

Modes of Perception for Early Modern Architecture (SAH 2013 Buffalo)

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A conundrum stands at the heart of early modern architecture: treatise authors argued for reasoned analysis by the hypothetical viewer, yet they also suggested responses that slipped beyond the strictures of reason's control. One could calculate mathematical proportions precisely in one's mind, and one could develop a cogent argument about a building's purpose or the status of its owner from logically organized observations of its design. The fifteenth-century Leon Battista Alberti, however, argued for the psychological impact of beauty, while the eighteenth-century LeCamus de Mézières explored how buildings were sequential stage-sets that manipulated response. Such accounts mirrored enigmas inherent to the basic human process of perceiving the surrounding world, as it was described by early modern philosophers: the fallible senses, the deceptive imagination, and the tug of war between reason and the passions.

Scholars have considered the early modern viewer across architectural history, art history, science, and philosophy. Underpinning these approaches is a certainty about the human body: it can both reason and be reasoned about. Early modern architectural, philosophical, and scientific theorists, though, agreed that reason was as likely to be in collaboration as in competition with other human faculties. We invite papers that explore this conundrum of rational analysis, psychological response, and idiosyncratic imagination. What are the approaches and sources that could open up a multi-faceted, malleable relationship between the early modern viewer and the built environment? Topics to consider include: representations of viewer and building, contemporaneous recommendations about perception, building types evoking multi-faceted responses (e.g., social reform structures, theaters), memory spaces, and studies of particular viewers reacting to specific buildings. Please submit a CV and an abstract of not more than 300 words by 1 June 2012 to: Freek Schmidt, Vrije Universiteit, De Boelelaan 1105, 1081 HV Amsterdam, Netherlands, +31205986372, f.h.schmidt@vu.nl; Kimberley Skelton, 50 Avalon Drive, #7222, Milford, CT 06460, USA, 443-253-5529, kcskelton1@gmail.com. It is also possible to submit these materials online at: [http://www.sah.org/index.php?cid=548761&src=gendocs&ref=Call for papers 2013&category=Annual Conference 2013&submenu=1&curlid=476#o](http://www.sah.org/index.php?cid=548761&src=gendocs&ref=Call+for+papers+2013&category=Annual+Conference+2013&submenu=1&curlid=476#o).

Reference:

ArtHist.net

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