

Gazing Otherwise: Modalities of Seeing (Florence, 11–12 Oct 2012)

Florence, Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz - Max-Planck-Institut, Oct 11–12, 2012

Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz - Max-Planck-Institut

Gazing Otherwise: Modalities of Seeing

A conference organized by Olga Bush and Avinoam Shalem

Art history as a discipline has focused on vision as the main tool for gathering knowledge. With the coining of the term "Iconic Turn" and the establishment of the field of visual studies within art history departments, a shift occurred in scholarly interests. Various directions were undertaken, such as investigations in bio-neuro system of the gaze and its interaction with the body; the mechanics of instruments that enhance visibility; and the methods for the rendition of the phenomenological world into aesthetic expressions and imagery. The history of art history can be re-named as the history of gazing. But these new areas share basic Western conceptions of the gaze with more traditional approaches to art history (e.g., the scientific, philosophical and artistic dimensions of Renaissance perspective), which have thus been imported into the study of Islamic art.

This conference aims at examining the gaze and the aesthetic experience of the beholder as they are constructed, depicted and theorized within the culture-specific frameworks pertinent to the field of Islamic studies, through approaches developed in the fields of art history, visual culture and anthropology. Within the broader categories of the functions, constructions and limits of the gaze, we intend to explore, among others, the following topics:

- Astonishment, the overwhelming of the eye at the first encounter with an object, and the embodiment of vision at interface with multisensory experience;
- The empirical eye as a scientific tool and its impact on the artist's perception and production, and as a concept in the historiography of the phenomenon of sight and the acquisition of knowledge;
- Directing the gaze in its various constructions, including political, social and gender manipulations;
- The mind's eye and the supra-image in imagination, fantasy and dreams; the poetic tropes of the image making;
- Visualizing the invisible, concealing and revealing in the expressions of the sacred and of the mundane;
- Repositioning the gaze in the colonial and postcolonial discourse.

With these goals in mind we hope to reconsider the role of the gaze in the study of Islamic art.

Program

October 11, 2012

Welcome and Introduction

9:30

Gerhard Wolf, Director, Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz - Max-Planck-Institut, Florence
Avinoam Shalem, Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz - Max-Planck-Institut, Florence and University of Munich
Olga Bush, Vassar College, USA

Session I - The Poetic and Multisensory Gaze

10:00

Chair: Gerhard Wolf, Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz - Max-Planck-Institut, Florence

The Scrutinizing Gaze in Islamic Texts on the Arts: Sight, Insight and Desire
Gülru Necipoğlu, Harvard University, USA

The Gaze and the Responses of Desire in Nizami's Khusraw and Shirin
Julie Scott Meisami, Professor Em., Oxford University, UK

Edibility of the Beautiful: Palate, Poetry and the Gaze
Sussan Babaie, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, UK

11:30 Coffee break

Session II - The Site of the Gaze

12:00

Chair: Robert Hillenbrand, Professor Em., University of Edinburgh, UK

Egypt's Invisible Sultan: Shajar al-Durr
D. Fairchild Ruggles, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA

The Eye of Reflection: al-Nabulusi's Spatial Interpretation of Ibn 'Arabi's Tomb
Samer Akkach, University of Adelaide, Australia

Entangled Gazes: The Polysemy of the New Mosque of Granada
Olga Bush, Vassar College, USA

13:30 Lunch Break

Session III - Wonder, Astonishment and Experience

15:00

Chair: Hannah Baader, Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz - Max-Planck-Institut, Florence

Seduced, Astonished and Excited: Ottoman Views on the Visual Arts
Emine Fetvacı, Boston University, USA

Style and Experience in the Dar al-Khilafa of Samarra

Matt Saba, University of Chicago, USA

Experientia and Auctoritas: Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi's Kitab al-Ifadah wa'l-I'tibar (Book of Instruction and Admonition) and the Birth of the Critical Gaze

Avinoam Shalem, Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz - Max-Planck-Institut, Florence and University of Munich

16:30 Coffee Break

17:00 Tour of the KHI and Photo Library (for speakers only)

October 12, 2012

Session IV - Repositioning the Gaze

10:00

Chair: Cristina Tonghini, University of Venice, Italy

The Arabesque and the Unicorn: "Scientific" and "Humanistic" Gazes and the Methods of Islamic Art History

Eva Troelenberg, Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz - Max-Planck-Institut, Florence

Glancing Blows, Crossing Boundaries: Photographs that Look Back

Holly Edwards, Williams College, USA

The Gaze of the Archaeologist

Zeynep Çelik, New Jersey Institute of Technology, USA

11:30 Coffee Break

Session V - The Memorial Gaze

12:00

Chair: Giovanni Curatola, University of Udine, Italy

Further Travels of the Abstract Line

Laura U. Marks, Simon Fraser University, Canada

Generating an Interior through Cognitive Recall: More on al-Hakam's Addition to the Mosque of Cordoba

Renata Holod, University of Pennsylvania, USA

From Veneration to Deep Devotion in the Portrayal of 'Alî b. Abû Ṭâlib

Raya Shani, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

13:30 Lunch Break

15:00

Concluding Remarks

Robert Hillenbrand, Professor Em., University of Edinburgh, UK

General Discussion

16:00 Visit to Museo Nazionale del Bargello (for speakers only)

Location:

Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz - Max-Planck-Institut

Photothek - Palazzo Grifoni Budini Gattai

Via dei Servi 51

I-50122 Firenze

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Further information:

<http://www.khi.fi.it/en/aktuelles/veranstaltungen/veranstaltungen/veranstaltung334/index.html>

Reference:

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