Doctoral fellowship and student assistant position, Florence

Florence, Italy, Dec 01, 2011
Application deadline: Sep 15, 2011

Tim Urban

The Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz - Max-Planck-Institut seeks to appoint a doctoral fellowship (1-2 years) and a student assistant position (80h/month) to pursue studies in Art History. The positions will be affiliated to the Max Planck Research-Group

Objects in the Contact Zone: The Cross-Cultural Lives of Things

One of the major challenges facing art history today is the issue of globalization with its cultural implications - both regarding retrospective historical narratives and contemporary methods. As scholarship and museum audiences alike are becoming more and more internationalized, a (self-) critical analysis of disciplinary standpoints seems more important than ever and is at the center of ongoing discussions within and beyond academia.

Starting December 1, 2011, the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz - Max-Planck-Institut will establish a Max-Planck-Research Group whose aim is to contribute differentiated epistemic viewpoints to this discussion.

In her article "Arts of the Contact Zone" Mary Louise Pratt defines a paradigm for postcolonial literature and linguistics which applies as well to other realms of cross-cultural exchange. The research group seeks to adapt the notion of the "contact zone" as a key term, connecting it to the object: non-European objects which are shown and stored in western museums or collections, reproduced in Western media or are regarded, described, analyzed and categorized through a western lens - such objects are situated in a contact zone. This follows James Clifford's cultural anthropology, while maintaining genuinely art historical solutions as the investigative aim. As such, these contact zones create particular conditions of perception and reception, resulting both from the object's own aura, provenance, or biography and from the recipient's predisposition and intentions. Asymmetrical relations of power can undoubtedly often be observed in such contexts.
This project rejects simple models of "stimulus-response", "influences" or essentialist theories of "exotism" or "Orientalism". Following a potentially asymmetric, but basically reciprocal working hypothesis of transculturation, this research group is seeking applications for case studies which can shed significant light on the production of knowledge in such contact zones. The case studies should deal with the interrelation between particular objects or groups of objects and their reception as mediated through museums, collections, or publications in the colonial and postcolonial age. Together, these case studies would bridge the theoretical space between cross-cultural studies and visual culture phenomena and may also induce critical reassessments of established

narratives, categories and key terms such as the very idea of "transculturalism" itself.

Applications for the doctoral fellowship should include
- a letter of motivation
- a research proposal outlining the status and main scope of your dissertation project (maximum 4 pages)
- a CV
- a letter of recommendation from your dissertation supervisor
- information about evaluations of educational degrees

Applications for the student assistant position should include
- a letter of motivation
- a CV
- a letter of recommendation
- certificate of matriculation

Applications should come in one pdf file and can be submitted in German or English. They should be addressed to Eva-Maria Troelenberg and sent by e-mail at the latest by September 15, 2011 to troelenberg@khi.fi.it. Please mark your e-mail with "application research group" in the subject line.

E-mail inquiries concerning the application process should also be sent to troelenberg@khi.fi.it.

Reference:

STIP: Doctoral fellowship and student assistant position, Florence. In: ArtHist.net, Aug 29, 2011 (accessed Oct 6, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/1703>.