

Architectural Ornament: Actors and Practices (Paris, 13–14 Mar 24)

Paris, Mar 13–14, 2024

Deadline: Sep 30, 2023

Lucie Prohin

The “Professional Worlds” of Architectural Ornament: Actors and Practices from the 18th Century to the Present Day, Paris, March 13th-14th 2024).

At the crossroads of art history and architecture, the study of ornament nowadays constitutes a specific field of research. Although studies had already been devoted to this question from the 1980s onwards (Hamburger, Thiebault, 1983; Durant, 1986), ornament was the subject of renewed interest during the 1990s and at the turn of the 21st century, thanks to collective publications often stemming from large-scale scientific events (Grabar, 1992; Collomb, Raulet, 1992; Ceccarini et al., 2000). More recently, France saw a remarkable revival in this field of research. Without claiming to draw up an exhaustive historiographical assessment of the question, one could for instance think of the numerous journal issues devoted to the question of ornament in the early 2010s—*Perspective* in 2010, *Images Re-Vues* in 2012 or *Livraisons d'Histoires de l'architecture* in 2015. Several events were also organized during that period, such as the symposium ‘Questionner l'ornement’ (questioning ornament) which took place at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs (Paris) in 2011, or the series of public lectures organized at the École de Chaillot in 2014.

In recent years, essential studies on ornament have been published (Picon, 2016; Necipoglu, Payne, 2016), sometimes tackling more definite topics: theoretical considerations (Varela Braga, 2017; Thibault, 2020); the use of certain materials (Dobraszczyk, 2014); or the roles and functions of ornaments on specific surfaces or in specific building types, such as farms (Ripatti, 2019) or tenements (Violette, 2019).

Far from being limited to the contemporary period, the interest in ornament is also evident in publications and events relating to the Renaissance, such as the colloquia organized in Azay-le-Rideau (2014) or Lausanne (2017, 2022).

Concomitantly, a significant amount of research has been devoted to the organization of professions and the relationships between professional groups in the field of architecture and construction. In this field, several historical studies also draw on sociological perspectives that can be borrowed from both functionalism and interactionism, in a context in which the sociology of professions has itself undergone noteworthy renewal (Vézinat, 2010).

Recent publications have thus questioned the evolution of architects’ status and practices, particularly in the context of their public missions (Bruant, Callais, Lambert, 2022). The concrete organiza-

tion of their work has also been the subject of several studies, focusing on construction sites (Nègre, 2018), or more recently on the architectural firm (Cahiers de la recherche architecturale, urbaine et paysagère, 2020; Livraisons d'histoire de l'architecture, 2021). Such questions also raise issues related to the relationships between professions and to professional strategies (Prina, 2020). These studies echo broader research undertakings, focusing on sectors of activity such as expertise (ANR research programme 'Experts') or on the issue of architectural education (Lucan, 2009; Diener, 2022; ANR research programme 'EnsArchi').

Despite their common dynamism, these two fields of study – the history of ornament and the history of professions related to architecture – have so far rarely been connected to one another. The ambition of this colloquium is therefore to foster such a dialogue, to move towards a better understanding of the 'professional worlds' of ornament.

The interdependence with architecture being a crucial question here, papers should thus focus on ornaments directly linked to architectural surfaces. However, resolutely positioned on the side of the actors and professional practices, this colloquium does not have the vocation to give a strict definition of what ornament is. It will thus look at a wide range of productions, from ornamental sculpture to mosaic, mural painting, and up to parquetry, marble features, or stained glass: in short, any finishes helping to develop sensibility to architecture. Issues related to the forms, functions and uses of ornaments, especially in a world increasingly marked by the imperatives of sobriety and sustainability (Körner, 2020), could be addressed in a subsidiary way but should not constitute the heart of the presentations.

Papers are invited to consider themes including (but not limited to):

1. The spectrum of ornament professionals: training, status, regulations:

- Who are the professionals creating architectural ornaments (sculptors, industrial designers, architects...)?
- What contributions have women made in this field? What opportunities were open to them in comparison with architectural practice?
- How have the names and regulations of these professions changed over time?
- Do they benefit from the same status and social recognition? Is there a hierarchy between them?
- What is the training of these professionals, and in which institutions does it take place (drawing schools, schools of fine arts, schools of decorative arts, artisans' workshops...)?

2. The relationship between professions in the fields of ornament, architecture, and construction:

- How are tasks divided between professions?
- What are the discrepancies or similarities in the material exercise of these crafts (remuneration, place of work...)?
- How do the collaborations – between individuals (such as professional "duos") or with construction companies – work?
- What degree of freedom is allowed to ornament professionals in the exercise of their art (choice of subjects represented, materials, techniques...)?
- What agentivity do the clients have?
- How are technical questions (such as patent registration) dealt with?

3. The production lines:

- How are ornaments concretely made (in the workshop or in situ)? What roles do drawing and molding play?
- What sources (especially photographic) do we have to document the concrete organization of the building sites?
- How and why do actors, materials, and even entire decorative elements circulate (locally, nationally, or transnationally)?
- What were the changes brought about by the development and diffusion of catalogs and pattern books (which are publications that can play a key role in the construction process, but also have a life of their own)?
- Can discrepancies be highlighted between the conditions of production of elite decorations and those of more ordinary buildings?
- What were the working methods and conditions of the men and women in the workshops and on the building sites?

Papers may cover a wide contemporary period, encompassing the 18th century and extending to the present day. The choice of this chronology stems from a will to study diachronically the evolution of the professional dynamics of the field during a long period marked by three crucial phenomena: significant changes in the professional worlds of architecture and construction (Picon, 1988; Woods, 1999; Decommer, 2017); the development of mass-produced ornaments (Nègre, 2006); and finally, frequent debates around ornamentation (Payne, 2012), in the 19th century, at the turn of the 20th century, or during the postmodern period.

Any cultural and geographical area is likely to be studied. Indeed, questions related to transportation and circulations invite reflection on spatial interactions, for instance, between European nations and colonized territories. These questions also echo the phenomenon of internationalization of the Beaux-Arts architectural culture, particularly in the Americas. Proposals for papers with a transnational dimension are therefore particularly encouraged.

Organizing Committee:

Justine Gain, EPHE (Histara), École du Louvre, Institut national d'histoire de l'art,
Elsa Jamet, Centre André-Chastel,
Lucie Prohin, université Paris 1-Panthéon Sorbonne (HiCSA), Institut national d'histoire de l'art

Scientific Committee:

- Basile Baudez, Princeton University
- Jean-François Bédard, Syracuse University
- Ariane Varela Braga, Villa Médicis
- Jérémie Cerman, université d'Artois (CREHS)
- Sophie Derrot, Institut national d'histoire de l'art
- Jean-Philippe Garric, université Paris 1-Panthéon Sorbonne (HiCSA)
- Valérie Nègre, université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne (IHMC)
- Estelle Thibault, ENSA Paris-Belleville (IPRAUS / AUSser)

Practical details:

Paper proposals should be sent before 30 September 2023, along with a brief CV, to Justine Gain (justine.gain@gmail.com), Elsa Jamet (elsa.jamet@hotmail.fr), and Lucie Prohin (lucie.prohin@in-ha.fr).

The symposium will take place at Institut national d'histoire de l'art (Galerie Colbert, Paris) on March 13th and 14th 2024.

Papers may be presented in English or French and will last 25 minutes.

Financial support is available for speakers whose home institution would be unable to cover travel expenses.

Selective bibliography:

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