masters active in Cassinese communities to confront alternative forms of antiquity in a dialogue among the arts for the reinvention of a modern Christianized art.

The present conference proposes itself as a forum for the task of reconnecting various artistic episodes that were once Cassinese initiatives in Renaissance Mediterranean Italy and of re-considering the spatial monastic settings in which the artworks were originally placed. Investigating the network of Cassinese arts therefore offers a fresh occasion to gain new perspectives on a rich

body of antique and Renaissance artworks and their life across time, as well as their makers' approaches to past models, recipients' modalities of viewing and the pressures put on images as agents of religious reform.

Proposals engaging with all aspects of the network of Cassinese arts are welcome, with a preference for investigations of little-explored Cassinese works in southern Italy or new readings of major artworks and their modes of functioning. Comparative approaches to cycles depicting rebus-like art forms such as grotesques and hieroglyphs are also of great interest, as are explorations of the social life of Renaissance artists building on the evidence that some set up workshops within the Cassinese precincts while working for the monks. Other topics could include the appropriation and recycling of Early Christian and Byzantine materials in Cassinese edifices, the ecological management of built resources (for example, the transfer of antique columns from San Vitale in Ravenna to the abbey of Santa Maria del Monte in Cesena) that served to symbolically link Cassinese monasteries, and considerations on the Cassinese visual network of the sacred, spreading throughout Mediterranean Italy by means of copies of primary objects and the mobility of monks, artists and forms.

Please send your proposal (maximum 400 words) and CV in English, German and/or Italian to Dott.ssa Mandy Richter: Richter@khi.fi.it.

Application deadline: October 30, 2016.
Review of applications: November 2016.

Reference:
CFP: The Network of Cassinese Arts (Florence, 16-18 Mar 17). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 6, 2016 (accessed Nov 6, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/13538>.