3 Sessions at AAH Annual Conference 21
(Birmingham, 14–17 Apr 21)

University of Birmingham, Apr 14–17, 2021
Deadline: Oct 19, 2020
forarthistory.org.uk/our-work/the-annual-conference/

Association for Art History’s 2021 Annual Conference

[1] From Canvas to Stage: The Visual Artist as Opera Scenographer
[2] Displaying Art In The Early Modern Period (1450-1750)

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[1] From Canvas to Stage: The Visual Artist as Opera Scenographer

From: Corrinne Chong and Hannah Chan-Hartley, canvasstage@gmail.com

Since the start of the early modernist period, there has been a longstanding tradition of artist–opera collaborations. Dalí’s Salome (Covent Garden, 1950), David Hockney’s Turandot (Lyric Opera of Chicago, 1992) and William Kentridge’s Wozzeck (Salzburg Festival, 2017) are a few examples that attest to the enduring legacy of Wagner’s ideal of the Gesamtkunstwerk and, more generally, to the appeal that the musical stage continues to hold for painters and sculptors today. This interdisciplinary session examines the artist’s role as opera scenographer – one which involves the orchestration and manipulation of space, architectonic structures, costumes, lighting and images; in short, the visual elements of the performance environment. Inevitably, the artist’s aesthetic language and subjective lens shape the scenographic realisation of the operatic work. The outcome is an interpretation which can either complement or challenge the authorial intention, whether it be textual and/or musical. Moreover, the artist’s scenographic vision can align with or disrupt the spectator’s expectations of the production. These underlying tensions can provoke polarising critical responses which merit further investigation in the scholarship.

Papers might consider: the impact of ‘artist interventions’ on the operatic stage and the various ways in which these have sought to stimulate and invigorate the existing repertory; the artist’s idiosyncratic reading and the libretto’s dramaturgical impetus; the appropriation of art-historical imagery in the scenic tableau; and the implications of the increasingly prevalent crossover of contemporary visual artists into the sphere of opera scenography. This panel particularly welcomes papers that incorporate perspectives across the spectrum of visual culture, musicology and theatre studies. Artist-scenographers can be drawn from any historical time period.

PLEASE SEND YOUR ABSTRACTS (250 words) to canvasstage@gmail.com by October 19, 2020.

Dr. Hannah Chan-Hartley (Independent Musicologist, Formerly the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and the
Displaying Art In The Early Modern Period (1450-1750)

From: Pamela Bianchi, pamelabianchi1@gmail.com

Over the years, despite the increased interest in spatial issues and some iconic studies (Luckhurst, Haskell, Koch), little attention has been paid to the long-term history of the exhibition space and exhibition-making practices.

Before the appearance of the first painting exhibitions and the spaces specially designed to show collections, the idea of showing art was mainly related to the habit of dressing up spaces for political and religious commemorations, cultural festivals, and marketing strategies. Thus, various venues (palaces, cloisters, façades, squares, pavilions, auction houses, fairs, shops...), where sociability was performed and experienced, ended up becoming temporary and privileged platforms of exhibiting.

What were those places and events? What aesthetic, cultural, social and political discourses intersected with the early idea of exhibition space? How did showing art shape a new vocabulary within these events and, vice-versa, how these occasions had conditioned exhibiting practices? Who were the producers, actors and spectators of these processes, devices, and spaces? How can we relate early exhibition logic with art history and exhibition design theories? Which kinds of sources (treatises, depictions) are involved?

The panel proposes to reconsider those events and habits that contributed to defining exhibition-making practices and to shaping the imagery of the exhibition space in the early modern period (1450–1750). Also, it seeks to define a new geography of exhibiting, not limited to Europe but expanded to include exhibiting practices in the early modern Americas, Africa, and Asia. It encourages connections between art history, exhibition studies, and architectural history, and studies crossing micro-histories and long-term changes, in order to open new perspectives of study and to foster historiographical research through an interdisciplinary approach.

We invite proposals for 20-minute papers.

Please download the completed proposal form from the website and submit it to the session co-conveners (pamelabianchi1@gmail.com).

Abstract length is maximum 250 words.

Connectivity, Transcultural Entanglements and the Power of Aesthetic Choices in Africa

From: Vera-Simone Schulz, vera-simone.schulz@khi.fi.it

Following the transcultural and global turns in the humanities and social sciences, studies of issues of connectivity, transcultural interactions, processes of exchange and long-distance entanglements have been key contributions to the fields in the past 15 years, when also the mobility of objects and artistic respons-
es to imported artefacts from the medieval to the contemporary period gained more and more prominence throughout the disciplines. When it comes to the African continent, however, such questions are often deeply problematic, since the humanities still have to deal with the weight of colonial discourses, racist concepts and rhetoric.

This session seeks to sound out ways of how to study connectivity, transcultural entanglements, and the role of and artistic responses to imported artefacts from 500 CE to the present-day in Africa without seeing Africans as passive beings 'influenced' by people and objects from afar. The session will provide a platform for transdisciplinary dialogue between art history, archaeology, anthropology and history. It will investigate issues of connectivity and mobility both across and beyond the continent, often evident in complex networks of proximity and distance. It will illuminate the impact of imported objects and the key role of local production. It will also unpack issues such as mimesis, inventiveness, the use of imported artefacts, their adaptations and transformations, creative responses to possibilities and challenges, and the power of aesthetic choices by means of case studies to probe methodologies and conceptual innovations for new studies on Africa's multiple entanglements with the wider world.

Please send abstracts according to the AAH guidelines to:

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Reference: