

International Conference on Art History & Visual and Material Culture

2 – 3 November 2023 at the University of Copenhagen and at Kronborg Castle in Elsinore, Denmark.

Celebrations at Court Ephemeral Objects, Materials, and Machineries in the Early Modern Period

Confirmed Keynotes

Professor Pamela Smith, Columbia University.

Professor Mara Wade, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

Professor Simon Werrett, University College London.

Enhancing the cultural prestige and power of the princely dynasties, early modern European courts invested vast amounts of resources and effort into various art forms at their festivities, including ephemeral objects.

With this international conference we wish to explore the appearances and functions of ephemeral objects, materials, and machineries used at court festivities, and their relations to spectacles and performances in general. The focus will be on the 16th and 17th centuries, potentially drawing lines to the periods before and after.

We seek contributions that discuss how various technologies were utilized in staging festivities at court, and we encourage presentations that reflect on the notions of art and nature as well as preconditions related to import, production, and handling of the materials used in the celebrations.

We hope to attract interdisciplinary attention to a field crossing over different aspects of the visual, material, and technical culture of the time and welcome both empirically and more theoretically founded analyses.

Contributions in the form of papers (15-20 min.) or posters (accompanied with short orals, 3 min.) might shed light on some of the following questions (but are not limited to these):

Ephemeral objects, materials, and technology

- What types of technology and machinery were used and how were they integrated in celebrations?
- What were the concepts of materials and resources underlying the productions?
- How did artists' mobility, cultural exchange, and trade in materials influence the transferring of knowledge related to the making of spectacles?

Iconography and affect

- How were the multisensory spectacles and fireworks received/perceived by the audiences?
- How was allegory and symbolic content integrated in the festivals and for what purposes?

Fireworks

- How were firework spectacles designed and staged?
- What were the relations between the designing and production of fireworks and that of artillery/equipment for military purposes?

Architectural framings

- What role did royal sites (castles, town squares, parks etc.) as well as the overall urban fabric play as frameworks for the spectacles?

Theory and methodology

- Which concepts of art and nature were embedded in the spectacles and the equipment, machineries, and other objects integrated into them?
- How did books and prints influence presentations and circulations of theory and practice of materials and techniques related to the spectacles?
- How do we analyze fleeting performances, experiences, and ephemeral objects of the past, and what are the potentials of reenactments today?

Please submit proposals with:

- Your full name, current affiliation, and email address.
- Paper title (15-word maximum).
- Paper abstract (200-word maximum).
- CV (1-page maximum).
- Date of PhD completion (past or expected) or other relevant degree.

Submissions will be accepted until March 20th 2023. Please send submission materials to Maria Fabricius Hansen (mfhansen@hum.ku.dk).

The conference is organized by Professor in Art History Maria Fabricius Hansen (University of Copenhagen, Denmark), Painting Conservator Anne Haack Christensen (SMK, National Gallery of Art, Denmark, and PhD fellow Casper Thorhauge Mønsted (University of Copenhagen, Denmark).

Key words: fireworks, artillery, spectacles, technology, manuscripts, royal sites, allegory, theatre, festivals, tacit knowledge, reenactments.

The conference is generously supported by the Novo Nordisk Foundation.

Further information about the conference and how to register will be posted later this spring here:
<https://artsandculturalstudies.ku.dk/research/rudolf-von-deventers-fireworks-and-artillery/>