The many faces of ‘style’ in law and legal scholarship (Lisbon, 16–21 Jul 17)

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Special Workshop
The many faces of ‘style’ in law and legal scholarship

Organisers:
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Style is probably best characterized as a proto-concept. The term ‘style’ is used in a bewildering variety of senses and contexts, mundane and refined, practical and theoretical. While there is a risk that the term causes more confusion rather than contribute to organising and expressing our thoughts clearly, the problems it refers to are unlikely to disappear. Art historians, linguists, sociologists of culture could not easily do without it.
The term has also been used in a variety of legal discourses, referring to characteristic ways legislators, judges, law enforcement agencies talk and behave; specific legal institutions operate; legal systems express distinctive mentalities and cultural patterns. Style books in courts provide more or less binding guidance, assuring consistency in adjudication by regulating the written form of judicial decisions; a ‘plain style’ as opposed to legalese and jargon is supposed to make law accessible; the ‘legal stylist’ as a paralegal specialism in the ecology of modern law firms takes care of standard formal and substantive features of legal documents. In fact, some legal historians suggest that the origins of style as a technical term are in medieval legal doctrine, when stilus referred either to certain formal features of official legal documents or to customary procedural rules of specific courts.

The aims of this workshop are twofold.
First, it should contribute to mapping (distinguishing and clarifying) the numerous ways ‘style’ is used in legal discourses, including legal reasoning, comparative law, legal semiotics, legal aesthetics, law and literature. How is ‘style’ related to ‘content’, ‘form’, ‘mentality’, ‘culture’, or ‘narrative’?
Second, it should generate reflection on possible cross-disciplinary connections. If style is to be used in legal discourse, how is this use enriched by/distinct from the usage of the term in other disciplinary discourses, such as art history, cultural studies, linguistics, or sociology of science?

We invite contributions discussing these and related questions. An abstract of 250–500 words,

indicating the authors' academic affiliation, should be submitted by 30 April 2017 to p.cserne@hull.ac.uk, indicating "Law and style IVR" in the subject line. Acceptance decisions will be communicated by mid-May.

Reference:

CFP: The many faces of 'style' in law and legal scholarship (Lisbon, 16-21 Jul 17). In: ArtHist.net, Apr 13, 2017 (accessed Nov 16, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/15243>.