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Articles

Framing the Sun: The Arch of Constantine and the Roman Cityscape

Elizabeth Marlowe

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Approaching the Arch of Constantine in fourth-century Rome, the northbound traveler beheld a spectacular tableau of monuments. The position of the arch negotiated the divergent orientations of the triumphal road and the monuments in the Colosseum Valley. It also framed the colossal Neronian statue of Sol through the arch's central passageway, in a highly scenographic display of the comity between the emperor and the sun god. This appropriation of the ancient colossus sheds light on the arch's overall program, on other acts of appropriation in Constantinian Rome, and on the emperor's religious tendencies.

A Renaissance Audience Considered: The Nuns at S. Apollonia and Castagno's Last Supper

Andrée Hayum

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Andrea del Castagno's Last Supper has been well known to art historians especially once it began to appear in general survey books more than forty years ago. Its treatment, however, was often either from the retrospective vantage point of Leonardo's more famous example in Milan or in terms of the development of this theme within the context of monastery refectories in Florence. Since Castagno's Last Supper was commissioned for a convent of Benedictine nuns, research about gender and aspects of women's piety is brought to bear in an exploration of how Castagno's remarkable fresco related to its original female viewers.

The Discourse of Failure in Seventeenth-Century Rome: Prospero Bresciano's Moses

Steven F. Ostrow

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Since the moment of its unveiling in 1588, Prospero Bresciano's Moses, which adorns the center of the Fontana dell'Acqua Felice in Rome, was ridiculed as a "monster" and the work of a "sculptor who had lost his mind." One of its earliest critics, Giovanni Baglione, similarly denigrated the statue, framing his critique in terms of art theory and fabricating a moral tale around the work's failure. What emerges from an examination of the early responses to the Moses is both a tragicomic fable in the history of art and a lesson in reading and interpreting early modern art criticism.

The "Ghosting" of Incest and Female Relations in Harriet Hosmer's Beatrice Cenci

Vivien Green Fryd

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Viewed within the context of mid-nineteenth-century attitudes toward gender and sexuality, Harriet Hosmer's sculpture Beatrice Cenci reveals that the artist recognized ways in which texts about Beatrice Cenci "ghosted" her status as a victim of incestual rape. The sculpture's subject, patricide in retaliation for incest, intersects with the artist's unconventional lifestyle and sexuality. These themes derive from society's containment and condemnation of sexuality, Hosmer's interest in unconventional behavior and ambivalences about normative sexuality, Cenci's radical striking back against patriarchal oppression, and the nineteenth-century women's movement.

The Uncharted Kahn: The Visuality of Planning and Promotion in the 1930s and 1940s

Andrew M. Shanken

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The examination of a Louis Kahn diagram illuminates the visual sources and strategies that architects used in the 1940s to communicate the obscure language of urban planning to the public. The larger set of issues concerns the visual culture of modern bureaucracy and the ways in which consumer culture, urban planning, and public relations dovetailed in an age of experts, and did so by harnessing modernist art and graphic techniques. Kahn's diagram opens up the possible links between the Vienna Circle philosopher Otto Neurath, New Deal literature, abstraction in art, and the social mission of the Modern Movement in architecture.

Judaic Threads in the West African Tapestry: No More Forever?

Labelle Prussin

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The perception of the Sahara Desert as an impenetrable barrier overlooks the reality that for millennia, trade, travel, and communication generated

a rich repertoire of similarities in iconography, style, and technology between North and West Africa. These can be partly credited to itinerant and resident Jews under the aegis of Islam, European expansion, nomadism, and indigenous rule. Combining scholarship and artisanship with the trades over which they exercised a virtual world monopoly (precious metals, gold and silk embroidery, silk and indigo cloth) they contributed to a pan-Saharan design network by integrating Judaic traditions and Islamic proscriptions into indigenous African cultures.

Andy Warhol's Silver Elvies: Meaning through Context at the Ferus Gallery in 1963

David Mccarthy

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Both time and place played pivotal roles in the conception, installation, and intended meaning of the series of silver Elvies that Andy Warhol produced in the summer of 1963 for exhibition at the Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles. The appropriation of a banal publicity photograph indicates that Warhol's primary parodic target was the Hollywood Western, while the coupling of the series with portraits of Elizabeth Taylor echoed a similar gender binary found in the canonical work of Marcel Duchamp. As such, the silver Elvies constitute an important moment in Warhol's attempt to wed mass culture and vanguard art.

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