

Sculpture, decoration and design (Belfast, 12-14 Apr 07)

Ellen Tait

Contesting forms, testing functions:

Dynamic encounters between sculpture, decoration and design

This session forms part of the AAH conference 2007, 12-14 April, University of Ulster, Belfast
See www.aah.org.uk for full details.

Deadline for Submissions, 10 November 2006

The category of 'decorative art' defies precise definition. As a term, it is descriptive rather than definitive, and implies a condition of art, instead of a distinct category of its own. It is often used interchangeably with 'applied art', 'industrial art' and 'design', even though each of these terms evokes a specific period and comes with its own unique associations. Inherently interdisciplinary, these practices cross fluidly into other, more easily defined categories of art, such as painting, sculpture and architecture. Yet paradoxically, when they are studied, catalogued or displayed, objects classed as decorative art and design often assume an autonomy that contradicts their conditional nature. This session seeks to explore these divisions and intersections with specific reference to sculpture and the 'plastic' arts: when does an object count as sculpture, decoration or design? In turn, how are these definitions absorbed and reflected into art history and histories of decorative art and design?

Taking the historic partnership that has existed between sculpture, decorative art and design as a means of investigating the problems that arise when we divide art practices into disciplinary categories, this session aims to examine, firstly, the motives that inform the categories by which we order objects and, secondly, to test this ordering by examining more closely the objects themselves, as well as their critical reception and status. The session will seek to bring together a range of different approaches, and will welcome specific case studies as well as broader theoretical, historiographic and museological discussions, focusing on any period or geography. By addressing these issues across both historic and modern contexts, the session aims to highlight shifts and continuities in the dialogue between decorative art and sculpture.

For further information about this session please call Ellen Tait on 0113 246 7467. Please submit abstracts (c.500 words) and a CV by email to ellen@henry-moore.ac.uk or by post to Ellen Tait, The Henry Moore Institute, 74 The Headrow, Leeds, LS1 3AH by 10 November 2006.

Reference:

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