

Perceiving Processions (London, 24 Nov 18)

The Courtauld Institute of Art, Nov 24, 2018

Deadline: Sep 24, 2018

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Eighth Early Modern Symposium

Saturday 24th November 2018, The Courtauld Institute of Art

In recent years, a renewed interest in Early Modern rituals, festivals, and performances has prompted a reconsideration of ceremonious processions with a particular focus on their impact on social, cultural, artistic and political structures and practices. Simultaneously, scholars have increasingly acknowledged the mobility of Early Modern artists across geographical, religious and cultural borders. Although processions were witnessed by natives and visitors alike and were therefore prime instances of cross-cultural encounters, their depictions by artists both local and foreign remain a lesser-studied body of visual material. This symposium proposes to explore the visual representations of processions that took place within cross-cultural encounters both within and outside of Europe.

A procession was an act of movement that was particularly charged with meaning; an ambulatory mode of celebration, it had a global resonance in the Early Modern period. Processionals impressed foreign dignitaries, established modes of rule, communicated traditions and negotiated power balances and were highly sensory occasions – as such they lent themselves readily to visual representation and were enthusiastically recorded in literature. Pageantries, military processions and Joyous Entries (*Blijde Inkomsten*) were recorded in a variety of media, as exemplified by the festival books celebrating the ephemeral constructions orchestrated for Cardinal-Infante Ferdinand's arrival in Antwerp (1635) or the eighteenth-century paintings depicting Venice's dazzling boat parades in honour of foreign dignitaries. Furthermore, ceremonial processions conceived for births, weddings, circumcision feasts and funerals occasioned visual representations such as the colourful Mughal miniature Wedding Procession of Dara Shikoh in presence of Shah Jahan (1740). In addition, the notion of procession can be expanded to encompass various expressions of mobility that could be understood and were often depicted as a procession. Both Jan van Scorel's frieze-like painting of the knightly brotherhood commemorating their Holy Land pilgrimage (c. 1530) and the depiction of ambassadors travelling with their retinue to foreign courts and cities can be perceived as a form of procession. Thus, the structure of a procession was increasingly adopted in the Early Modern period to depict moments of exchange and motion propelled by the quest for knowledge, as much as diplomatic concerns and religious piety. Well-known examples include *The Voyage to Calicut* tapestry series (1504) as well as the highly detailed printed frieze of a merchant endeavour by Hans Burgkmair (*The King of Cochin*, 1508).

We welcome proposals for papers that engage with processions in the Early Modern period (c.

1500-1800) in the context of cross-cultural encounters, with the locations of cross-cultural interaction defined here as both inter or extra-European and beyond the “East meets West” dynamic. Participants are invited to explore artistic exchanges across geopolitical, cultural and disciplinary divides, and to examine drawings, prints, alba amicorum, painting, sculpture, decorative arts, architecture, and the intersections between them. Contributions from other disciplines, such as the history of science and conservation, are welcome. We invite 20-minute papers that explore, but are not limited to, the following questions:

- How is the format of the procession used to structure visual representations of Early Modern ceremonial occasions and cultural difference?
- How were processions perceived visually both by local and foreign artists?
- Moreover, what audiences were interested in these visual representations and what scope did such a broad and diverse range of visual material serve? It is widely acknowledged, for instance, that Festival Books were not only designed for the audience of the spectacle, but also for armchair readers who could thus experience the procession as if they had been present.
- In what way does the visual representation of a procession signify a means of negotiating between one’s own identity, heritage and outlook whilst in dialogue with another culture?
- How did diplomatic encounters encourage the production of procession scenes both during and after the diplomatic mission, such as the depiction of gift-giving ceremonies? We strongly encourage speakers to also consider less conventional modes of processions. Could, for instance, the sequential depiction of costumes in costume albums also be interpreted as a procession of some sorts?
- Through which visual strategies and spatial arrangements did the ephemeral decorations and arches erected on the occasion of glorious entries orchestrate a procession through the urban space, or thematise the idea of cross-cultural encounter?
- What are the effects (both ephemeral and lasting) of these processions that sometimes involve the construction of specific architectural constructions and temporary settings (e.g. the Field of the Cloth of Gold, 1520)?

The Early Modern Symposium offers an opportunity for research students from universities both in the UK and abroad to present, discuss and promote their research. We invite proposals from graduate students, early career researchers, conservators, and curators. Talks that draw upon technical analysis and other theoretical approaches are equally welcome.

Please send proposals of no more than 300 words along with a short biography by 24th September 2018 to talitha.schepers@courtauld.ac.uk and alice.zamboni@courtauld.ac.uk

The aim of this postgraduate symposium is to provide a platform for Early Career Researchers and postgraduate students to their share research with peers. We may be able to provide a subsidy for travel and accommodation costs, but please be aware that this may not cover all of your expenses. We prioritise candidates from the UK and Europe. We will notify successful candidates by Monday 1st October 2018, the latest.

Reference:

CFP: Perceiving Processions (London, 24 Nov 18). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 4, 2018 (accessed Oct 17, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/18737>>.