Drawing Comparisons (Rome, 20 Oct 23)

Bibliotheca Hertziana, Villino Stroganoff, Via Gregoriana 22, 00187 Rome (Italy), Oct 20, 2023

Alejandro Nodarse

Drawing Comparisons: Images in Comparative Anatomy, 1500–1900

The history of art and the practice of anatomy have long depended upon similar acts of comparison: identifying, visualizing and describing likenesses. This workshop investigates the role of images in developing comparative anatomy — the study of anatomy across species — in early modern Europe.

Visual or formal analysis entails a search not only for forms but for likenesses. To look closely is, in other words, to look across. Anatomy, likewise, depends upon comparison. From Leonardo to Linnaeus, early modern anatomical knowledge materialized through bodies conceived as similar. The discipline of comparative anatomy emerged, specifically, as generalizations occurred across the human/nonhuman divide. The history of the anatomical image is also a history of violence, as those anatomical procedures allowing comparison (dissection and vivisection) often proceeded through the forceful manipulation, observation and depiction of the (non)human body.

Scholars from various disciplines (history of art, history of science and medicine, philosophy, fine arts, paleontology) will consider the use of images in generating comparison and in both formulating and challenging comparative anatomical knowledge.

Program:

Introduction

10:30–11:00
Alejandro Nodarse, Bibliotheca Hertziana / Harvard University
“A Guide to Looking Across”

Session One: Drawing Order

11:00–11:45
Martin Clayton, Royal Collection Trust, Windsor Castle
“‘Describe the jaw of a crocodile’: Leonardo da Vinci’s Animal Anatomies”

11:45–12:30
Katrina van Grouw, University of Cambridge
“Linnaeus Organized: Illustrating Convergence in Comparative Anatomy”

12:30–13:30
Lunch Break

Session Two: Languages of Likeness

13:30-14:15
Maria Conforti, Sapienza Università di Roma
“Fruits, Mushrooms, and Trees: Botanical Imagery in Early Modern Surgery and Anatomy”

14:15–15:00
Paul North, Yale University
“Likeness Looks Both Ways”

15:00–15:30
Coffee Break

Session Three: Violence in the Comparative

15:30-16:15
Thomas Balfe, Courtauld Institute
“Skin Deep? Visualizing Human and Animal Violence in Early Modern Still Life Painting”

16:15-17:00
Rose Marie San Juan, University College London
“Anatomical Violence and the Pain of Resemblance”

17:00-17:15
Pause

Roundtable Discussion

17:15–18:00
Sietske Fransen, Bibliotheca Hertziana
Roundtable & Concluding Remarks

Reference:
CONF: Drawing Comparisons (Rome, 20 Oct 23). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 22, 2023 (accessed Nov 2, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/40159>.