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(Re)Constructing Spaces in Premodern Visual Cultures (Basel, 9–11 Mar 23)

eikones - Center for the Theory and History of the Image, University of Basel, Mar 9–11, 2023

Masha Goldin

Know your place: (Re)Constructing Spaces in Premodern Visual Cultures.

Visual means construct spaces by defining their character and purpose, and dictating human behaviours within them. Medieval monuments such as choir screens or market crosses divided ecclesiastic interiors and juridical topographies, and denoted hierarchies. Wall paintings shaped domestic environments in ancient Roman houses, formed inter-medial dialogues by alluding to textile hangings in pre-modern Central Asian residences, and established idealised ancestor identities in ancient Egyptian tombs. Yet the study of these examples – as well as any of the chimaeric entities we here call "premodern spaces" or objects that were experienced within them – poses a challenge familiar and common to all disciplines that focus on material culture, namely the challenge of recontextualization.

Disciplines concerned with the study of premodern cultures face particularly harsh conditions in attempting to engage with these types of visual spaces, due to loss of evidence, misleading photo reproductions, and decontextualized museum displays. Yet the growing awareness of the significance of the spatial context in the visual cultures we study, and the introduction of novel approaches, tools and technologies for the reconstruction of premodern spaces, has opened new horizons for researchers seeking to take up the task of reconstructing the experience of past physical environments. In this workshop we will therefore collect a series of early career researchers from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds, to bring together different and new ways of approaching premodern spaces, discerning the goals of their creation, discovering the tactics utilized in their construction, and sharing our own attempts to reconstructing them – in our minds through writing, in digital virtual and augmented realities, and in physical reconstructions. Through such an interdisciplinary discussion, we hope to bring forward new ways of combining the unique facets of our research in order to advance our collective approaches towards understanding the multifaceted experiences of premodern spaces.

Program

9.3. Thursday
18:15 Keynote lecture
Designed to Impress: The Rise of the Square in Late Medieval Europe,
Zoë Opačić (Birkbeck, University of London)
19:45 Apéro

10.3. Friday

9:00 Opening Remarks, Aden Kumler (Universität Basel)

Introduction, Fabian Felder (Universität Basel)

9:45 Coffee Break

10:00 Relating Spaces: The Impact of Ancient Egyptian Tomb Clusters on the Experience of Individual Tombs, Geirr Lunden (Universität Basel)

11:00 Tour at the Basler Münster, Martin Schwarz (Universität Basel)

12:30 Lunch

14:00 Imaging Space in between Science and Fiction, Marco Bernasconi (Archäologische Bodenforschung Basel-Stadt)

15:00 Analyzing Human Relations Through the Syntax of Space. Case-studies from Ancient Egypt, Maarten Praet (Johns Hopkins University)

16:00 Coffee Break

16:30 Ecclesiastical Topography and Partitioning of Space – a Study of Medieval Frescoes in St. Andrew's, Cologne, Miriam Guth (Universität zu Köln)

17:30 Break

18:00 Tour at the Historisches Museum Basel (Sabine Söll-Tauchert, limited participation, please register at simon.buehler@unibas.ch)

11.3. Saturday

9:30 Muddy Paths, Dirty People: Deconstructing the Image of „Glory" in Roman Urban Spaces, Sarah Siegenthaler (Universität Basel)

10:30 Coffee Break

10:45 Carpets on Walls? On the Interrelation of Wall Paintings and Textiles in Central Asia, Zumrad Ilyasova (Universität Basel)

11:45 Same Same but different. Living with Mythological Imagery in Pompeii, Adrienne Cornut (Universität Basel)

12:45 Lunch

13:30 Reapproaching the Classical Body: Sculptural Spaces of Sensory Interaction, Simon Bühler (Universität Basel)

14:30 Coffee Break

14:45 (Re)Constructing an Idea of a Space: Late Medieval Town Halls and their Perception by Town Councils in the Holy Roman Empire, Masha Goldin (Universität Basel)

15:45 The Eloquence of the King's Chamber. Descriptions of Royal Palaces from the 9th-13th Century, Sabine Sommerer (Universität Zürich)

16:45 Concluding Discussion

Organized by Simon Bühler, Adrienne Cornut, Fabian Felder, Masha Goldin, Zumrad Ilyasova, Geirr Lunden