People, Books and Models (online/Valletta, 17-19 Apr 24)

online/Valletta (Malta), Apr 17–19, 2024
Deadline: Sep 30, 2023

Valentina Burgassi

International conference: "People, Books and Models. The Order of St John and the circulation of architectural ideas between Malta and Europe (16th-18th century)".

This conference aims at encouraging a multidisciplinary discussion, set in a broad European and Mediterranean context, of the spread of ideas, models for architecture, and construction techniques in Malta during the early modern age, via the networks of the Order of St John. In particular, it intends to investigate this dissemination of architectural theoretical and technical knowledge through the circulation of sources such as books, treatises, manuals of mathematics and geometry, catalogues and collections of architectural images and drawings, as well as people, from architects to patrons, from engineers to intellectuals. The conference also aims to address a thorny methodological issue: the origin, dispersion, and fragmentation of the Hospitaller conventual library and, at the same time, the genesis of the library collections in Malta that include architectural sources, especially -but not only- at the National Library, for a better understanding of their provenance and context.

Taking Valletta and its civil architecture and historical construction sites as the main starting point of this investigation, the key role played by the city-convent was twofold. On one hand, the city was the core of the Hospitaller network, mirroring in its palaces, construction sites, and library collections the European dimension of the Order's political, social, and cultural relationships. For this reason, the intense exchange between Malta and the Hospitaller offices in Europe will also be considered as well as the reciprocal influences between the Order and various political powers. On the other hand, there were also in Malta other important political stakeholders -from the Diocese to the Inquisition, from the many religious orders (like the Jesuits) to private individuals and travellers- that diversified the cultural scenario in Malta. These all need to be further investigated.

Finally, interpreting the Order as a powerful engine for the European circulation of drawings, books, and architectural models, the conference aims at serving as a forum where new research and methodologies can be discussed and fostered, not only to explore Malta and the other European nodes of the Hospitaller network, but also to better understand the broader European context from an original perspective.

Contributions delving into the following key topics are very welcome: migration of architectural languages, construction techniques, and circulation of drawings for architectural projects between the Maltese environment and Europe; analysis of architectural models from printed

sources in the context of Hospitaller patronage; the genesis of the Maltese and Hospitaller libraries and book circulation and production (with a focus on architectural sources).
The conference will be hybrid. A Zoom link will be provided closer to the date of the conference.

After the conference
Participants will be invited to contribute to an edited volume to be proposed for inclusion in a peer-reviewed publication. Participants who wish to contribute are invited to send their text in English, and related illustrations (including permission for publication) by 1 June 2024.

Conference directors:
Armando Antista (University of Palermo)
Valentina Burgassi (Politecnico di Torino)
Heléna Perez Gallardo (Complutense University of Madrid)
Valeria Vanesio (University of Malta)

Chairs of the scientific committee:
Fernando Bouza Álvarez
Sabine Frommel
Marco Rosario Nobile
William Zammit

The conference is the first step in an international project entitled 'Malta & Europe, Europe & Malta. Dissemination of knowledge, sources and architectural models through the network of the Order of St John' run jointly by the University of Palermo (Dr Armando Antista), Politecnico di Torino (Dr Valentina Burgassi), and the University of Malta (Dr Valeria Vanesio).

Submission of abstracts:
Abstract submissions will be open from 21 August 2023 to 30 September 2023.
The submitted abstracts will be evaluated by the scientific committee and acceptance will be communicated by 23 October 2023.
Selected speakers are invited to prepare 20-min contributions.

If you would like to apply as a speaker for the conference, please submit the following via email (peoplebooksmodels2024@um.edu.mt) :
400-word abstract in English
Contact information and affiliation
Short CV (max 150 words) in English

Reference:
CFP: People, Books and Models (online/Valletta, 17-19 Apr 24). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 13, 2023 (accessed Nov 25, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/40051>.