“Civilizing” the World (16-23 Oct 26)

Warburg Institute, University of London, Woburn Square, London WC1H 0AB, Oct 16–23, 2026
Registration deadline: Oct 15, 2026
warburg.sas.ac.uk/news-events/events/civilizing-the-world-2026

Jon Millington, Warburg Institute, University of London

“Civilizing” the World: Classicism, Neo-Classical Sculpture, and Plaster Casts in the Service of Imperial Powers and Post-Colonial Elites (1780-1945).

16 October 2026: Online presentations
21 October 2026: Public evening event supported by the John Coffin Memorial Trust: Chancellor’s Hall, Senate House & online: Curatorial Perspectives on Colonial Casts and Mould Taking
22-23 October 2026: International two-day conference: Warburg Institute & online

The conference explores the uses of Greco-Roman and neo-classical sculpture and architecture by European colonial powers to express and consolidate their power, at home and abroad, and the continuation and adaptation of these strategies in elite nation-building in many former colonies, post-independence.

Speakers from across the world will discuss the roles classical and neo-classical art fulfilled globally, addressing the deployment of classical visual culture in the service of self-presentation and as a means to dominate indigenous, subaltern and settler populations. Taking in the history of five continents, the conference is designed to bring out historical differences as well as continuities, putting existing, geographically focused approaches and global frameworks of postcolonial analysis to the test.

Organized by Dr Eckart Marchand (Warburg Institute), Professor Katherine Harloe (Institute of Classical Studies, University of London) and Professor Amy Smith (Department of Classics, University of Reading).

Generously supported by: Henry Moore Foundation, Institute of Classical Studies, John Coffin Memorial Trust, University of Reading Department of Classics and School of Humanities, University of Reading and British Museum Partnership Joint Development Fund, Dino and Raffaello Tomasso, UK, Classics Beyond Borders (University of Cambridge) and the Leventis Foundation, University College London

For conference programme and booking see: https://warburg.sas.ac.uk/news-events/events/civilizing-the-world-2026

PROGRAMME:

FRIDAY 16 October 2026 – Online day - from 10:50 BST.

10:50: Welcome by Flora Dennis, Deputy Director of the Warburg Institute and the organizers, Eckart Marchand, Katherine Harloe, and Amy Smith

11:00: Session 1: The Representation of Imperial Power and its Discontents. Chair: Katherine Harloe, Institute of Classical Studies

Polina Malova, 4th-year undergraduate, National Research University, Moscow: 'Classical Faces of Empire: Rochette and Catherine II's Southern Program'
Logan Douglas, PhD student, St Andrews: 'The Beit Bequest and the Artifice Underpinning Settler Colonialism'

12:00-12:10: Break

12:10: Session 2: Classicism in the Philippines and Japan. Chair: Amy Smith, Dept. of Classics, University of Reading

Geronimo Cristobal, PhD cand, Cornell University: 'The Small Museum of Empire: Plaster Casts and Artistic Formation in Colonial Manila'
Shinya Araki, Lecturer, Tama Art University, Japan: 'The Uneven Acceptance of Western Art in Different Regions of Japan'

13:10: Break

14:00: Session 3: Representing State and Nation in the Post-Colonial Americas. Chair: Amara Thornton, Institute of Classical Studies

Mauricio Oviedo, Ass. Prof., Universidad de Costa Rica and Leonardo Santamaria Montero, PhD cand., Cornell University: 'Allegories of America: Indigenous Representation, Transatlantic Artistic Networks, and Nation-Building Narratives in Nineteenth-Century Central America'
Victoria Jiménez, PhD cand., University of Barcelona: 'Civilizing Through Copies: Classical Replicas, 'Mamarrachos,' and the Visual Politics of Nation-Building in Nineteenth-Century Chile'

15:00: Break

15:15: Session 4: Shaping the Citizen and the Other. Chair: Maria Golovteeva, Warburg Institute

Joseph Albanese, Ass. Prof., DePauw University, Indiana: 'The seductive lie of classical pagan sculptures in colonial Peru'
Katie Margerison, MA, Tulane University: 'Moral Bodies, Secular Virtues: Educación Física and the Idealized Citizen in Post-Revolutionary Mexico'

16:15: Final Discussion

WEDNESDAY 21 October 2026 - Evening event - from 18:00 BST.
University of London, Senate House, Chancellor's Hall & Online

'Curatorial Perspectives on Colonial Casts and Mould Taking'
Chair: David Saunders, The British Museum

18:00: Welcome by Flora Dennis, Deputy Director of the Warburg Institute and Katherine Harloe, Director of the Institute of Classical Studies

Eder Ignacio Arreola Ponce, Curator of the Sculpture Collection, Faculty of Art and Design, Academia de San Carlos, UNAM, Mexico City: 'Neoclassicism in America: The Sculpture Collection of the Academy of San Carlos in Mexico. History, Provenance, and Tracing of a Dispersed Collection'
Iffat Azeem, Senior Research Officer, Lahore Museum: 'An Empirical Curatorial Insight into the Ethnographical Heads of Schlagintweits (1854–1858)'
Veronika Tocha, Curator, Gipsformerei, SMK, Berlin: 'Plaster Casting and/as Cultural Appropriation: The Politics of Reproduction'
Final Discussion
Drinks Reception, Grand Lobby Senate House

THURSDAY, 22 October 2026 – Conference Day 1
Warburg Institute, University of London & online

09:00: Arrivals
09:40: Welcome by Bill Sherman, Director of the Warburg Institute. Introduction by Eckart Marchand, Warburg Institute

