Journal18, issue #20: CLEAN

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This issue of Journal18 asks: what we might see if we regard the eighteenth century as possessed by a cleaning frenzy? Cleaning, as a process of removing excess matter to get to the essential or the original, engaged an eighteenth-century obsession with origins and etiology. This type of removal took place in a time of formulations and nebulous debates about race, class, and ethnicity and intersected with attempts to "purify" the urban and rural environment as well as society itself. Cleanliness suggested a particular aesthetic that resonated with the tenets of neoclassicism but also with racialized notions of whiteness, as the opposite of "impure," non-white races, cultures, and objects. In the increasingly disenchanted worldview of elites, cleaning artworks was also a way to annihilate any living presence connected to these objects, from bugs and microorganisms to ancestral spirits to immanent beliefs.

In eighteenth-century Europe, political, cultural, and religious authorities sought to clean artworks and monuments from anything that "soiled" them, whether that was actual dirt, natural traces of use and time, or (hu)man-made ephemera, immaterial rituals, and ideological beliefs. These actions were symptoms of a power struggle between religious institutions and the state and between different cultures and countries, but also between local populations and an increasingly centralized administration. Even when presented as neutral measures of maintenance, such acts of cleaning often led to conflict. This was the case, for example, in late eighteenth-century Naples, when the German painter Jacob Philip Hackert was accused by local artists of disrespecting a number of Italian paintings he had cleaned. What for one cultural milieu diminished artistic value could be, for another, an integral part of the artwork.

This issue of Journal18 invites essays on acts of and discourses around cleaning in the long eighteenth century, particularly cases that address issues of authority and ownership. Who was entitled to touch, handle, modify, or clean an artwork, relic, building, or monument? What/who was allowed to reside within such buildings and objects, and what/who had to be erased or exterminated? What was the significance of defining the "pure" or "original" state of such artworks? What line of separation did actors draw between cleaning and destruction? Was cleaning gendered, and, if so, how? Who was expected to do the cleaning, and who was allowed to produce dirt? What are the connections between racialized ideologies that led to the devastations of ethnic cleansing and eighteenth-century aesthetics of cleaning and cleanliness? Is there a way to contrast the "messiness" of the early modern multi-modal "entangled" historiography with the streamlined "cleanliness" of eighteenth-century historical writing?

To submit a proposal, please send an abstract (250 words) and brief biography to the following addresses: editor@journal18.org and nikolaos.magouliotis@gta.arch.ethz.ch by October 1, 2024.

Articles should not exceed 6000 words (including footnotes) and will be due by April 1, 2025.

For further details on submission and Journal18 house style, see Information for Authors: https://www.journal18.org/info/

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