

The Secret Lives of Artworks (Leiden, 24-26 June 10)

Joris van Gastel

International conference

The Secret Lives of Artworks:
Exploring the Boundaries between Art and Life

Leiden University, 24 - 26 June, 2010

To mark the completion of the research program 'Art, Agency, and Living Presence in Early Modern Italy', funded by the the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) and under the direction of Professor Caroline van Eck, a conference will be organized at Leiden University from 24 to 26 June.

Throughout history, and all over the world, people respond to images as if they are alive: they say that they move, speak or look at the beholder. Paintings are addressed, touched, kissed and embraced, beaten or destroyed. Statues are treated as if they are the living being they represent; buildings are given food and drink, and reported to move, speak, bleed or look at the beholder. Such responses are not limited to non-Western or so-called 'primitive' societies. What is more, such responses seem clearly based on a ontological confusion: images are not alive, and if they move, speak or weep it is because there is a hidden mechanism at work. Yet, they are so constant and widespread, that we cannot simply dismiss them as confusions, primitive reactions to art, critical hyperbole or cliché. Indeed, rather than simply dismissing them on such grounds, we propose to take these responses more seriously.

The aim of the conference is to examine such responses and to discuss new ways in which they can be studied. Though taking as a point of departure the art and culture of early modern Europe, contributions will address a variety of related topics.

Confirmed speakers are:

Lina Bolzoni (Pisa), Jan Bremmer (Groningen), Frédéric Cousinié (Paris), Ralph Dekoninck (Louvain), Maarten Delbeke (Ghent/Leiden), Claire Farago (Boulder), Frank Fehrenbach (Harvard), Iain Fenlon (Cambridge), Jason Gaiger (Open Univ., UK), Christine Göttler (Bern), Fredrika Jacobs (Richmond, VA), Robin Osborne (Cambridge), Alina Payne (Harvard), Matthew Rampley (Middlesbrough), Sebastian Schütze (Vienna), Peter

Stewart (London), Arno Witte (Amsterdam), Joanna Woodall (London). Also the participants in the project will present their work.

The conference fee for three days is € 100,- and € 30,- for students or PhD candidates. Participation is free for speakers and members of the Huizinga Institute and the Dutch Postgraduate School for Art History.

A detailed programme is to be announced. For further information and registration, please check our website at www.hum.leiden.edu/research/artandagency/conference or contact either Elsje van Kessel (e.van.kessel@hum.leidenuniv.nl) or Joris van Gastel (j.j.van.gastel@hum.leidenuniv.nl).

Reference:

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