10:00: Session 1: Mexico. Chair: Claudia Zehrt, The British Museum

Daniel Sobrino Ralston, CEEH Associate Curator of Spanish Paintings, National Gallery, London: ''Estatua digna del griego afamado': The Plaster Cast Collection of Mexico City's Academia de San Carlos, 1783–1803'
Elizabeth Fuentes Rojas, Prof., UNAM, Mexico: 'The continuing influence of neoclassicism in Mexican altarpieces: A symbiosis of Sculptors and Architects'
Delia Cosentino, Prof., DePaul University Chicago: '"Por no ser traidor a su patria": Tlahuicole and the Making of a Mexican Spartacus'

11:15: Coffee

11:45: Session 2/1: Central and South Americas. Chair: Rebecca Levitan, King's College London

Maite Álvarez, Project Specialist, Getty Research Centre, Los Angeles: 'Classical Ideals in the Amazon: The Drawing Academy and Artistic Civilization in the late Eighteenth Century'
Joseph Hartman, Ass. Prof., University of Missouri-Kansas City: 'Queen, Poet, Republic: The Classical and Colonial Formations of Cuban National Identity'
Edgar Ulloa, Ass. Prof., Universidad de Costa Rica: 'Rethinking Post-Colonial Assumptions: The Plaster Cast Collection of the Escuela de Artes Plásticas de Costa Rica (1897–1940)'

13:00: Lunch break

Poster Session during Lunch break (at 13:45): Mauricio Oviedo, Ass. Prof., Universidad de Costa

Rica and Leonardo Santamaria Montero, PhD cand., Cornell University: 'Allegories of America: Indigenous Representation, Transatlantic Artistic Networks, and Nation-Building Narratives in Nineteenth-Century Central America'

14:30: Session 2/2: Central and South Americas. Chair: Vicky Donnellan, The British Museum

Paul Niell, Prof., Florida State University: 'A Rhetoric of Permanence: Neoclassical Urbanism and the Suppression of Ephemeral Architecture in the Spanish Caribbean, 1830-1898'
Fabio D'Almeida Lima Maciel, Prof., UniCamp, São Paulo: 'Neo-Classical Sculpture and the Racial Politics of “Civilization” in Ferdinand Pettrich’s The Dying Tecumseh'

15:25: Tea/coffee

16:00: Session 3: Representing the Colonial Power. Chair: John Tresch, Warburg Institute

Ciarán Rua O’Neill, Research Fellow, University College Dublin, 'Hibernia Improved: Architectural Sculpture, Neoclassicism, and Imperial Authority in Dublin, c.1780-1810'
Michael Adam Smith, PhD stud., York University, 'A ‘Union of Conciliation and Firmness’: John Flaxman’s monument to Major-General Sir Barry Close'

18:00: Visit and Reception, UCL Flaxman Gallery.

FRIDAY, 23 October 2026 – Conference Day 2 - from 09:30 BST
Warburg Institute, University of London & Online

09:30: Introduction by Amy Smith, Dept. of Classics, University of Reading

09:40: Session 4: Imperialism in Europe. Chair: Marianna Leszczyk, Warburg Institute

Agnieszka Skrodzka, Ass. Prof., Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, Warsaw: 'The Clash of Neo--Classicisms. The sculpture in Warsaw against the signs of Russian domination in the art of the 19th century'
Jonatan Pérez Mostazo, Prof., University of the Basque Country (EHU): 'Civilizing the inner barbarians: classicism, progress and Basque culture in Bilbao (1875-1931)'

10:35: Coffee

11:15: Session 5: Neoclassicism and Anthropology. Chair: Charles Burdett, Institute of Languages, Cultures and Societies

Elisabeth Décultot, Prof., Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg: 'Winckelmann’s Beauty Ideal and the Making of Ethnological Difference around 1800'
Aris Sarafianos, Prof., University of Ioannina: '“Neptune’s Breast” and the "Chest” of Wilson, the Black: Extreme Simulations, Vitality and Race in the Imperial Spectrum – Elgin Casts in Russia, 1818'
Laetitia Lai, PhD stud., Open University of the Netherlands: 'Between Art and Anthropological Authenticity: The Visual Languages of Colonial Science'
Nam Huh, PhD stud., University of Loughborough: 'From Colonial Life-Casting to Archival Ecology: Technologies of Visibility and Robert Zhao Renhui’s Counter-Archives'

13:05: Lunch break

14:15: Session 6: Colonialism in the Eastern Mediterranean and Africa
Chair: Sam Agbamu, Dept. of Classics, University of Reading

Gaia De Luca, PostDoc., Lille University: 'Conquering through construction: the Fascist cultural and architectural Italianisation in the Dodecanese (1912–1943)'
Khalifa Bashbash, Independent Scholar, Libya: 'Archaeology as Imperial Propaganda: The Impact of Italian Colonial and Fascist Ideology on Libyan Antiquities'

15:10: Tea/coffee

15:45: Carmen Belmonte, Assistant Professor, University of Padua: 'Classicism and Fascist Imperial Power in the Sculpture of Romano Romanelli'
Susan Slyomovics, Distinguished Prof. UCLA: 'François-Léon Sicard and “Great Men” Sculptures of French Algeria'

16:40: Final Lecture. Chair: Eckart Marchand, Warburg Institute
Lorenz Winkler-Horacek, Prof. and Curator of the Plaster Cast Collection, Freie Universität Berlin: 'From Prussia to China: On the Appropriation, Rejection, and Re-Appropriation of Classical Antiquity through Plaster Casts'
Discussion and conclusion

Reference:
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