Lias journal, issue: The Sublime in Humanist Art Theory

ERC starting grant Elevated Minds, Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society
Deadline: May 1, 2014

Stijn Bussels

Special Issue Lias: The Sublime in Humanist Art Theory

For this special issue of Lias we welcome proposals that focus on the appropriation of the Longinian sublime in theories of art, architecture and theatrical performances in the period prior to Burke and Kant. In contrast with previous studies on the visual sublime in Early Modernity, our primary focus will not be put on the analysis of works of art, but on the studia humanitatis and the new understandings of how artists could move their audience maximally. Already in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Europe, the treatise Peri hupsous (On the Sublime) by pseudo-Longinus was a crucial text to form humanist ideas on the overpowering effect of visual media. Thus the special issue of Lias addresses the earliest theories on the overwhelming agency of these visual media since Antiquity.

This project is part of the ERC starting grant program 'Elevated Minds. The Sublime in the Public Arts in Seventeenth-Century Paris and Amsterdam' (http://hum.leiden.edu/lucas/elevatedminds).

Aims of the Special Issue
Since Nicolas Boileau's canonical French translation of Peri hupsous in 1674 the sublime was for decades increasingly related to literature. However, prior to Boileau, Longinus's treatise was appropriated in a broader field. For example, recent studies on the widely influential De pictura veterum by Franciscus Junius F.F. (Amsterdam, 1637) have indicated the importance of Longinus for the Early Modern conceptualization of the breathtaking and awe-inspiring effect of painting. However, we currently lack insight to what extent Longinus's treatise was used before Junius, e.g. in Italian art theory, or in the decades after Junius.

Humanists, such as Lorenzo Giacomini, explicitly discussed Longinus's use of the term phantasia (or mental image) to get a grasp on the overwhelming effect of art. They learned from Longinus that poets and

orators need to use phantasiai to make their subject present. Thus the poets and orators should become witnesses of the events themselves and can put these events into vivid words. In turn, the audience gets phantasiai thanks to the vividness of the sublime text or speech. However, we do not exclusively look at the Early Modern appropriation of Longinus's phantasia: other elements from the Peri hupsous can be taken into regard as well, such as Longinus's use of enthousiasmos (pointing at the state of total possession of the artist in the process of creation) or ekstasis and ekplexis (both defining the overwhelming effect on the audience), as well as the Longinian discussion on 'greatness of mind' and the juxtaposition of 'flawless mediocrity' versus 'erratic genius'.

Since many other ancient authors also used these terms, it is not only necessary to assess to what extent humanists relied on the particular conceptualization of Longinus, but also how these humanists combined the ideas from the Peri hupsous with insights on overwhelming art from other ancient sources. Moreover, we have to clarify how humanists combined Longinus's ideas on the sublime with neighboring concepts from Antiquity dealing with overwhelming art, such as Aristotle's thaumaston, Plato's mania, or Quintilian's enargeia.

Lias
Lias is devoted to primary sources which concern the history of learning and education in the broadest sense: the artes liberales, the studia humanitatis, philosophy, etc. (http://poj.peeters-leuven.be/content.php?url=journal&journal_code=LIAS). Starting from this interest, the special issue on the sublime in humanist art theory also places the primary sources at the center of attention. We will not primarily deal with the analysis of works of art, but start from an unpublished source or a neglected printed source that sheds more light on humanist thought on overwhelming art and the influence of the Longinian sublime and/or related concepts. The source will be published (according to its length, entirely or in part) and thoroughly discussed.

Timescale
We invite scholars to send an abstract of c. 300 words before May 1th, 2014 to S.P.M.Bussels@hum.leidenuniv.nl. This abstract will be discussed by the guest editors and the board of Lias. Remarks and comments will be sent to the contributors in July 2014. The deadline for an advanced draft of the contribution will be December 15th, 2014. This draft will be distributed among all other contributors and discussed during an interactive workshop in March 2015. A revised version, to be submitted by September 1st, 2015, will be commented on by the guest editors, the board of Lias and the anonymous reviewers.

The deadline for the final version will be February 1st, 2016, after which the guest editors, the board and reviewers will give their final approval. The special issue of Lias will be published in Winter 2016.

Reference:
CFP: Lias journal, issue: The Sublime in Humanist Art Theory. In: ArtHist.net, Jan 17, 2014 (accessed Nov 26, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/6786>.