Transnational Circulations of Devotional Objects (Rome, 4-5 Feb 25)

Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max Planck Institute for Art History, Rome, Feb 4–05, 2025
Deadline: May 15, 2024

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Transnational Circulations of Devotional Objects through Religious Orders – Between the Iberian World and Rome.

The ProJesArt Research Group Agents: Jesuit Procurators and Alternative Channels for Artistic Circulation in the Hispanic World (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid), in collaboration with Prof. Tristan Weddigen (Bibliotheca Hertziana), invite proposals from specialists on Italian material culture and Iberian and Latin American viceregal art to explore new methodological perspectives related to the transnational circulations of devotional objects that travelled between the Iberian world and Rome from the 16th to the 18th centuries.

As the epicenter of the Catholic world, Rome occupied a powerful place in the imaginary of the Early Modern Age on a global scale. In turn, Rome was also a recipient of ideas, people, and objects. Although these are commonplaces in the historiography, this workshop aims to analyze a specific kind of circulation within this context that has been less explored. It will focus on the religious agents who connected Rome materially with the Iberian world through the acquisition and distribution of a wide range of art and objects. Thus, the objective is to reframe questions and broaden perspectives in line with the approaches of recent studies on global and postcolonial art history (McNeill 1995; Gruzinski 2010; DaCosta Kauffmann, Dossin and Benson 2015; Göttler and Mochizuki 2018).

Among the most recently studied religious agents involved in such global circulation, previously not well known, are the Jesuit procurators who, every three years, were sent to Rome to assist the congregations from their respective provinces throughout the world (Martínez Serna 2011). Jesuit documentation alludes to the devotional objects that were acquired in Rome to be sent to their places of origin as "things of devotion", a label which encompassed many things, including: medals, Agnus Dei, rosaries, crosses of different materials and techniques, bronze and ivory crucifixes, relics, and reliquaries, as well as liturgical objects and ornaments, small sculptures, paintings on copper, and prints. Some of these works were not created in Roman workshops but could be obtained in the capital through the vast Jesuit network, both Italian and worldwide. This type of activity was also common among the representatives and/or procurators of other religious orders, such as Augustinians, Franciscans, Dominicans and so forth. They had their central headquarters in Rome as well and travelled there regularly to attend to various matters (Palomo 2016).

By focusing on the role played by religious orders during the Early Modern Age in the circulations

of these devotional objects from Rome to the Iberian World, our approach implies not only a global perspective but also the development of a “transnational lens” which “cares for movements and forces that cut across national boundaries” (Saunier 2004). In this regard, religious orders constitute an excellent laboratory for study because they had complex organizational structures of a supranational nature since they encompassed different territories and “provinces” but, at the same time, pursued interests which lead them to converge in one place: Rome. Consequently, the workshop seeks to reconstruct the interactions and cross-cultural transfers that took place in Rome, and to better understand the production and acquisition of these objects in Italy and their transferal and impact in the Iberian world, where they were highly appreciated, as well as to learn more about what these agents brought to the Italian capital, focusing on circulations, transformations, and entanglements in a multidirectional sense.

Furthermore, through this analysis, the workshop seeks to question the status of these travelling objects. These devotional objects, most by nature physically “small”, have failed to draw the attention of traditional art history, either because they are by unknown or lesser-known artists, or because they have been excessively defined by function rather than form, materiality, and other artistic parameters. In fact, both the role of the agents and this circulation and the objects it involved, artistic or otherwise, have been largely invisible in the historical narratives of the religious orders as well as in the canonical accounts of art historiography, whether it be about Italian or Iberian art. Thus, from the current perspectives of a more global art history, we ask what can be learned from recovering the narrative of these multiple circulations and reframing these objects? What has the historiography of Italian religious material culture been like in the past, and in what new directions is it moving? How can academic study be activated to impact on collections of such objects, many scattered in small museums, or else in convents, monasteries, and churches, some of which are in imminent danger of closure?

We invite submissions related to the issues and questions proposed. Major themes of interest include, but are not limited to:
- Rome as a "great market" for devotional art
- Religious orders as agents in the circulations of devotional objects
- Typologies, functions, and taste for religious objects moving between Rome and the Iberian World
- The historiography of these travelling objects and religious material culture of the Early Modern Period
- “Small-big” devotional things: methodological perspectives for a reconsideration of the status of the devotional object

Submission Guidelines
- Submit title and abstract (max. one page) and brief CV (max. 3 pages) to: ProJesArt@gmail.com
- Submission deadline: May 15, 2024 (notification of accepted papers by June 1, 2024)

Practical Information
- The organization will cover hotel accommodations for speakers.
- As part of the program, there will be an onsite visit to view and study devotional export objects.
- Please note that the research group will organize a separate conference dedicated to Jesuit procurators from an interdisciplinary perspective on February 6–7, 2025. For this program, please

visit www.projesart.org.
- For further information and queries, contact: projesart@gmail.com.

The workshop is organized by Luisa Elena Alcalá (Universidad Autónoma of Madrid/UAM), Margarita Ana Vázquez Manassero (UAM), Elena Amerio (UAM), Tristan Weddigen (Bibliotheca Hertziana), and coordinated by Jorge Oliaga Vázquez, Elizabeth Vite Hernández, and Mara Freiberg Simmen. The Advisory Committee has as its members: Alexandre Coello de la Rosa, Patricia Díaz Cayeros, Carmen Fernández-Salvador, Corinna Gramatke, Josefina Schenke, Vanina Scocchera, and Verónica Zaragoza.

Reference:

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