Dialogues Between Life and Death (London, 2 Feb 13)

Kenneth Clark Lecture Theatre, The Courtauld Institute of Art, Somerset House, Strand, London WC2, Feb 02, 2013
Deadline: Dec 1, 2012

Ingrid Guiot

18th Annual Medieval Postgraduate Student Colloquium: 'Dialogues Between Life and Death'

This colloquium will address how communication and interactions between the living and the dead are depicted in art by focusing on the liminality, or the thresholds where these interactions take place. Papers should explore art objects or architectural structures that demonstrate the ways in which the living approached or experienced death and the afterlife, especially how such depictions reflected cross-cultural or geographical differences. For many in the Middle Ages, this issue would have involved how perceptions of Heaven, Hell and the Last Judgment were envisioned in art and the audience's reception of such images. For others, it would have encompassed myths, magic and mysticism, and how they were used in communicating with those in the post mortem world or to reconcile the very idea of death. Such perceptions and behaviours generated artworks involving Apocalyptic images; legends like that of the Three Living and the Three Dead; visions and apparitions of saints, both in the afterlife and revisiting the living; the use of relics to communicate with saints; and legacies as dialogues between the dead and their descendants via objects such as coats of arms, wills and bequests, and badges and inscriptions. Papers could discuss liminal beings such as angels, demons, or other supernatural entities which cross the boundaries between the living and the dead; liminal spaces such as funerary chapels or tomb monuments; liminal experiences such as visions and visionary experiences; and the liminality of once-living materials (eg ivory and parchment) given an afterlife by the artisans who repurposed them into art objects.

Possible topics may include but are not limited to:

• Depictions of visions and visitations, including annunciations, apotheoses, stigmata and dreams, as direct communication between the living and the otherworldly
• Relics, reliquaries, icons and other devotional and intercessory objects, along with saints' vitae, as a material bridge between the living and the dead
• Apotropaic images used around liminal spaces such as doorways to protect the living from evil entities
• Architecture as transitional space between Heaven and Hell
• Cross-cultural and geographical differences in approaching and depicting life after death, both Christian and non-Christian, Western or non-Western

• Manuscripts such as Apocalypses and apocryphal scripture as evidence of medieval concepts of the afterlife
• The patronage by an individual of items as preparation for his or her death
• Group preparation for death through the cult of saints, including those that developed within the lifetime of the saint and those which developed after death
• Spolia and the reuse of materials or objects emphasising the regeneration of objects
• Medieval art history as an on-going dialogue between the living and the dead

The Medieval Colloquium offers the opportunity for research students at all levels from universities in the UK and abroad to present their research and receive feedback in a friendly and constructive environment. We cannot offer travel subsidies for speakers, and therefore students from outside London are encouraged to apply to their institutions for funding to attend the colloquium.

Please send proposals of 200–300 words, for papers of 15–20 minutes, to rachel.hapoienu@courtauld.ac.uk by 1 December 2012.

Download CFP here: http://www.courtauld.ac.uk/researchforum/events/2013/spring/feb02_18thMedievalPostgradColloquium.shtml

Reference:

CFP: Dialogues Between Life and Death (London, 2 Feb 13). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 5, 2012 (accessed Nov 2, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/3954>.