Art as Commodities / Commodities as Art (York, 14 Jun 19)

University of York, Jun 14, 2019
Deadline: Mar 29, 2019

Simon Spier

When art makes the headlines, it is usually about money. In 2017, Leonardo da Vinci's Salvator Mundi sold for over $450 million at Christie's New York. Just how can a painting be worth more than a penthouse on Fifth Avenue?

Are artworks 'commodities through and through', or are they economically exceptional? The brand equity of a Picasso or Fabergé, compounded with their provenance or "social life", suggests so. As desirable objects, artworks are often meta-desirable. The Paston Treasure is a mirror of luxury that was itself luxurious to own. Mundane objects, meanwhile, have a history of aesthetic transfiguration, especially materials of the craft. Did artists possess a kind of Midas touch?

This conference will demonstrate the centrality of markets to art's modern cultural ascendancy, while also recasting art objects as bodies of knowledge and vehicles of cultural exchange through networks of global trade.

We welcome papers across artistic media and geographic regions, with a focus on the period 1450-1900. In particular, we wish to cover the following topics:

- The art and antiques market
- Collecting, provenance and the "social life of things"
- The materials of art
- The value of artistic labour
- Art and global trade/empire
- Artistic representations of commodities, e.g. still life
- The art of the Low Countries (modern-day Belgium and the Netherlands).

The conference is a unique opportunity to share one's research in an under-explored field, and meet other like-minded scholars. Our keynote, Dr Leah Clark from the Open University, will be hosted by York's Centre for Renaissance and Early Modern Studies.

Please send a short speaker profile and an abstract of 300 words maximum to art.as.commodities@gmail.com by the above date. For further enquiries, please contact Adam Sammut, PhD candidate at the University of York, at anws500@york.ac.uk with "Art as commodities" in the subject header.

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Reference:

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