

Picturing Paradise in 19th Century Art (Washington DC, 2 Feb 16)

Washington D.C., Feb 02, 2016

Deadline: Sep 1, 2015

James Romaine, Nyack College

Call for proposals

Picturing Paradise in 19th Century British and American Art: Past, Lost, Regained

A Symposium organized by James Romaine and Rachel Smith
for the Association of Scholars of Christianity in the History of Art (ASCHA)

Paradise is a persistent and varied theme in 19th century American and British art. It is often visualized through local, exotic, and even imagined landscapes, gardens, and plants. Drawing from both the first and last chapters of the Bible (Genesis and Revelation, respectively), as well as literary sources such as Dante and Milton, artists interpreted "paradise" in different contexts. Some described the paradise of the past (the Garden of Eden), the present (the paradise "lost" after the Fall), or the paradise to be "regained" in the future (as the destination of the blessed soul). During a period of increasing industrialization and urbanization in the 19th century, foliated and landscape imagery found particular resonance as a means of drawing on a past and/or projecting a future paradise to address present concerns as various societies, groups, and individuals pursued explorations of spiritual and social perfection.

While the aspiration for paradise is common among a host of world religions, it is particularly prevalent in Christianity and in images influenced by that faith and philosophy produced by individual artists. Although the sublime and pastoral are often contrasted, both of these orientations are potential paths to paradise. Bridging such diverse movements as the Hudson River School and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, this use of garden imagery in the 19th century expresses a hope for personal and collective harmony.

The keynote address for "Picturing Paradise" will be delivered by Roger Crum, Professor of art history at the University of Dayton. A specialist in the art of Renaissance Florence with a corollary interest in the diverse influence of Italy on the subsequent history of art,

Crum's address is entitled "Paradise Lost, Eden Remade, and Italy Brought Home as Substance, Sign, and Souvenir." His remarks will focus on the idea and ideal of Italy—while not shying from the tarnished realities of a "Paradise lost"—in the complex intersection of Italy and the Anglo-American experience of intellectuals and artists, art lovers and art lubbers from the Grand Tour of the 18th century to the grand tour bus of the modern moment.

For the symposium itself 20-minute papers are sought that address this topic in the visual and material culture of either the United States or Great Britain focused on the 19th century. Papers may address how an artist or group imagined and/or interpreted paradise through plant, garden, and/or landscape imagery and how this representation related to the artist's personal, social, and/or spiritual contexts. We are also interested in topics that approach this subject from a more thematic or conceptual framework.

Proposals of no more than 300 words should be submitted, with a cover letter and 2 page C.V. by September 1, 2015 to Dr. Rachel Hostetter Smith rsmith@tayloru.edu and Dr. James Romaine drjamesromaine@gmail.com

The symposium is co-sponsored by the Henry Luce III Center for the Arts and Religion at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. where it will be held on February 2, 2016, one day prior to the CAA's annual conference.

Reference:

CFP: Picturing Paradise in 19th Century Art (Washington DC, 2 Feb 16). In: ArtHist.net, Mar 12, 2015 (accessed Dec 28, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/9710>>.