

Bacchanalia! Nude, ecstasy and dance in XIXth century art (Bordeaux, 4-5 Feb 16)

Bordeaux, Feb 4-05, 2016

Deadline: May 30, 2015

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BACCHANALIA!

NUDE, ECSTASY AND DANCE IN XIXTH CENTURY ART

International Conference (Bordeaux, 4th – 5th February 2016)

The myth of Bacchus, wandering god of drunkenness, contagious euphoria and creative inspiration, experienced a series of revivals throughout history. In the XIXth century, this “mysterious god”, living “hidden amongst the vines” as Baudelaire once said, reemerged to both trouble and nourish artistic creation. In a time when mythographs rediscover the cult of the Antic god and romantic poets from Schlegel to Schelling, bringing back its Orphic and spiritual depths, the artists of the period also show a lot of interest in the mysterious call of Bacchus and his procession. Long before Nietzsche, bacchanals, orgiastic celebrations, cortege of fauns and satyrs, dancing Maenads and Bacchus’ triumphs invaded the artistic, cultural and social imagination of the period, from Delacroix to Böcklin, from Berlioz to Wagner. The Antic Myth is thus transformed. This feverish taste for Dionysian disorder, which encompassed creation in all its forms, from fine art to popular art, unveils the turmoils of a period in duress, divided between reason and imagination, norms and the desire to break free from them. This subject has been explored in all its philosophical, literary and mythocritical aspects, by the indispensable work of Marcelle Detienne and Brian Juden. It has also been the subject of notable advances in history of art, music and theatre. Nevertheless, no overall analysis has yet been proposed of XIXth century artistic representations of the Dionysian manifestations.

To coincide with the "Modern Bacchanalia ! Nude, Ecstasy and Dance in the XIXth Century French" Art exhibition, which will first appear at the Musée des Beaux-arts in Ajaccio in June 2015 and then at the Musée des Beaux-arts in Bordeaux in November 2015, this conference aims to extend the reflection on the polymorphic forms of the God of wine throughout XIXth century art, encouraging a multidisciplinary approach. It will mainly focus on the originality of these modern Bacchanalia in their aesthetic and cultural significance, following the antic myth in all its forms, in order to better understand the caprices of its metamorphoses.

The conference addresses itself to researchers in History of Art, Literature, Musicology, or in Theatre and Dance, and aims to take into account the international dimension of such a subject. The numerous approaches of the conference could be articulated around four major axis:

- Echos from the past :

Contributions may explore the reasons behind the return of Dionysus in the XIXth century, such as the renewed interest in philological and archaeological studies, the visual inspiration coming from the mythic cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum, and the revival of anacreontic and idyllic subjects in history painting. Historical reconstructions of ancient dionysian mysteries and rituals could be explored, as seen for example in the spectacular paintings of Lawrence Alma-Tadema. At the same time, papers may also insist upon the idea of a subverted and perverted mythology, such as in

Arnold Böcklin's paintings or in Félicien Rops' erotic engravings.

-Bacchus and Venus :

Since ancient times, Bacchus and his followers were used by artists as a mean to translate passion, sensual abandon or debauchery in their creations. During XIXth century thought, the erotic implications of the Antic myth intertwines with the modern aesthetic of ecstasy, excess and debauchery. It may be interesting to take a deeper look into the social discourses implied by the revival of nymphs, fauns, maenads or satyrs in visual arts, literature and music, since it often reflects a cultural construction over morality, sexuality and gender dynamics.

- Music, Dance, Carnival: modern celebrations and reversal of values

The XIXth century creates its own "modern bacchanalia": from Wagner to Saint-Saëns, from Offenbach to the café-concerts, music, opera's ballets, carnivals, can-can and popular dances can be considered new forms of Dionysian celebrations affecting society. Contributions may focus on the moral and political aspects of those modern rituals, of those "contagious dances" that echo the antic myth. The scandal provoked by Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux's *La Danse* is an interesting example : the public was shocked by the realism of the nude maenads, the dance was perceived as an embodiment of the debauchery of current times, and Zola saw it as an allegory of the dissolute mores of the Empire and ruling classes.

-Bacchanalia : a metaphor for artistic creation

It is important to insist upon the poetic power of the bacchanalia : a means to express turmoil and the need to break free from the rules of reason, but also a metaphor for artistic creation, for the unruly power of inspiration and the generating force of the artist himself. The "Dionysian" image of the artist, as well as his frequent identification with the figure of the satyr or the faun may then be explored.

Please send an abstract of 300 words and a short biographical note to creationivre@gmail.com before May 30, 2015. We will notify panelists by June 30, 2015. Travel and accommodation costs will be borne by the organizing committee thanks to the generosity of the Fondation pour la culture et la civilisation du Vin.

Organizing committee:

Adriana Sotropa, Associate Professor of Contemporary Art, Université Bordeaux Montaigne and Sara Vitacca, PhD student, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne.

Scientific committee:

Sophie Barthémy, Director of the musée des Beaux-Arts de Bordeaux; Sandra Buratti-Hasan, Curator at the musée des Beaux-Arts de Bordeaux; Philippe Morel, Professor of Modern Art, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne; Adriana Sotropa, Associate Professor of Contemporary Art, Université Bordeaux Maigne; Sara Vitacca, PhD student, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne ; Pierre Wat, Professor of Contemporary Art, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne.

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