Material Culture and Gender in the 17&18 Centuries (online/Edinburgh, 5 Jun 22)

Online / University of Edinburgh, May 06, 2022

Anna Myers

Making Masculinities: Material Culture and Gender in the 17&18 Centuries

A one-day workshop fostering interdisciplinary discussion on the approaches to historic ideas about gender through material culture.

Research into the intersection of material culture and masculinity has steadily increased as scholars across disciplines choose to use material culture as a conceptual point of departure. The Material and Visual Culture in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries Research Cluster aims to provide a space to continue the conversation. The cluster will host a one-day workshop fostering interdisciplinary discussion on the material approaches to historic ideas about gender through material culture. This one-day workshop is spread over a series of formats to diversify how participants may interrogate this material. Sign-up to attend online or in person via Eventbrite: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/making-masculinities-material-culture-and-gender-in-the-1718-centuries-tickets-319087558477

PROGRAMME (all times are in BST)

9:30am Welcome and Introduction

9:45am Fashioning Masculinity

Chair: Dr Georgia Vullinghs (National Museums Scotland)

Dr Ben Jackson (University of Birmingham) :Making a Figure in Eighteenth-Century England: Elite Masculinity, Social Expectation, and Material Goods.

Maria Gordusenko, PhD (Ural Federal University):Self-representation through artworks as a way of life: Count Gustav Adolf von Gotter (1692-1762)

11:00am Refreshment Break

11:20am Making Masculinities Roundtable

Chair: Dr Emily Taylor (National Museums Scotland)

Dr Timothy Somers (Newcastle University):The Materiality of Men’s Practical Jokes

Alysée Le Druillenec (Université Paris 1 - Panthéon- Sorbonne/Université Catholique de Louvain):

Carrying the Holy Child as a depiction of masculinity in Christian counter-reformation materiality

Élise Urbain Ruano (Université de Lille): How does softness affect masculinity?: the paradox of 18th century dressing gowns

Alexandra Atkins (Birkbeck):The Classical Portrait Bust and Masculinity in Eighteenth-Century Country Houses

Nicholas Babbington (University College London):The Royal Family and Domestic Disorder: The Satirization of George III's Patriarchal Virtues in British Caricature c.1785 – 1795

12:50pm Lunch Break

1:50pm Reconvene

1:55pm Keynote

Chair: Dr Meha Priyadarshini (University of Edinburgh)

Dr Sarah Goldsmith (University of Edinburgh)

Hercules himself?: Materiality, Masculinity and the Body in the Long Eighteenth Century

3:00pm Refreshment Break

3:20pm PhD/ECR Workshop

4:30pm Close

All sessions except for the 3:20 workshop are hybrid. The link to join to join the sessions will be provided via email the day before. Contact materialcultureresearcheca@ed.ac.uk with questions.

PAPER ABSTRACTS:

Dr Ben Jackson (University of Birmingham)

Making a Figure in Eighteenth-Century England: Elite Masculinity, Social Expectation, and Material Goods.

Paper Abstract: This paper examines the idiom of 'making a figure' often used by eighteenth-century men about making their way in the world and forging a name for themselves in their social, economic, and often professional lives. It centres on one use of this phrase; how men curated for themselves a material culture that lived up to the social figure they were expected, not necessarily aspired, to make of themselves and for their families. The research examines a case study of the familial correspondence of Thomas Robinson, Lord Grantham (1742-1786) to understand the social and professional expectations placed upon Grantham during his tenure as Ambassador in Madrid in the 1770s. In his letters home, Grantham wrote of his anxieties surrounding making a figure and the material objects that underpinned his material construction of a refined, cultivated, and worldly masculine identity. The paper will illustrate, not only the strategies by which elite men acquired and maintained a suitably decorous 'figure', but the centrality of material goods in elite

men’s construction and performance of their masculine identity.

