PhD Sublime in Seventeenth-Century French Architecture (Leiden)

Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society
Application deadline: Nov 10, 2013

Stijn Bussels

PhD Position in Art and Architectural History (1,0 fte)
Vacancy number: 13-277

The Faculty of Humanities hosts a wealth of expertise in fields including philosophy, history, art history, literature, linguistics, and area studies, covering practically the entire world. The Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society (LUCAS) is one of seven research institutes within the Faculty of Humanities. LUCAS focuses on the study of art, literature and culture through various media. The PhD student will work within a research programme funded by the European Research Council (ERC Starting Grant), entitled: Elevated Minds. The Sublime in the Public Arts in Seventeenth-Century Paris and Amsterdam supervised by Dr. Stijn Bussels (Art and Architectural History, LUCAS).

Description of the Phd project
Contrary to widely-held assumptions, the revival of the sublime did not begin with the adaptation published by Boileau in 1674; it was not connected solely with the early Greek editions that began to appear from 1554; nor was its impact limited to rhetoric and literature. Manuscript copies circulated in Quattrocento Italy and from there spread to France and the Low Countries. Many of these early versions were produced in milieus distinguished by strong political influence combined with an evident interest in the visual arts and the theatre such as the Farnese and Barberini in Rome, or Mazarin's in Paris.

This project will identify and collect a series of relatively unknown versions of the sublime in connection with the patronage and appreciation of architecture and the arts. Among those already identified are texts by Rapin, Bouhours, Saint-Évremond, and Pierre Cureau de la Chambre's writings on Bernini of the 1680s. Of particular importance is the manuscript French translation held in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, which was probably made in the entourage of, or possible even by, Mazarin in the 1630s, together with a series of state-of-the-art treatises on architecture, perspective and painting.

The reactions to Bernini's bust and equestrian statue of Louis XIV offer a considerable range of reactions in which the sublime plays a role. The sublime is conspicuous in the testimonies collected in the BNF manuscript Colbert 37; in Pierre Cureau de la Chambre's biography of Bernini; but also in François Lemée's Traité des statues, occasioned by the erection of yet another statue of Louis XIV, this time in the Place des Victoires to commemorate the peace of Nijmegen (1678-9). These versions of the sublime are important because they argue that the sublime is not restricted to literature, but can be found everywhere, in particular in the lives and actions of great men and the works of art they cause to be made, and both present Louis XIV as the supreme embodiment, if not living image, of the true sublime.

In this project we will further extend our knowledge of the networks of patrons, authors, artists, and viewers and their interest in the sublime. Whereas previous studies of the role of the sublime in Louis XIV's artistic policy concentrated on his aims and the artistic aspects, we will reconstruct the chorus of contesting voices that works like the Invalides or the Place Vendome caused, and thereby obtained a much more detailed and historically informed view of the use and impact of the sublime.

Duties and responsibilities

The candidates are supposed to carry out the following tasks:
- writing a Ph.D. thesis;
- submitting research results for publication in peer-reviewed academic journals;
- submitting research results for incorporation in a synthetic publication to be written by the programme director;
- presenting papers at (international) conferences;
- some teaching in the second and third year of the appointment;
- organizing and participating in reading and discussions groups, seminars and workshops within the ERC-starting-grant group.

Requirements
- The applicant has a Master's or equivalent degree in Art and Architectural History, and has obtained this degree no longer than five years ago. The MA-thesis must be of high quality, with a grade of at least 8.0 on a ten-point scale, or comparable assessment;
- The applicant's MA thesis testifies to well-developed research skills, including the ability to formulate relevant and creative research questions and hypotheses, descriptive and analytical skills, and a clear and persuasive style of writing;
- The applicant's CV illustrates familiarity with and experience in

research into the study of the early modern architecture and/or art, preferably with interests in seventeenth-century France;
- The applicant has an excellent command of French and English, in reading, writing and speaking; and a reading and speaking competence in Dutch;
- The applicant is able to work both independently and as part of a team;
- The applicant undertakes to finish the proposed Ph.D. research within 4 years;
- The Ph.D. research should result in a doctor's degree from the Faculty of the Humanities of Leiden University under the primary supervision of Prof. dr. Caroline van Eck.

What we offer
The successful applicant is initially appointed for a period of 12 months, with the preferred starting date of February 1st 2014. After positive evaluation of capabilities and compatibility and if progress is satisfactory, the appointment will be extended by another 3 years. The appointment must lead to the completion of a Ph.D. thesis. Appointment will be under the terms of the Cao (collective labour agreement) of the Dutch Universities.

The gross monthly salary is set on € 2.083,- in the first year up to € 2.664,- gross per month in year four. This is based upon a fulltime employment and in conformity with current salary scales under the collective employment agreement (Cao) for Dutch Universities.
An appointment with Leiden University includes a pension build-up and facilitates other benefits such as an annual holiday premium of 8% and an end-of-year premium of 8,3%. Candidates from outside the Netherlands may be eligible for a substantial tax break.

Information
For more information and the full project proposal, please contact Dr. Stijn Bussels e-mail: S.P.M.Bussels@rug.nl. For information about LUCAS see http://hum.leiden.edu/lucas/.

How to apply
Please submit your application letter (with the vacancy number) and Curriculum vitae before 10 November, to vacaturesLUCAS@hum.leidenuniv.nl and S.P.M.Bussels@rug.nl. You are also requested to ask two scholars familiar with your work to send reference letters to the same addresses. We may also contact these referees directly in case we need more information.

Please add to your application the following appendices: the MA thesis, copy of relevant course assessments and the MA degree certificate, and other relevant documentation such as certificates of relevant language

courses.

Note that the procedure may include skype interviews in addition to a final interview in Leiden; interviews are scheduled to take place at the beginning of December.

Reference:
STIP: PhD Sublime in Seventeenth-Century French Architecture (Leiden). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 25, 2013 (accessed Nov 11, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/6006>.