Desiring Statues (Exeter, 27 Apr 12)

University of Exeter, Apr 27, 2012
Deadline: Oct 1, 2011

Jennifer Grove

Desiring Statues: Statuary, Sexuality and History Conference

Keynote Speakers

Dr Stefano-Maria Evangelista (University of Oxford)
Dr Ian Jenkins (British Museum)

Statuary has offered a privileged site for the articulation of sexual experience and ideas, and the formation of sexual knowledge. From prehistoric phallic stones, mythological representations of statues and sculptors, e.g. Medusa or Pygmalion, to the Romantic aesthetics and erotics of statuary and the recurrent references to sculpture in nineteenth- and twentieth-century sexology and other new debates on sexuality, the discourse of the statue intersects with constructions of gender, sex and sexuality in multiple ways.

As historical objects, statues give insight into changing perceptions of the sexed body and its representation; they tell stories of ownership and appropriation of sexualities across diverse cultural locations and historical moments. As an imaginary site, statues can serve to trouble the distinction between subject and object, reality and unreality, presence and absence, and present and past, thereby offering rich possibilities for thinking about the relation between individual and communal identities, sexuality and the past.

This interdisciplinary conference seeks to investigate how statues facilitate this interplay of sexuality and history. It explores the numerous different ways in which statues –as historical and/or imagined artefacts– allow us to think about the past and its relation to sex, gender and sexuality.

The conference brings together contributors from a wide variety of disciplines, including history, gender and sexuality studies, literary and cultural studies, art history, classics, archaeology and philosophy. Contributions from postgraduate research students are very welcome.

Papers should explore how statuary intersects with questions of sexuality

and gender, and temporality, specifically history. Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

• Uses of Statuary in Sexual Science
• Statues in Colonial and Postcolonial Contexts
• Representations of Statues and Sculptors (in Literature, Visual Arts, New Media)
• Sculptures and the Construction of Gender, Racial and National Identity
• Use of Statuary in Sexual Reform Movements
• Psychoanalytic Uses of Statuary
• Statues, Gender and Sexuality in Myths, Legends and Their Adaptations
• Sculpture and Figurations of Desire
• Statuary Representations of the Gendered Body
• Reception Histories of Individual Statues

The conference is organised by Dr Jana Funke (j.funke@exeter.ac.uk) and Jennifer Grove (jeg208@exeter.ac.uk) as part of the interdisciplinary Sexual History, Sexual Knowledge project, funded by the Wellcome Trust, and led by Drs Kate Fisher and Rebecca Langlands.

Please send 300-500 words abstracts to j.funke@exeter.ac.uk and jeg208@exeter.ac.uk. The deadline for abstract submissions is 1st October 2011.

Reference:
CFP: Desiring Statues (Exeter, 27 Apr 12). In: ArtHist.net, Jul 12, 2011 (accessed Nov 5, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/1638>.