The Itinerant Shrine (London, 30 Jun-1 Jul 22)

London, The Courtauld Institute of Art, Jun 30–Jul 1, 2022
Deadline: Mar 15, 2022

Matteo Chirumbolo

The Itinerant Shrine: Art, History, and the Multiple Geographies of the Holy House of Loreto

The Santa Casa, or Holy House of the Virgin Mary, is a relic in constant motion. Legend holds that at the end of the thirteenth century, a company of angels flew Mary's small brick house—the site of the Annunciation and Jesus's childhood home—out of Nazareth before eventually depositing it in Loreto, a remote hill town in the Marches region of Central Italy. Over the ensuing centuries, the House prompted the movement of people to the sanctuary that grew up around it: migrant communities that had been excluded from other Italian cities came to settle in Loreto just as a growing number Christians set out on pilgrimage in order to visit the miraculous incorporation of the Holy Land into Europe. As the site grew in prominence, it attracted artists from multiple centres who produced opulent votive adornments in painting and sculpture. At the same time, the sanctuary became a point of transmission for devotional memorabilia, including prints, statuettes, ceramics, and tattoos. As a result of this proliferation of media, architectural reproductions of the Holy House emerged throughout Europe and as far afield as the Amazon Basin and modern-day Canada. Through contact with the original relic or one of its surrogates located across the globe, Loreto has continued to inspire devotional and artistic responses into the present day.

Building upon scholarly interest in the cult of the Holy House, this conference endeavours to serve as an important milestone for international academic discourse on Loreto. Responding to the humanities' recent global turn, it will investigate how a small town in the Italian hinterland became a central node in an expansive geographic network.

Topics covered might include:
- The cult of Loreto, from its medieval foundations through the twenty-first century
- The Holy House of Nazareth and its various permutations (i.e., Walsingham, Sossau)
- Broader themes of mobility, migration and cultural contact
- The Santa Casa as an instrument of symbolic domination, religious conversion and colonisation
- Lay and religious patronage pertaining to the Loretan cult
- Iconographic and spatial reproduction of the sanctuary of Loreto, or the Santa Casa itself
- The sacred and political economies of pilgrimage

This conference welcomes proposals from early and mid-career scholars working in a variety of disciplines and employing diverse methodological approaches. Proposals of maximum 250 words and a brief CV must be sent by 15 March 2022 to ecgiffin@icloud.com and matteo.chirumbolo@courtauld.ac.uk. The main language of the workshop will be English. Speak-

ers will be notified by 1 April 2022. Some expenses (i.e., travel costs and accommodation in London) will be covered.

Organised by Matteo Chirumbolo, Erin Giffin, and Antongiulio Sorgini.

Clive's conference is kindly supported by Dr Nicholas Murray and Mr William Sharp in loving memory of Mr Clive Davies.

Reference:
CFP: The Itinerant Shrine (London, 30 Jun-1 Jul 22). In: ArtHist.net, Feb 16, 2022 (accessed Nov 25, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/35935>.