The Afterlife of the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus (Aachen, 24-26 Jun 21)

RWTH Aachen University, Jun 24–26, 2021
Deadline: Jan 31, 2021
halicarnassus.rwth-aachen.de

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Re-Conceiving an Ancient Wonder. The Afterlife of the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus, 1500-1850.

International Workshop at RWTH Aachen University

The importance of the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus for European culture is revealed by its very name, which – in many languages – has become a noun signifying any sufficiently monumental tomb. However, the Mausoleum was destroyed during the Middle-Ages, and many aspects of its appearance remain uncertain, even since the excavation of its foundations in the 1850s. During the Early Modern Period, the main sources of information on this building were thus ancient texts, which were the only references concerning the Mausoleum's dimensions and appearance. Accurately reconstructing architecture according to brief written descriptions, however, is an impossible task. Yet, despite this difficulty or perhaps due to the liberty it offered the imagination, numerous artists, architects and antiquaries took a keen interest in the monument during the timeframe 1500-1856, mainly using Pliny's description to suggest reconstructions, devise pictorial representations and seek inspiration for new funerary projects or monumental public architecture.

This workshop aims to examine the afterlife of the Mausoleum during this period. Being an invisible reference, the monument left far more leeway to the imagination than other, existing ancient buildings that also attracted scholarly and artistic attention, such as the Pantheon. The Mausoleum's invisibility entails that it is not the monument itself that will be investigated here, but rather the ensemble of texts, images and architectural projects referring to this central but unknowable model. Drawing upon recent developments in the methodologies of intermediality and temporality, the project aims to add a new dimension to this discussion by focusing on a precise case study examining the evolution of several key themes over a long period.

The following questions offer a common intellectual framework for the workshop. Further research themes suggested by participants, however, will naturally be welcomed.

- How did reconstructions engage with the Mausoleum's invisibility and the intermedial relations that it entailed between architecture, text and image?
- What differences emerge between various groups (e.g. antiquarians, architects, painters) in their interpretations of the Mausoleum and in the motivation of their interest for this structure?
- How did the Mausoleum inspire actual buildings and serious architectural projects?

- Or, inversely, imaginary pictorial vistas and stage sets?
- How did the Early Modern reception of the Mausoleum engage with the different means of architectural quotation (shape, dimensions, ornaments)?
- Why did the Mausoleum generate particular interest within specific cultural contexts?
- How, when and to what extent was the funerary function of the Mausoleum emphasised?
- What did the Early Modern Period make of the Mausoleum's insertion into an urban context and of its relation to the surrounding landscape?
- How is the Mausoleum discussed in general histories of architecture written during the period under consideration?

While we are interested in all proposals concerning the period 1500-1850, topics from the seventeenth and nineteenth century will be especially welcome, since they remain underrepresented amongst the several key speakers already selected.

We invite scholars to submit proposals (max. 1 page) for 20-minute talks that can later be developed into full-length book chapters. Abstracts should be sent to halicarnassus@ages.rwth-aachen.de until 31 January 2021.

The workshop will be held at RWTH Aachen University on 24-26 June 2021. Funding will be available for a partial reimbursement of participants' expenses, thanks to a grant from the German Research Foundation (DFG).

The workshop will result in a collective publication – a coherent book, rather than a loose set of articles – retracing key issues regarding the afterlife of the Mausoleum throughout the timeframe under consideration. For this purpose, we strive for an open workshop format that fosters debate and concrete ideas for a collective publishing project. We sincerely hope that we will be able to meet in person, however, if the pandemic lasts until summer 2021 we will prepare an appropriate digital format for the workshop.

For more information please visit: https://halicarnassus.rwth-aachen.de

Reference:

CFP: The Afterlife of the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus (Aachen, 24-26 Jun 21). In: ArtHist.net, Nov 27, 2020 (accessed Nov 22, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/24018>.