

Imperial tensions (AAH Glasgow 15–17 Apr 2010)

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'Imperial tensions: visual cultures of coercion, silence and display'

Session at the annual conference of the Association of Art Historians, Glasgow, 2010:

Barringer and Flynn's 'Colonialism and the object' (1998) applied developments in new museology and post-colonial theory to analyze the impact of ideology on the collection and display of colonial objects. At the heart of this and other related cultural studies has been a critique of projects that sought to construct funds of knowledge via educational and scientific pedagogies whilst simultaneously enacting imperial control. Keeping in view more recent shifts in museum ethnography and indigenous studies, which enable institutional silences to be apprehended productively, a key question emerges: how representative of the violence of imperialism and colonialism were these displays? In broaching this topic art historians may actively engender new multi-disciplinary formations, to invoke research in visuality, materiality, spatiality and temporality that contest existing epistemologies.

Which objects are most representative of colonial coercion? Do national and universal museums generate cultures of silence around such objects? Were objects of imperial violence admissible for public display during the imperial heyday, or was there an obligation to sanitise history and obscure evidence of conflict? How did the metropolitan visualisation of coercion function within popular cultures of imperialism? In raising these questions, the panel seeks not only to identify the way objects were created and/or collected in colonial contexts and the visual history of empire between c.1750 and c.1950, but also to assess how such cultures of display were received amongst imperial interest groups, journalists, artistic communities and the wider public of empire.

Proposals for papers for this session are now invited and would be gratefully received by November 9th 2009. Please submit your proposals by email to Dr Matthew Potter, Department of History of Art and Film, University of Leicester, mcp20@le.ac.uk or Dr Daniel Rycroft, School of World Art Studies, UEA, Norwich, D.Rycroft@uea.ac.uk.

Reference:

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