

The Role of the Medieval in Pictorial Photography (Kalamazoo, 10 - 13 May 12)

Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, May 10–13, 2012
Deadline: Sep 15, 2011

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Medieval Views: The Role of the Medieval in Pictorial Photography

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(Kalamazoo)

The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed an international occurrence of art movements aiming at a return to skilled craftsmanship and individual handiwork, usually summarized under the Arts and Crafts Movement. These movements can be described as "an unfocused reaction against industrialization" (Crawford). Installing small workshops and reviving old techniques, they often associated their ideals with medieval times.

Around 1880, photography joined this aesthetic movement with the rise of pictorialism, equally promoting elaborate techniques and opposing simplified photographic possibilities and mechanical mass production. Manipulation of the negative as well as the positive was one of the main, albeit contested topics in international pictorial circles throughout their existence.

Photographers aimed at ever more complex forms of picture making that demanded most skillful users, thereby removing themselves from the growing crowd of practicing photographers (Keller). Although this fact today is widely known within the history of photography, its roots in a broader orientation towards ideals associated with medieval arts and crafts still need to be examined. Furthermore, references to iconographic models of medieval art are a recurring phenomenon of pictorial photography that has yet to be explored.

This session aims to close this gap in research by clarifying in what way pictorialists used prevailing ideals and iconographic models of medieval times to warrant their strategies of establishing photography as an art. When, how and to what purpose were references and allusions to medieval models and styles employed? Which picture of medieval times did pictorialists create in order to be able to use it to their ends?

Papers might address issues of organization, iconography, gender, artistic and photographic networks and practices, national and international circles and exhibitions, and paradigms of handcraft. We invite papers from scholars and postgraduate students casting an analyzing look at the complex relationship between pictorial photography and its incorporation of references to medieval models and ideals.

Please send your inquiries and abstracts of no more than 300 words to

caroline.fuchs@univie.ac.at. The deadline for abstract submission is September 15, 2011. For further information about the conference including travel grants visit the following website:
<http://www.wmich.edu/medieval/congress/>

Reference:

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