

Session at RSA (San Juan, 9–11 Mar 23)

San Juan, Mar 9–11, 2023

Deadline: Jun 25, 2022

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[1] The Material Culture of Magnificence in Early Modern Cities

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This session proposes to study the material culture of magnificence in early modern cities as a specific topic. Magnificentia, by its definition as a virtue, is very much concerned with the individual. By making appropriate expenditures to create grand works, the individual manifests his or her virtuousness, thus making it visible to a broader community. This manifestation occurs on multiple scales; in clothing, coachwork, tombs, city palaces, churches, as well as the design of urban space. Moreover, the virtue of magnificence necessarily requires an audience. This audience is needed to judge whether the expenditure is appropriate to the person, the object, and the circumstance in which it occurs, as well as to show admiration for the great works achieved.

The session departs from the hypothesis that the urban environment creates specific opportunities, but also imposes proper conditions and restrictions on the performance of magnificence. The community for which the virtue is externalized in a city is not only diverse in socio-economic position, but also in political affiliation. The performance of magnificence thus inscribes itself in a complex moral, social and political world, and one that is particularly dense and intense in an urban environment. What preconditions does this create for the performance of magnificence? How richly can (or should) one live in an environment where power struggles, economical rivalries, and personal disputes operate on a daily basis?

Moreover, the session specifically wishes to study how the material culture of magnificence functions in a daily context. The performance of magnificence in temporary events of social, political or religious importance, such as royal entries or religious ceremonies, has already been extensively studied. The particular nature of celebrations creates a temporal realm in which the virtue can be actualized, performed and recognized. But how does magnificence operate on an everyday basis? How does it function as a *modus vivendi*? And what traces does it leave in the material culture of the city?

We invite proposals that study the material culture of magnificence in early modern cities, and this at multiple scales and from multiple disciplines. Authors can focus on a specific type of object (such as clothing, coachwork, tombs, buildings...) or on the patronage of a specific (type of) patron. We invite proposals that focus on cities in early modern England, the Low Countries and Italy in specific, but are also open for papers that focus on other geographical areas.

Proposals can be sent to nele.deraedt@uclouvain.be by 25 June 2022. The proposal should include a title, 150-word abstract, and one-paragraph biographical cv. The Annual Meeting of the RSA 2023 will take place in San Juan from 9-11 March 2023.

This session is organized by Anne-Françoise Morel (KU Leuven, Belgium) and Nele De Raedt (UCLouvain, Belgium) and is sponsored by the European Architectural History Network.

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