

Death and Virtue (New York, 27–29 Mar 2014)

New York, RSA, Mar 27–29, 2014

Deadline: Jun 1, 2013

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"[...] and recognizing, from the example not only of the ancients but of the moderns as well, that the names of very many architects, sculptors, and painters [...], are going on being forgotten and destroyed little by little, and in such wise, in truth, that nothing can be foretold for them but a certain and well-nigh immediate death; and wishing to defend them as much as in me lies from this second death, and to preserve them as long as may be possible in the memory of the living."

As the main purpose for writing his famous *Vite*, Giorgio Vasari states his strong desire to save the artists and their work from being forgotten – an occurrence which would have meant nothing less than a second death to them. However, this threat was not only true for artists, but for everyone. In pre-modern Italy, individual status was heavily based on origin and lineage. Therefore, keeping the memory of ancestors and patrons alive was as important as leaving a trace of one's own achievement for posterity. Art production has always been a powerful means of dealing with the breaks in the social network caused by deceased protagonists. Thus, death is not only a destructive but, on the contrary, a highly creative force that resulted in a splendid cultural productivity defined by concepts of *memoria* and *fama*.

Whereas *memoria* aspires to the soul's eternal salvation, the concept of *fama* aims to engage a more profane audience. Both are constitutive of virtue, which can be expressed through various media to build up remembrance. The proclamation of social status could be achieved by referring to highly formulaic standards, like listing accomplished steps in the individual career, or emphasizing unique, distinctive traits of the deceased. Together with the praise of character, they blended together and formed cultural memory, where truth and ideal blurred.

In our panels we would like to investigate different concepts of virtue and legacy. How did various social groups, like artists, clerics, humanists, and the nobility establish their own remembrance through foundations and monuments? What varied local traditions emerged throughout cultural centres in early modern Italy, like Venice, Florence, Rome, or Naples? How were those traditions absorbed, transformed and made fruitful within the 19th century's revival of Renaissance Italy? Can we detect a difference in the strategies used for creating one's own eternal reputation in contrast to the enactment of a posthumous public image by others?

We aspire to a broad chronological frame, from early Renaissance up to its reception in the 19th century in order to contextualize questions of *memoria* and *fama*. We are seeking proposals dealing with a wide range of media to investigate the transformation of immaterial merits into material culture, for example: medals or paintings, monuments or architecture, literature or foundations.

Papers from all disciplines will be considered.

We are looking forward to your application: as per RSA guidelines your email should include your proposal (no longer than 150 words), your contact information, affiliation and short CV (no longer than 300 words) in one PDF.

Please send by June 1, 2013 all information to both organizers:

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For further information about the RSA annual meeting (membership and registration), please see the official RSA website: www.rsa.org.

Reference:

CFP: Death and Virtue (New York, 27-29 Mar 2014). In: Arthist.net, May 10, 2013 (accessed Apr 18, 2025),

<<https://arthist.net/archive/5315>>.