Historically free African Americans (Munich, 2-3 Sep 24)

Käte Hamburger Kolleg global dis:connect, Sep 2–03, 2024
Deadline: Apr 20, 2024

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Historically free African Americans in visual and spatial representation.
Organised by Dr. Andrea Frohne (Alumna Fellow, Käte Hamburger Research Centre global dis:connect and Professor, Ohio University, USA).

Art historians have overwhelmingly focused on representations of enslavement. In her book Picture Freedom. Remaking Black Visuality in the Early Nineteenth Century, Jasmine Nichole Cobb calls for a 'disentangling [of] Blackness from slavery within the shared space of the nation' (6).
This workshop focuses on free African American people through art, visual culture and studies of space. It investigates circumstances of freedom and the disconnection from slavery prior to the Civil War, representations of free people of colour and descendants in visual culture and studies of space into the 21st century, and 17th and 18th-century White European immigration into Black America.
For pre–Civil War processes and circumstances of legalising freedom, presentations may address free Black life from birth, manumission or the Underground Railroad. Freedom at birth occurred when children born of free mothers were immediately free at birth regardless of racial categorisation. Second, manumission processes included documents or wills written by enslavers, and enslaved people purchasing their and their family members' own freedom. Third, freedom seekers escaped on the Underground Railroad into lands where slavery was illegal. Once liberated or free at birth, descendants of all of the above remained free through the centuries.
Presentations may focus on artworks made by free people of colour, such as sculptor Edmonia Lewis, portrait photographer J.P. Ball, landscape artist Robert S. Duncanson, and painters Henry Ossawa Turner and Edward Mitchell Bannister. How did their status as free play a role in their artistic careers or impact the content of their artworks? Papers may also focus on mobility and migration into free Black settlements across the United States and Canada. Topics include visual and spatial analyses of Black churches and schools, ownership of property shown in land surveys, rural roads named after free families of colour, or cemeteries in areas such as Black Philadelphia, Seneca Village in Manhattan, the Ohio River Valley (Lett Settlement, Tablertown, Berlin Crossroads, Cutler, Blackfork, Barnett Ridge), Beech Settlement in Indiana, Nicodemus in Kansas, Mecosta County in Michigan, Chestnut Ridge in West Virginia, Amherstburg in Ontario, Buxton in Ontario, etc.
Finally, with our location in Germany for the workshop, we seek to explore European migration into enslaving territories. What are the through lines of White families who become Black in the

new world? They may have become enslavers who bore liberated children of colour. Or they may be indentured servants who bore free children of colour. Some free people of colour in the United States descended from German, British, Irish and Scottish forebears. What are the global ramifications of such disrupted, disconnected genealogies? Overall, the workshop seeks to contribute new scholarship to the underrecognised subject of free African Americans and descendant populations in visual and spatial representation.

Please note that the language of the workshop is in English. Abstracts (<250 words) with short bio-notes (<150 words) for 25-minute presentations are invited for this in-person event at the Käte Hamburger Research Centre global dis:connect at LMU Munich. Accommodation in Munich and meals during the workshop will be provided, and some support for travel may be available.

Please email the workshop convener, Dr. Andrea Frohne at frohne@ohio.edu by 20 April, 2024.
For information on the Centre, visit www.globaldisconnect.org. Decisions will be conveyed by 1 May.

Place & date: Munich, 2-3 September 2024
Organiser: Andrea Frohne (Fellow Alumna, Käte Hamburger Centre and Professor, Ohio University)
Venue: Käte Hamburger Research Centre global dis:connect, Maria-Theresia-Straße 21, 81675 Munich

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