Maria Gordusenko, PhD (Ural Federal University)

Self-representation through artworks as a way of life: Count Gustav Adolf von Gotter (1692-1762)

Abstract: This paper focuses on the issue of self-representation in the eighteenth-century art with the reference to the personality of Count Gustav Adolf von Gotter (1692 – 1762). Various artworks, including portraits, which were created during different stages of Von Gotter’s life and career are discussed. Specific attention is given to Count’s luxury lifestyle at his residence, the Molsdorf Palace. Also, this paper explores Von Gotter’s artistic, cultural and diplomatic contacts with Russia.

Undoubtedly, throughout the centuries it was common practice for the aristocracy to underline their social status and to preserve the memory about themselves for subsequent generations through art. In the eighteenth century, the idea of self-representation in art, has become a prominent socio-cultural tendency. It was in this period when the portrait genre flourished, and the aristocracy and statesmen actively commissioned ceremonial portraits to decorate their own luxurious residences.

In this respect, the prominent diplomat and politician, and a close associate of King Frederick II (1712-1786), Count Von Gotter, followed the tendencies of the period and paid special attention to self-representation by means of art. For their contemporaries, Count Von Gotter was a famous and respected person, and he remains known to subsequent generations as a fairly large number of Von Gotter’s portraits survives to date. This paper examines a variety of paintings, graphic arts and architectural monuments related to Von Gotter. As a result, a complete image of this historical personality is formed, demonstrating him as the truly representative of the eighteenth-century aristocracy.

Dr Timothy Somers (Newcastle University)

The Materiality of Men’s Practical Jokes

Abstract: Practical jokes, embodied and using a range of objects, were a major component of early modern humour alongside more linguistic forms: puns, innuendo, repartees and so on. This paper will draw upon life-writing, jestbooks, legerdemain manuals, recipes, chapbooks, ballads and material culture to explore the relationship between practical jokes and the norms and stereotypes that shaped codes of masculinity and civility. Some practical jokes had specific social settings: markets, taverns, banquet tables, barber shops, churches, or liminal streets and highways. Jokers sold dog turds as quack pills, painted over shop signs, filled pies with grass, put padlocks onto lips, switched wine for urine, hid ant-hills under pulpits, and mutilated animals. Some jokes were based upon fear, deceptive outward appearances, deformity, public shaming and ideas of racial difference: artificial eyes, silver noses, counterfeit hair, smearing black ink onto someone’s face. Other misogynist jokers targeted women, especially the elderly or the country maid. While the fundamental values of patriarchal masculinity were relatively stable, I am interested in relating practical jokes to changing gender stereotypes, concepts of humour, and practices of sociability and material culture c. 1600 to 1800.

Alysée Le Druillenec (Université Paris 1 - Panthéon- Sorbonne/Université Catholique de Louvain)

Carrying the Holy Child as a depiction of masculinity in Christian counter-reformation materiality

Abstract: In the Seventeenth Century, the abondance of devotional images depicting Christ-carriers and the promotion of these saints by theologians such as Molanus and Canisius, proves how crucial this body pattern was in this era. There is no doubt that the prototype of this body composition is the Madonna. However, there is neither any doubt that most of the saints Christ-Carriers are men holding the Child in the same manner the Virgin Mary does in her arms: Joseph, Symeon, Hyacinth of Cracow, Anthony of Padua, Felice of Cantalice and Cajetan. This survey aims to study the depiction of masculinity in Christian counter-reformation materiality. An analysis of the hagiographic narratives, the theological texts and devotional images will demonstrate how the desire to have the ability to "contain" a child in a maternal matrix was essential in catholic masculinity. Indeed, why would Augustin seek a "space" into his body where he could "host" and "contain" God (Confessions, I)? What is at stake when Felice of Cantalice's hagiographer write that this saint carries the Christ "in his bosom"? Why a Jesuit theologian such as Etienne Binet would insist on the fact that "because Joseph is Mary's spouse, it is to consider that he carried the Christ in his flesh by the laws of marriage"? Furthermore, it is as if, anachronistically, Karen Horney's "womb envy" theory was fully operative in the Christian materiality of the counter-reformation. What was the spiritual impact of such ambivalent masculine figures? What about its effects in a patriarchal society? What was the reception of a cult centered on holy men depicted as envious of female biological functions?

