Iconotropy (Madrid, 4-5 Apr 19)

Autonomous University of Madrid, Apr 4–05, 2019
Deadline: Jan 15, 2019

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Iconotropy: Symbolic and Material Changes to Cult Images

Iconotropy is a Greek word which literally means “image turning.” William J. Hamblin (2007) defines the term as “the accidental or deliberate misinterpretation by one culture of the images or myths of another one, especially so as to bring them into accord with those of the first culture.” In fact, iconotropy is commonly the result of the way cultures have dealt with images from foreign or earlier cultures. Numerous accounts from classical antiquity and the Middle Ages detail how cult images were involved in such processes of misinterpretation, both symbolically and materially. Pagan cultures for example deliberately misrepresented ancient ritual icons and incorporated new meanings to the mythical substratum, thus modifying the myth’s original meanings and bringing about a profound change to existing religious paradigms. Iconotropy is a fundamental concept in religious history, particularly of contexts in which religious changes, often turbulent, took place. At the same time, the iconotropic process of appropriating cult images brought with it changes in the materiality of those images.

The earliest approach to the concept was in Robert Graves’s The Greek Myths (1955), where Graves justified his own ideas about the origins of many Greek myths, claiming that classical Greek culture had essentially misinterpreted images from the Bronze Age. In some cases, Graves conjectured a process of iconotropy by which a hypothetical cult image of the matriarchal period had been misinterpreted by Greek culture. More broadly, since the 1970s, cultural anthropologist Leopold Kretzenbacher published a large number of meticulous studies on European religious iconography. In these critical studies, Kretzenbacher focused on reinterpretations of both religious and secular images whose original meaning was lost, forgotten or even ignored on purpose. In Kretzenbacher’s view, iconotropy refers to the conversion of religious iconography from one mode of spiritual organization to another. Apart from Graves’s and Hamblin, scholars have paid only attention to a concept that is fundamental for the articulation of an integrative discourse on the visual culture and anthropology of the ancient and medieval cult image.

The conference hopes to generate new research questions and creative synergies by initiating conversation and the exchange of ideas among scholars in the arts and humanities. We invite researchers from ancient and medieval periods to propose contributions engaging questions on themes such as:

- Changes in the symbolism and materiality of the religious image
- Iconotropy and rituality
- Reinterpretation of non-Western cult images
- Mythology and cult image in Antiquity

- Symbolic and material appropriation of pagan images in the Middle Ages

General information
The workshop will take place in April 4 and 5 of 2019 at the School of Philosophy and Letters of the Autonomous University of Madrid and the National Museum of Archaeology. Keynote speakers: Prof. Michele Bacci (Universität Freiburg); Prof. Cecilie Brøns (Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhague); Prof. Adolfo Domínguez Monedero (UAM); Prof. Alejandro García Avilés (Universidad de Murcia). Participants accepted will presente papers up to a maximum length of twenty minutes.

Deadlines
- January 15, 2019: submition of paper proposals (including title, abstract of 300 words maximum and brief CV)
- February 15, 2019: announcement of accepted proposals
- July 31, 2019: submition of articles for publication

Address for submitions and contact
Paper proposals, questions and articles should be sent to: icam.uam@gmail.com.

Organizers
Jorge Tomás García (UAM) Sandra Sáenz-López Pérez (UAM)
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