

The Coat of Arms in Extra-European Contexts (Bern, 17–18 Oct 19)

University of Bern, Institute for Art History, Oct 17–18, 2019
Deadline: Feb 10, 2019

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Arma virosque...

The Coat of Arms in Extra-European Contexts in Early Modern Times

From the very beginning of the Iberian expansion, artifacts, images and objects played key roles in the first contacts between people who were not yet well acquainted with one another. One of the most important images in these first encounters was the coat of arms: As a marker of occupation, it was engraved into the padrões, the stone pillars that the Portuguese took with them on their voyages of discovery and planted in the newly conquered coastal areas. Some decades later, the same coat of arms appeared on ivory oliphants made in Sierra Leone by indigenous artists for Portuguese clients. And after the Portuguese rounded the Cape of Good Hope, coats of arms including those of individual Fidalgos multiplied even further, appearing on caskets manufactured by Ceylonese artists, on the silversmith's locks of boxes made in the Gujarat, on colchas woven in Bengal, etc.

The roles and functions of armorial bearings in European medieval and early modern contexts have been well researched. In recent decades, the coat of arms has revealed itself as a fruitful topic for visual studies and the anthropology of art. The proposed conference aims to build upon this work and also put pressure on it by expanding investigations of the coat of arms into the field of global art history. It wants to focus on the specific visual format of the coat of arms, as well as its material qualities in tandem with the functions it performed overseas. Questions of media transfer will be addressed as well as the issue of transcultural permeability of coats of arms within the contexts of negotiation processes that took place in extra-European contact zones. The conference proposes to connect questions from the well-established field of early modern political iconography and heraldry with more recent approaches of transcultural art history and visual culture studies. It is open for proposals from various disciplines as well as geographic regions.

Alongside the aforementioned topics, contributions could potentially focus on:

- transmedial dynamics of the coat of arms
- the coats of arms invented for the Kings of Kongo
- contemporary manuals of coats of arms
- the providentialist myth of the Portuguese coat of arms
- similar phenomena in other cultures (e.f. mon/monshō in Japan or the Ottoman tughra)
- iconoclasm directed towards coats of arms

Proposals for this conference must include (in English):

- an abstract of maximum 300 words
- a short CV with full contact information

Papers will be 20 to 30 minutes in length and followed by discussion.

Please send abstract and CV to urte.krass@ikg.unibe.ch by 10 February 2019.

Reference:

CFP: The Coat of Arms in Extra-European Contexts (Bern, 17-18 Oct 19). In: ArtHist.net, Dec 14, 2018 (accessed Jan 17, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/19785>>.