Élise Urbain Ruano (Université de Lille)

How does softness affect masculinity?: the paradox of 18th century dressing gowns

Abstract: The fashion for dressing gowns spread throughout Europe from the 17th century onwards, a mix between the Japanese kimono and the Turkish caftan. Products of luxury and testimonies of international trade, 18th century dressing gowns are often associated with the figure of the intellectual, the philosopher or the scientist, exemplified in France by Louis Michel Van Loo's portrait of Denis Diderot. The use of dressing gown was associated with intellectual pursuits, a typically male activity – intellectual women would therefore be represented wearing the same kind of outfits. But this elegant casualness was not the only meaning associated with this clothing. It was also considered as a sign of weakness, disease, far from the criteria of strength usually associated with masculinity. This communication intends to present the paradox of the dressing gown, which defines the supreme intellectual who can only be a man, but also deprives his owner of some of his manly qualities associated with stiffness. I assume that the materiality of the garment is the evidence of a redefined masculinity. As in the 18th century mind, the body and its appearance define the morals of the person, the dressing gown is too soft, too loose, to shape a strong and muscular body, too associated to oriental fantasies to provide its male wearer the seriousness he expects. What definition of masculinity does the dressing gown reveal?

Alexandra Atkins (Birkbeck)

The Classical Portrait Bust and Masculinity in Eighteenth-Century Country Houses

Abstract: Fashioning masculinity through one's sculpted likeness was a potential minefield for the eighteenth-century gentleman. To wear a wig or not? To be classically draped or in contemporary dress? To eschew dress and hair entirely, à la Lord Chesterfield? Scholars such as Malcolm Baker (2004, 2014, 2015) and David Wilson (2003, 2010) have considered the aesthetic choices of sitters, patrons and artists. What happens, however, when multiple sculpted representations of men are working together in one space, the ensemble generating an overview of conceptualisations of contemporary masculinity – and one which drew significantly on reverence for the classical past? By utilising Robert Walpole's Stone Hall at Houghton, in Norfolk and Nathaniel Curzon's Hall of the Caesars at Kedleston, in Derbyshire, this paper will explore masculinity on display in the entrance hall decoration. Walpole's "Roman legion" in marble as Angelicoussis (2009) termed them, and Curzon's peculiar plaster and wood 'Caesars' are units of masculine representation, whose multiplicity is key to their meaning. In both cases eighteenth-century ideas about what masculinity meant in ancient Rome are interwoven with contemporary English fashions both in terms of personal appearance and interior decoration.

Nicholas Babbington (University College London)

The Royal Family and Domestic Disorder: The Satirization of George III's Patriarchal Virtues in British Caricature c.1785 – 1795

Abstract: My paper addresses British caricature's criticism of the promotion of George III as a patriarchal paragon in the 1780s and 90s. During this period the status of the monarchy began to be fundamentally rearticulated in ways which entwined it with the deeply gendered codes of domesticity; becoming a site in which the intersections of patriarchal authority, political legitimacy, morality, sentimentality, the public/private division and national identity could all be located and negotiated. The king's role and reputation increasingly relied upon reflections of idealised masculine values rooted in domesticity: such as household economy and harmonious familial relations. My discussion focuses upon a specific motif deployed in the wider critical scrutiny of these developments in contemporary caricature. The motif of lampooned royal behaviour at the dinner table, I argue, served as a site for the critique and exploration of persistent problems involved in linking the king with ideal domestic masculinity. I shall discuss printed visual satires' value as contemporary commentary exposing multifaceted patterns of values, opinions and anxieties operating in this rearticulation of patriarchal authority, political legitimacy and national identity. Masculinity, as key mediator between the strands of this rearticulation, represented its weak point and as such was exposed and exploited by satirists.

Reference:

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