

Non-ferrous Metal Objects in Western Europe (Brussels, Oct 22)

Art & History Museums Brussels (Parc du Cinquantenaire, 10 – 1000 Brussels)

Deadline: Jun 13, 2022

Anne-Clothilde Dumargne

Interdisciplinary dialogues. Current research on non-ferrous metal objects in Western Europe (Middle Ages & Modern Times)”

The Center of Excellence for Decorative Arts of the Royal Museums of Art and History of Brussels, in collaboration with the Archeology Center of the University of Liège, invites proposals for a seminar, scheduled to take place from October 2022 in Brussels, at the KMKG-MRAH.

The objective of the seminar is to provide an overview of current research, relating to the study of non-ferrous metallic objects (copper, brass, bronze, lead, tin, gold, and silver), whatever the field of research involved (historical anthropology, art history, social history, economic history, cultural history, technical history, etc.). The selected theme for this first session revolves around the notion of workshop, and particularly the way we can/must define the identity of a production center.

The definition of the workshop is not considered in the same way, depending on the type of documentary sources studied. The cross-study of texts, images, archaeological remains, and even scientific analyzes does not provide a concordant conception of what a workshop is or represents for medieval and modern societies. The difficulty lies in the critical interpretation of the concept, which is generally based on stereotyped images, or regulatory conceptions far removed from reality. However, it is less obvious to determine on what characteristics the identity of a workshop is established, because it is built on different scales: the place itself, both workspace and living space, men – as well as the sociability and mobility that this implies – and goods.

At the scale of objects, the way consumers perceive the identity of a production center - likely to influence their purchase choices - also raises issues, even when provenance and attribution can be established without ambiguity. It depends on factors that are not clearly explained in the sources: typological, technical, material or even aesthetic characteristics.

Understanding the metallurgical activity of non-ferrous metals is inevitably dependent on disciplinary and methodological biases, which induce disparities and gaps depending on the periods, spaces and objects studied. However, these boundaries make analogies, or comparisons, difficult to perceive.

This seminar aims to serve as a milestone for an exploratory and collective work, through a trans-disciplinary study of the concept of the workshop in Western Europe, over a long period (13th – 18th century). It also aims to reveal not only the diversity of the relationships that bind the protagon-

onists of the production to each other (agreements, struggles, mutual aid, conflicts, or competitions), but also their similarities, in particular the use of common techniques and practices, the production of similar goods and their distribution on a protean market which they share.

We welcome communications that consider one or more of the themes of the following three axis:

1. Transmissions and dynamics. - artistic transfers

- building networks
- development of sociability
- mobility circuits
- creations and innovations
- emulations, collaborations, and competitions

2. Identity constructions

- versatility
- learning of knowledge and skills - sharing practices
- specializations
- tools, equipment, and locations

3. Development of frameworks and standards

- regulations and public authorities
- demands and resistance
- valuations and recognition

This seminar is intended for specialists (academics, archaeologists, scientists, curators, restorers), senior or junior researchers, wishing to reflect collectively, on the one hand on the issues and methods relating to the study of corpuses of objects and on the other hand, to the prospects and challenges of the construction of an interdisciplinary history of the metallurgy of non-ferrous metals.

The scope of the call is intended to be large enough to consider the common characteristics on which each production is based, starting with the nature of the objects preserved (museum objects, archaeological remains, private collections, liturgical objects), the variety of goods (utensils, tools, accessories, objects of worship, ceremonial objects, etc.), as well as the properties and values – inherent or symbolic – of materials.

To favor dialogue, each seminar session will propose the presentation of a research project, or a case study, followed by a discussion, led by one or more guest researchers. This discussion will contribute to the critical perspective of the themes addressed during the sessions.

How to apply:

Please submit an abstract in French or in English, for individual or collective presentations of 15 to 30 minutes. Paper proposals (title and abstract of approximately 300 words), with a brief biographical presentation (affiliation, research areas, contact address), should be sent before June 13, to the following address: a.dumargne@kmg-mrah.be

Seminar organization:

The meetings will be held – as far as the health situation remains stable – once a month, in the afternoon, at the Royal Museums of Art and History of Brussels (Parc du Cinquanteaire, 10 – 1000 Brussels).

Depending on the papers presented, visits to the KMKG-MRAH collections may be considered at the end of the seminar sessions.

Conference Committee:

Anne-Clothilde Dumargne (KMKG-MRAH), Sophie Balace (KMKG-MRAH), David Strivay (ULiège).

Reference:

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