Visualizing Portuguese Power (Munich, 26-27 Sep 2013)

München, Center for Advanced Studies, Sep 26–27, 2013
Deadline: Feb 28, 2013

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Visualizing Portuguese Power: The Political Use of Images in Portugal and Its Overseas Empire (16th to 18th Century)

Images have always played a vital role in political communication and in the visualization of power structures and hierarchies. They gain even more importance in situations where non-verbal communication prevails: In the negotiation processes between two (or more) different cultures, the language of the visual is often thought of as the more effective way to acquaint (and overpower) the others with one's own principles, beliefs, value systems. Scores of these asymmetrical exchange situations have taken place in the Portuguese overseas Empire since its gradual expansion in the 16th century.

In art history, the role of images in the contact zones of the early modern empires has recently met with an increasing interest. It is above all the study of objects belonging to the so-called Jesuit Mission Art and the Art produced in the context of the other religious orders that has shed new light on the potentiality of images in transcultural exchange processes. Numerous of these religious art works were, however, also used to visualize political claims and transmit notions of colonial power. The Munich workshop aims to develop thoughts on the broad phenomenon of Portuguese-Christian Art in the African, Asian and American colonies further by adding the dimension of the political appropriation of these (and other) objects. How were these "hybrid" artefacts staged and handled to generate new layers of meaning and visualize political ideas and concepts?

It seems worth discussing whether there were also in the profane sphere of the visualization of political ideas and structures phenomena of accommodation comparable to those in the sphere of the religious image: Do we find adaptations to the local artistic and ceremonial customs when it comes to demonstrate Portuguese power in the overseas regions? Rather than renewing emphasis on the outdated concept of an active centre that sends its messages into the passive and receptive peripheries, the workshop aims at analyzing the transmission processes and the development of transcultural imaginations in the sphere of the political use of the image.

Paper proposals may deal with the following aspects:

- political ceremonies (entradas, coronations, funerals) in the Portuguese mainland and in the colonies; ephemeral architectures/art works

- patron saints, their relics and their images

- the coalescence of Christian religious (Jesuit) spaces/art works/ ceremonies with those of the Bragança dynasty/the viceroys/ the profane elites

- turning points (e.g. 1580/1640: development of new iconographies after the enthronement of João IV as the new king of Portugal, etc.)

- (re-)presentations of the relations between the mainland and the overseas regions

- differences/similarities/entanglements with the Spanish, English, Dutch political iconographies

- the field of the allegorical representation of Portugal and its political iconographies in the period investigated

We welcome paper proposals from a variety of fields, including art history, history, philosophy, cultural history, visual culture, etc.
Please submit an abstract (with a maximum of 2.500 characters) plus a brief CV along with your contact information in one PDF document by February 28, 2013, to Urte Krass, Institut für Kunstgeschichte, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Zentnerstr. 31, 80798 Munich (urte.krass@kunstgeschichte.uni-muenchen.de)

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