

Session at SAH 2018 (Saint Paul, 18–22 Apr 18)

Saint Paul, Minnesota, Apr 18–22, 2018

Deadline: Jun 15, 2017

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Causes for Admiration: Objective Beauty in Architecture

In the Preface to the “Ordonnance for the Five Kinds of Columns after the Method of the Ancients,” Claude Perrault famously distinguished objective from arbitrary causes of architectural beauty. The scholarly discussion of the Preface has focused on Perrault’s view of proportion as an arbitrary cause, and his emphasis on taste and authority as principles guiding aesthetic judgment. Less attention has been given to how the Preface defines and affirms the beauty of architecture rooted in objective causes, “bound to please everyone.” Amongst these causes Perrault classes rich material, size and magnificence, clean execution of the work, and symmetry.

The Preface sets a benchmark in a long history of architectural but also political, religious, and philosophical reflections aiming to define architectural qualities that inspire universal admiration. Early modern considerations about the ethics of architectural patronage, for instance, put forth rareness and excellence of material, vast size, large expenditure and durability as architectural qualities naturally inducing admiration, now as an aspect of Aristotelian “magnificentia.”

This session seeks to explore historically and critically the belief in objective, universal causes of the admiration of buildings. It wants to test the often implicit assumption in architectural discourse and practice that particular qualities of buildings are necessarily deemed beautiful. By uncovering an at once continuous and fragile belief in objective beauty in architecture, the session also wants to challenge the historiographical assumption that modernity emerged with an increasing awareness of subjectivity and collective or individual taste. We are particularly interested in understanding which qualities are identified as ‘objective’ causes for admiration, and in how these causes are adopted or developed in religious, political or philosophical discourses surrounding architecture. The session takes the early modern period in Europe as its point of reference, but welcomes contributions covering expanded geographies and chronologies.

Please submit an abstract no later than 5:00 p.m. CDT on 15 June 2017. Submission Guidelines and access to the online submission module can be found at: <http://www.sah.org/conferences-and-programs/2018-conference--saint-paul/2018-call-for-papers>.

ArtHist.net

Reference:

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