

Images at Work (Florence, 30 Sep – 2 Oct 10)

Images at Work: Image and Efficacy from Antiquity to the Rise of Modernity.

Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, Max-Planck-Institut

30 September - 2 October 2010

According to legend, Virgil made a fly out of bronze and placed it above the gates of Naples. The sole purpose of the bronze fly was to prevent other flies from entering the city. The conference Images at Work will set out to explore the intention, function, and reception of images like Virgil's fly: images made to influence the natural world. We seek to examine the theories behind the construction of these operative images, to interrogate how the production of apotropaic images related to the production of Art, and to question how the manufacture of such working images interacted with the production of other types of mechanical apparatus.

In contrast to religious miracle-working images that perform multiple miracles of varying types, and which, crucially, are usually perceived as operating in the world only subsequent to their creation, the images with which this conference seeks to engage had, in most cases, very specific, predetermined functions. The objective of Images at Work is thus to focus on the scientific and magical spheres of image production; it will consider these adjunctive images as both objects in space and actors in ritual. The goal of the conference at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz will be to map the central issues regarding images that function in the natural world. We aim to discuss the phenomena ascribed to this category of images historically, culturally, and geographically, employing a broad array of theoretical and disciplinary approaches. The conference will address the manufacture of images that work, their function in real as well as in imaginary realms, and their reception on both functional and aesthetic levels.

Paper topics could include discussions of apotropaic imagery, as well as a wide variety of automata, from mechanical armed guards to timepieces and astronomical clocks. The interaction between the function of religious "miracle working images" and scientific developments in image making, as well as the place of magic in the making of images that work

are welcome subjects. Theories of the making of images that work, as well as discussions of workshop methods that address the interaction between images that work and the creation of typical images (i.e., Art), are also possible topics.

Scholars interested in participating in the conference are invited to send a 250 word proposal, a CV and a list of publications to the following address by 19 April 2010: jones@khi.fi.it

Conference organized by Ittai Weinryb, Ashley Jones, Hannah Baader and Gerhard Wolf

Reference:

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