Grinling Gibbons and the Story of Carving (London, 24–25 Jun 22)

Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Jun 24–25, 2022
Deadline: Jan 10, 2022

Kira d'Alburquerque

Grinling Gibbons and the Story of Carving
Victoria and Albert Museum and Grinling Gibbons Society Conference

Grinling Gibbons (1648-1721) is the most celebrated carver in British history. His closely observed depictions of full-bodied natural forms, executed in hyperreal detail, captivated audiences of his own time as much as they captivate us today. But how much is really known about this man, his work and its implications in terms of the way we think about carving now? As part of the year-long Gibbons tercentenary celebrations of 2021/22, this conference explores the story of Gibbons but also investigates broader themes around the subject of carving in a European context from 1600 to 1800.

On day one, an invited panel of speakers will present the latest research on Grinling Gibbons and his work. For the second day, we invite papers that explore all aspects of the processes of production and design in the story of carving in early modern Britain and in terms of international exchanges. Topics of interest are wide ranging and include design, sources, materials, methods, training, tools, techniques, business and workshop structures, branding, professional networks and nineteenth- and twentieth century engagement with and reinterpretation of the carved work produced in this period. Intersections and interactions are of particular interest. In what ways did the lives and careers of practitioners contemporary to Grinling Gibbons and the careers of his assistants and apprentices relate to each other and how did this impact the work produced? What were the exchanges between carving and other related disciplines of the time, such as ship building, furniture production and frame making? Using examples of early modern practice, how can we expand our understanding of the meaning of design sources and processes, be that through print or other material or social cultures of the time; how did these interplay and how can they be questioned and quantified? How can we develop methodologies to investigate these makers and their understanding of their own working processes, their relationships with materials and tools, and what new insights can be gained from this type of exploration? How did such factors work together to create the type of physical forms that are so recognisable as the product of Gibbons' world?

How to apply: Papers should be 20 minutes in length and include a PowerPoint. Please send an abstract of 250-300 words, with name, title, institution and short bio (100 words max) to: grinling.gibbons@vam.ac.uk. Deadline for paper proposal: 10th January 2022. Notification for acceptance: 7th February 2022. Conference Convenors: Jenny Saunt, Kira d'Alburquerque, Ada de

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