De- and Recentring the Belvedere Torso (Berlin, 25–26 Apr 24)

Berlin, Apr 25–26, 2024
Registration deadline: Apr 22, 2024

Anna Degler, Freie Universität Berlin

Centre/Pieces. De- and Recentring the Belvedere Torso.

Freie Universität Berlin, EXC 2020 Cluster of Excellence Temporal Communities: Doing Literature in a Global Perspective.

This two-day workshop is held as a cooperation between the EXC 2020 project “The Travelling Torso” by Anna Degler (EXC 2020, Freie Universität Berlin) and Katherine Harloe (Institute of Classical Studies, University of London School of Advanced Study). It is dedicated to the post-antique reception of one of the most canonised and well-known antique sculptures within ‘Western’ culture, the so-called Belvedere Torso, which is kept in the Vatican Museums in Rome. Since at least the early sixteenth century, this larger-than-life marble sculpture has been the centrepiece of a classical canon. It has also at the same time always only been known in its fragmentary state, as a powerful body in pieces.

Exploring scholarly, artistic and curatorial engagement with this centrepiece of classical Greco-Roman antiquity allows for a deeper insight into complex temporal, normative and political reference systems that are constitutive of classical receptions. The workshop will focus on the relation of body politics and classical sculpture over the five centuries since the Torso entered the European art historical canon in order to explore the entanglements of these engagements with ideals of freedom, humanity, and gender, as well as racial and ableist discourses.

Following the research agenda of EXC 2020, the Belvedere Torso reception serves as one paradigmatic case study of intermediary literary and artistic practices. In the workshop we will discuss how its reception within art, literature, scholarship and museums have produced or reproduced a variety of (political) temporalities and a set of norms. We will examine collection displays, the history of copies in plaster casts and other media, the Torso’s material transformations and the many literary and artistic attempts at its completion, as well as comparing its reception with that of other famous antique sculptures (such as Laocoon, Venus of Milo).
Invited practitioner Stephe Harrop will engage with the Torso from the perspective of contemporary storytelling with a new piece, to be performed during the workshop.

This two-day workshop, held on split site between the Cluster Villa and the Abguss-Sammlung Antiker Plastik in Charlottenburg, will bring together international and local guest speakers working at the interface of a variety of disciplines (classics, literary studies, art history, archaeology

and performance studies) to investigate and reflect upon the manifold temporalities and asynchronies that constitute and complicate processes of classical reception. Given the Belvedere Torso's central position in 'Western' canons up until today, the workshop aims at de- and possibly recentring the Torso by self-critically exploring classical reception and canonisation as a powerful practice. The workshop hereby raises the question how those practices actively shape temporal communities.

Thursday, April 25, 2024
Venue: room 00.05 Clustervilla, Otto-von-Simson Str. 15, 14195 Berlin-Dahlem

9:30 a.m. Registration

9:45 a.m. Katherine Harloe (London, Institute of Classical Studies) / Anna Degler (Berlin, EXC 2020): Introduction

Chair: Anna Degler (Berlin)

10:15 a.m. Elisabeth Décultot (Halle): Winckelmann's Invention of the Belvedere Torso: Epistemological Foundations and Strategic Interests

11:15 a.m. Coffee Break

11:30 a.m. Andrew James Johnston (Berlin, EXC 2020): Making the Torso Move: The Torso Belvedere, the Uffizi Wrestlers and Courbet

12:30 p.m. Lunch at Clustervilla

Venue: Abguss-Sammlung Antiker Plastik, Freie Universität Berlin, Schloßstraße 69b, 14059 Berlin-Charlottenburg

02:30 p.m. Check-in

03:00 p.m. Lorenz Winkler-Horaček (Berlin): The Belvedere Torso in Berlin: Between Display, Distribution and Disappearance

04:00 p.m. Short Break

04:15 p.m. Stephe Harrop (Liverpool): Storytelling Performance Speaking Stone: Broken Stories from The Belvedere Torso

04:45 p.m. Break / Time to visit the Collection

Chair: Kathryn Murphy (Oxford)

05:15 p.m. Leonard Barkan (Princeton): If the Torso Belvedere Could Talk, What Would It Say?

06:30 p.m. Reception

Friday, April 26, 2024
Venue: room 00.05 Clustervilla, Otto-von-Simson Str. 15, 14195 Berlin-Dahlem

Chair: Katherine Harloe (London)

9:15 a.m. In conversation with Stephe Harrop

10:00 a.m. Allannah Karas (Miami): Black Artists & 'White' Sculptures: Reconfiguring the Classical Tradition

11:00 a.m. Coffee Break

11:15 a.m. Ryan Sweet (Swansea): Prosthesis Narratives: Constructing and Complicating Physical Wholeness in Victorian Literature and Culture

12:15 p.m. Lunch at Clustervilla

Chair: Koenraad Vos (Cambridge)

01:00 p.m. Anna Degler (Berlin): Modes of Thinking or Thinkers beyond Rodin. The Torso Belvedere in the United States (c. 1853-63)

02:00 p.m. – 02:45 p.m. Closing Plenary Discussion

Event in English spoken language | free admission | registration required | barrier-free access

Organisers: Anna Degler (Berlin) and Katherine Harloe (London)

Please register with: anna.degler@fu-berlin.de

Reference:
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