

Immobilizing the Gaze (Rome, 28–29 Mar 24)

Rome, Ecole française de Rome, Centre André Chastel, Mar 28–29, 2024

Deadline: Oct 15, 2023

Anne Lepoittevin

Conference:

Immobilizing the Gaze: the Visual Fabrication of Events in the Early Modern Period.

In the last century, the emergence of a more critical historical discipline initially generated a distancing from events and event-based history in favour of long-term processes. Art history, for its part, has primarily approached events by focusing on the hierarchy of subjects and, more specifically, historical painting. More recently, various historiographical currents in both disciplines have re-examined the event as a historical and artistic object, questioning the very notion of event and the various aspects of its form, in writing and in images, as well as the strategies for disseminating the event and its multiple appropriations. The aim of this conference is to build a transdisciplinary dialogue to explore how certain perceptions create certain images, convey information and its interpretation(s) around the “event”, broadly understood here as an occurrence perceived as significant, whether it is singular or part of a sequence or even a series of sequences (assassination, conclave, embassy, battle, jubilee, canonization...). The focus is placed on the early modern period because the increase of writing and the greater circulation of images and information “fixed” events on an unprecedented scale; often, these new ways of viewing events were forged thousands of kilometers away from the place where the event occurred. In his analysis of the print series by Tortorel and Perrissin, Philip Benedict noted that despite the proliferation of studies on the history of information, the place of visual media within early modern circuits of information remains understudied. This observation opens largely unexplored perspectives on the role of different visual media (painting, prints, but also medals, sculptures and small objects) and their relationship to the texts disseminated via information circuits. Significantly, the studies that touch on these questions are almost always isolated: this is particularly true for studies considering the great Roman historically themed decorations of the early modern age which deal with events. In some valuable recent studies, the research focuses on a single type of visual media, generally painting and engraving (for example, *La lettre de l'estampe. Les formes de l'écrit et ses fonctions dans la gravure européenne au xvie siècle*, 2021) or is part of thematic inquiries that study a particular event, such as the Battle of Lepanto.

We therefore propose to produce a dossier that brings together studies of events represented in various types of visual media to refocus our thinking on the making of the events themselves. Rome and the Italian peninsula in the sixteenth century will be at the heart of our interrogations both as represented space(s) and as place(s) of projections onto the world. Do the representations of the events during the early modern period favour the uniqueness of the interpretation conveyed? To what extent do different representations, exploiting the various potentialities of differ-

ent media (construction of the legitimacy of power, multiplication of details, dramatisation of the event, polarisation of the camps, etc.) construct a univocal interpretation? What is left, deliberately or not, outside the proposed interpretative framework? How have these representations shaped the writing of the history of the events they portray over the very long term and, through it, the writing of history in general? We suggest questioning head-on the strength of some long standing yet difficult to perceive visual interpretations that impose certain actors as protagonists at the expense of others and forge imaginary spaces by claiming to offer precise illustrations of historical events. The project thus aims to take the full measure of the prisms of historical events represented by visual culture. In addition to the specific questions raised, this project aspires, through a reflection at the crossroads of two disciplines, to be methodologically useful by raising awareness about the pitfalls intrinsic to the representations of historical events.

Organization:

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Proposals for papers written in French, English or Italian (provisional title and a 450-word abstract accompanied by a short one-page CV) should be sent to the following address: fabriquevisuellerome2024@gmail.com

Working languages: French, Italian, English

Deadline for submissions: October 15, 2023

Participants will be provided with accommodation at the École française de Rome and a contribution towards travel costs.

The proceedings will be published at a later date.

Reference:

CFP: Immobilizing the Gaze (Rome, 28-29 Mar 24). In: ArtHist.net, Jul 29, 2023 (accessed Apr 5, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/39931>>.