

The Pictorial Turn in History (London, 4-5 Apr 08)

Prof.

[x-post H-Soz-u-Kult]

The Pictorial Turn in History. A cross-disciplinary Conference
Roehampton University, London
4-5 April 2008

This conference aims to theorise the relationship between history and the visual image. Pictures and other forms of visualisation have for too long been neglected by historians and left to art or film historians. But recently there is evidence of change. There is however, as yet, no consensus of how best to incorporate visualisation into historical research. Do historians use appropriate methods and concepts in order to operate successfully in areas which go beyond the pure text? How do we imagine/visualize the past? What role did visual images have for historical actors? How do visual images of the past affect the way historians perceive it? Vice versa, how does historical study affect the way we understand a visual image?

As Aby Warburg put it a hundred years ago, perception is culturally constructed and historically specific. Its function in historical works has often been relegated to illustrating historical evidence gleaned from other more conventional written sources whereas the power of the picture is not confined to representing the past but also constructs it. Questions have recently been asked about the authority of the visual image, how it can be invested with normative power and manipulate events for political or ideological purposes.

Different kinds of visual representation (paintings, statues, engravings, photographs, posters, documentary and feature films) influence our perceptions of the past differently; i.e. photography may be more inscrutable than, say, a painting. In other words, we need to take seriously the medium not just the message as a topic for historical research.

In this conference, we hope the input of representatives of history, art history, material culture, cultural studies, medical history and archaeology will stimulate ideas about how a new pictorial history might emerge from a truly cross-disciplinary discussion.

Programme:

Friday 4 April 2008

10.00 Registration and coffee

11.00 Welcome and introduction

John Tosh and Cornelia Osborne (History, Roehampton)

11.15 Visual History: the Ten Commandments

Peter Burke (History, Cambridge)

12.15 The Text of Images

Dawn Ades (Art History, Essex)

1.15–2.15 Lunch

2.15 Power and Function of Images in Migration-Era Scandinavia

Charlotte Behr (History, Roehampton)

3.15 The Bayeux Tapestry: an accurate reflection of the real world of the eleventh century or a work indebted to contemporary art?

Michael Lewis (History/Archaeology, British Museum)

4.15–4.45 Tea

4.4 The Evidence of the Conversation Piece

Kate Retford (Art History/History, Birkbeck)

7.00 Conference dinner

Saturday 5 April 2008

10.30 Registration and coffee

11.00 Just What is it that Makes the Pictorial so Different, so Appealing?

Lynda Nead (Art History, Birkbeck)

12.00 Melodrama, migration and conservative modernity: a case study in cultural transition

Erica Carter (Film History/Cultural Studies, Warwick)

1.00–2.00 Lunch

2.00 Gender and Memory in Post-Apartheid South Africa

Annie Coombes (Material and Visual Culture, Birkbeck)

3.00 Patient Photography and Propaganda: Medical Images as Sources for the Social History of Medicine

Philipp Osten (History, Heidelberg)

4.00–4.30 Tea

4.30 Round Table and Discussion

5.30 Conference close

Participation fee: £70.00 for 2 days, £40.00 for a single day
(£30.00/£15.00 for postgraduate students and Roehampton staff),
including lunch and refreshments.

For registration and further information please contact Dr Declan
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