Images of the Art Museum: Connecting Gaze and Discourse in the History of Museology

International Conference

Organized by the Max Planck Research Group "Objects in the Contact Zone - The Cross-Cultural Lives of Things" directed by Eva-Maria Troelenberg

Scholars normally consider the institution of the museum to have arisen in Europe. Historians have traced its origin back to the collections of the Renaissance princes and the "cabinets of curiosity", the 'Kunstkammern' and 'Wunderkammern', literally art chambers and wonder chambers, of sixteenth and seventeenth-century Western Europe. From their initial establishment until today, museums have become increasingly elaborate institutions, the purpose of which is not simply to exhibit collections of beautiful artefacts, but also to become a social agency able to interact with a different kind of public. In particular, in recent years, it seems as though 'the museum' has become a geographically universal or 'global' institution. At the same time, museum discourses are almost inevitably entangled with political questions, implying definitions of cultural values and privileges of interpretation.

Since the early 1990s, the emerging field of museum studies has seen rapid expansion in the critical study of museums. New Museology started to question the institution and its functions. Anthropological approaches to the object, theories on the aesthetics of perception or 'Bildakt' have affected our ideas of the artwork. The current museum boom and the ensuing new wave of historiographical and theoretical writing on museums have on the one hand addressed notions of 'the museum' as a temple, a cultural storage or even a universal symbol of enlightenment. On the other hand, more pro-active postmodern approaches work with concepts of the museum as a forum, a place of participation, but also as a machine or even a brand.

The changes in the museums’ functions have largely been documented and represented through a variety of tools, both literally and figuratively: pictures, photographs, popular books, video, film, etc... These images not
only passively constructed the public's idea of the museum but also play an active role in our understanding of the institution.

To contribute differentiated viewpoints to the currently evolving metadiscourse on the museum, this conference seeks to investigate how the institution of the museum has been visualized and translated into different kinds of images (the term 'image' being applied both literally and figuratively) and how these images have affected our perception of these institutions. The images could be the result of the encounter between Western paradigms and alternative models of relating to art and of producing and promoting culture. Our aim therefore is to discuss a wide range of historical and present-day 'images' of art and archaeology museums in Western and non-Western societies.

Program

Thursday, 26 September 2013

14:00
Welcome and Introduction
Eva Troelenberg and Melania Savino

14:30-16:30
Iconic Museums – Iconic Objects

Changduk (Charles) Kang, Columbia University:
The Multiple Representations of Bonnier de la Mosson's Cabinets of Curiosity

Stephanie Moser, University of Southampton:
Exhibiting ancient Egypt: the legacy of nineteenth century displays of ancient Egypt in Britain

Valentina Conticelli, Uffizi, Florence:
Sir Roger Newdigate's Notebook: the Uffizi in a Grand Tour Traveller's Eyes

Christina Ferando, Columbia University:
The Louvre in a State of Loss: Imaging and Imagining the Venus de Milo

16:30 Break

17:00-18:30
Kathryn Floyd, Auburn University:
Theme and Variation: The Museum Fridericianum at documenta
Evi Baniotopoulou & Stella Sylaiou, IHU & AUTh:
Guggenheim Abu Dhabi: Where the Wind Blows / Where the Winds Blow

Walter Grasskamp, Academy of Fine Arts in Munich:
André Malraux’s "Imaginary Museum" and some of his sources

Friday 27 September 2013

9:30-11:00
Visualizing the Museum

Lynda Mulvin, University College Dublin:
Of Journals, Collections and Museums: The Case of Kenhelm Digby and the National Museum of Ireland

Alison Boyd, Northwestern University:
The Visible and Invisible: Circulating Images of the Barnes Foundation Collection

David Odo, Yale Gallery:
The New Decisive Moment: Towards a Photography of the Art Museum

11:00 Break

11:30-13:00
Norbert Schmitz, Muthesius Kunsthochschule Kiel:
Museum in Movies, or: How the Mass Medium Imagines the 'Temple of the Muses'

Julia Kleinbeck, Hochschule für Gestaltung Karlsruhe:
Images of the beholder as Co-Creators of the Image of the Art Museum

Sandra Leandro, University of Evora:
'I had a dream like a picture': Museums, photography, film and national identity in London Exhibition of Portuguese Art (1955-1956)

13:00-14:30 Lunch Break

14:30-16:00
Transforming Museum Images

Martin Gaier, University of Basel:
The art of civilization. Museum Enemies in the 19th century

Yannis Hamilakis, University of Southampton:
Demolishing the Museum of Sensory Ab/sense

Marci Kwon, New York University:

16:00 Break

16:30-18:00
Anastasia Kontogiorgi & Iro Katsaridou, Hellenic General Secretary of Culture:
When El Greco (re)became Theotocopoulos: Policies and political discourse of the National Gallery of Athens

Zehra Tonbul, Mardin Artuklu University:
Museum-Text Labyrinthine: Orhan Pamuk’s Museum of Innocence

Frederick Bohrer, The Hood College:
The Middle East in the Western Museum: Edges and Textures of Temporality

18:00 Break

18:30
September: Mirage. A literary conversation on the poetics and politics of the museum.
With Thomas Lehr and Gerhard Wolf

Saturday 28 September 2013

9:30-11:00
Constructing Museum Images

Lynn Catterson, Columbia University:
Stefano Bardini & the Taxonomic Branding of Marketplace Style. From the Gallery of a Dealer to the Institutional Canon

Barbara Lasic, V&A:
Displaced materialities and colliding visions: loan exhibitions at the South Kensington Museum, 1853-1875

Irene Maffi, University of Lausanne:
Government museums and private collectors in Jordan. Can archaeological pieces be a base for democratic dialogue?

11:00 Break
11:30-13:00
Andrea Meyer, TU Berlin:
Museums in print. The interplay of texts and images in the journal Museumskunde

Melania Savino, Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz - Max-Planck-Institut:
Creating the Museum through the pages of the journal 'Mouseion'

Naomi Stead, University of Brisbane:
Building Flagships: regionalism, place branding and architecture as image in the Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane

13:00-14:30 Lunch Break

14:30-16:30
Shifting Categories, Shifting Images

Benedicte Savoy, TU Berlin:
Die Berliner Museumsfilme. Propaganda für die Berliner Museen. 1934-1939.

Qanita Lilla, Museum of Islamic Art, Doha:
Art and Rhetoric: The South African National Gallery in the 1940's

Shaila Bhatti, UCL:
Museum imaginings in South Asia: some constructive and deconstructive narratives

Yuka Kadoi, University of Edinburgh:
Bridging Art, Science and Religion – Islamic Civilisation in Museum Contexts

16:30
Concluding Remarks

Location
Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz - Max-Planck-Institut
Palazzo Grifoni Budini Gattai
Via dei Servi 51
50122 Firenze

Contact
Dr. Melania Savino
Reference: