

Annual meeting de la Renaissance Society of America
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5 sessions Culture of spectacle

SESSION CULTURE OF SPECTACLE I

Chair : Koen Vermeir

► Ralph Dekoninck

Framing the feast. The meanings of festive ornaments in the Jesuit spectacle culture.

If studies on the Baroque festival have been mainly oriented towards a deciphering of these ephemeral events through their arsenal of symbolical figures, less attention has been paid to the decorum framing their political and religious visual discourse. In what way do those spectacles communicate their message, not only symbolically but also emotionally, two dimensions which appear to be the two faces of the same coin, aiming to perform meaning and to act on the spectator ? Considering the ceremonial as a whole, and not as a message independent of its decorative frame, appears to be a very promising avenue of further research on the Baroque spectacle. This paper will approach this issue through the study of some examples of Jesuit spectacles in the Low Countries.

► Agnès Guiderdoni

Traveling sanctity : celebrating Francis de Sales's canonisation

The French bishop Francis de Sales (1567-1622) was beatified in 1661 and canonised in 1666. These events were of major importance for the Visitation order which he had founded with Jane de Chantal, and which celebrated both events with pomp and splendour across the whole country. These festivities were designed by the Visitandines, their priests but also by renowned "specialists" of the spectacle, such as Claude-François Menestrier for the celebration in Grenoble. From the texts of descriptions and relations that have been kept about these festivities, I will seek to identify the various patterns of representation, and how they are structured by and connected to the writings of Francis de Sales, in a performative rhetoric aimed at establishing the identity and the legitimacy of the new saint.

► Annick Delfosse

From universal to local : celebrating new saints in the Southern Netherlands

In March 1622, Gregory XV canonized, amongst other saints, Ignatius Loyola and Francis Xavier. Spectacular ceremonies were held in Rome, soon echoed throughout the Catholic World and notably in cities across the Southern Low Countries where the Society settled. There, the Jesuits celebrated their first saints with emphasis and inventiveness. These events

were a fundamental step in the Baroque process of spectacularizing religious ceremonies in the Low Countries. Our goal is to understand how the Jesuits managed, on that occasion, to juggle between "universal" and "local". Invited to celebrate universal saints, they held the ceremonies in a specific context that they had to take into account since armed conflicts with North Calvinists – the enemy brothers – had just resumed. It will identify, by comparison with ceremonies around the world for the same occasion, the specificities relating to the Low Countries in order to begin to determine the frame of a Flemish spectacular culture.

SESSION CULTURE OF SPECTACLE II

Chair : Ralph Dekoninck. Respondent : Minou Schraven

► Maarten Delbeke

Spectacular structures. Exposition thrones of miraculous statues in the Spanish Netherlands

The histories of miraculous statues published in the Spanish Netherlands in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries list exposition thrones – often portable structures of display – as the first and most prized gifts to miraculous statues. Still, these objects have garnered little art historical attention. This contribution will seek to draw up a typology of these exposition thrones and examine their function and meaning within the worship of miraculous images. The thrones will be compared to the statues themselves, the dresses they wear and the altars that house them. Special attention will be paid to the material of the thrones, as it is often related to the origin of the image itself ; many were cut from the trees where the images were found. Finally, it will be examined how the peculiar double ‘spectacular’ function of the throne, as a portable shrine and permanent marker of the statue’s sacrality, affected its design.

► Annelise Lemmens

Staging the book : Frontispieces in Antwerp between 1585 and 1650

Because it informs, gets the attention of, seduces or still persuades the mind by a setting of figurative elements devoted to the celebration and sacralization of the book, the frontispiece, an illustrated introductory page, cannot be studied as an autonomous entity. Synthesizing deictic and introductive functions in particular, its efficiency as a performative device is ensured by combining all the elements of a visual culture of triumph, of events and of theatre. In this paper, I would like to show how the typology of the frontispiece is involved in the development of a culture turned towards the spectacle. By considering some relevant examples, it can be possible to bring to light the main models shared by the two spheres (the worlds of the book and staging) and to explore the rhetorical mechanisms (re)used by the frontispiece.

- ▶ Caroline Heering

The emblems of the Imago Primi Saeculi and the affixiones : a study of ornamental frames

Published in 1640 to celebrate the centenary of the Jesuit Order, the *Imago Primi Saeculi* is a lavish volume relating the history of the Company containing also a number of emblems adorned with wealthy ornamental frames. During the festivities, some of these emblems have been displayed in the Jesuit church of Antwerp, along with a decoration for which we can presume a participation of the college's students. By linking together this practice to the ones of affixiones (emblematic exhibitions executed by Jesuit college's students), this paper aims to study emblem's frames within the printed book, the real festivities and the commemorative manuscripts preserved for a few colleges. Our purpose is to understand aesthetic stakes of this visual rhetoric displayed by emblem's frames, as well as to consider the ways in which ornament fit in different media and allow to serve different political and religious issues in various (secular and sacred) contexts.

SESSION CULTURE OF SPECTACLE III

Chair : Agnès Guiderdoni

- ▶ Grégory Ems

1651's celebrations commemorating the successful crossbow shot of Leopold William and their ideological significance

In 1651, the governor of the Spanish Netherlands, Leopold William of Habsburg, was invited by a crossbow guild to take part in a shooting competition, where he successfully shot the popinjay. This event has been commemorated by different celebrations, to which the students of the Brussels Jesuit College contributed actively. During the Ommegang, they re-enacted the shot in a symbolical way. Then in July, month of the "college open day", the students organised a display of emblems, conceived around the successful shot of Leopold William. We have preserved a manuscript of this emblematical exhibition giving a lot of information about the shot, the Ommegang's performance and the significance assigned to the governor's success. In our paper, we would like to reconstruct these festivities and disclose their ideological meaning to understand their importance in the political eulogy devoted to Leopold William.

- ▶ Aline Smeesters

Celebrations of the Jesuit College of Paris for the birth of Louis XIV (1638)

I will first propose a reconstruction of the practical aspects of the multimedia festival (combining theatre, music, dance, firework...) that was organized by the "Collège de Clermont" on the 7th of September 1638, only two days after the birth of Louis XIV. To this aim, several sources are available, including Jesuit and non-Jesuit reports of the event. I will

then explore the potentialities of meaning linked to the allegorical figures that were staged on that occasion by confronting them to the contemporary genethliac production (poems and speeches, mainly in Latin, celebrating the birth of the French Dauphin – some of them stemming from the same Jesuit Parisian College).

► Nathalie Hancisse

The Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots : Translation and the Culture of the Spectacle

From history to fiction, Mary Stuart has become an emblematic figure around whom religious and political tensions of the end of the 16th century crystallised. In an age when an extensive circulation of new and radical ideas was made possible by print, the translation of key political tracts dealing with the Queen of Scots played a pivotal role in allowing texts to reach beyond territorial and linguistic borders. The publication of stories about her execution suddenly confronted early-modern Europeans with shocking depictions of a major spectacle of the time, namely the beheading of an anointed queen. Translations then contributed to the spread of adversary representations of this spectacular death, which fuelled massive propaganda campaigns. My paper will explore, by means of a close study of some of these texts, the ways in which translation influenced controversial interpretations of this event and their impact on the political context of the time.

SESSION CULTURE OF SPECTACLE IV

Chair : Annick Delfosse

► Brigitte Van Wymeersch

Between feast and daily life : the perception of sacred songs in writings on music

From the end of the XVIth century onwards, a revival of singing and music can be seen in all religious orders, in the everyday liturgy as well as in more significant celebrations. But how was this revival perceived by contemporaries ? Is it possible to find in the treaties or the writings of intellectuals of the first modernity indications about the development of a very specific kind of music in the religious orders ? These questions will be examined in this paper, with regard to the Jesuits as well as to other orders. We will focus more precisely on the French writings of the first decade of the 17th, looking into the accounts of Maillart, Mersenne and other authors of that period, who have written on musical practice in the religious orders.

► Céline Drèze

Solemnitates ad quas invitantur lusores Instrumentorum. *Promoters of musicianship among Jesuits*

Recognised from an early date as being “inclined to music”, the Jesuits of the Gallo-and Flandro-Belgic provinces lived up to their reputation. From the end of the 16th century to the suppression of the Society, they worked steadily towards the development and the blossoming of a strong culture of musicianship attested to in the Custom Books compiled in the first half of the 17th century. This paper seeks to define the profile of those men – both members of the Society and musicians from outside the order – who were the promoters, managers and performers both of everyday musical life and of special ceremonies. It will also attempt to define the tasks which fell to those Jesuits placed in charge of music (the *præfecti musicæ*) and will analyse the changing relationship between “Belgian” Jesuits and local artists (composers, musicians and instrument makers) whose talents were recognised and valued by the Fathers.

► Laurence Wuidar

Canticum cum cithara : Theological Justifications of Music in Early Modern Period

To sing and to play music have, since the beginning of Christianity, been both a problematic practice (dealing with senses and emotions) and a way to reach the divine order and to elevate the mind and the soul to contemplation, in daily liturgy as well as in special feasts and celebrations. If we notice a revival of singing and music in religious orders at the end of the XVIth century, it may be interesting to look at the theoretical basis of this phenomenon. The prince of Renaissance musical theory, Zarlino, cites the Father and the Doctor of the Church, just to take but one typical and influential example. I would like to show how early modern Music’s theoreticians use the biblical authorities mediated by the medieval theological tradition to affirm, confirm and increase the role of music in early modern religious practices.

SESSION CULTURE OF SPECTACLE V

Chair : Maarten Delbeke

► Koen Vermeir

Kinds of Wonder : the epistemology of baroque religious festivals

In 1625 at the Jesuit college in Heiligenstadt, a religious festival was conducted in honour of Johann Schweikhard, the visiting Elector-Archbishop of Mainz. Much care was taken of the elaboration, and a play full of allegories, moving scenery and fireworks was arranged. The spectacle was so extraordinary that it was rumoured about that black magic was involved. The distinguished visitors were only reassured after the hidden machinery behind the tricks was shown to them. These mechanical inventions had been constructed by the young Athanasius Kircher, and his skills won him the Archbishop’s patronage, which would be the springboard to Kircher’s brilliant career. This paper will discuss techniques of creating technical wonders

at baroque festivals, their play of veiling and unveiling, as well as their epistemological importance. In particular, I will compare the sense of wonder evoked at these spectacles with other kinds of wonder created in a secular context.

► Anne-Françoise Morel

Spectacle of Solitude : The Foundation of the 'Désert of the Discalced Carmelites of Marlagne'

In 1619 Thomas de Jésus established a convent of the discalced Carmelites in the Southern Netherlands. The archdukes Albrecht and Isabella supplied grounds, funding and commissioned their portraits by Vaenius for the chapel's altarpiece. The first stone of the convent was laid by the royal benefactors. This ceremony was surrounded by necessary pomp. The whole setting had to mark the Catholic propaganda and Reformation conducted by the Archdukes through the creation of places of worship. This festive exuberance seems contradictory with the ideals of a remote, frugal and spiritual life aimed at by the discalced Carmelites which are described in two early 17th-century monastic texts praising Marlagne. Nature is put forward as a stage for devotion and personal reformation. This paper confronts how magnificence and austerity come together in Baroque spirituality and are staged as a result of crossing cultural ideals : the court, the orders, reformation and religious propaganda.

► Nancy J. Kay Sacra

Conversazione. Eavesdropping on the saints on the 100-year jubilee of Antwerp's return to Catholicism

In 1685, the city of Antwerp celebrated with all the spectacle of a typical baroque festival the centennial jubilee of the restoration of the Catholic faith. This paper focuses on three important features that distinguish the artistic program of this particular event. First, the festival decorations incorporated an unprecedented number of existing permanent sculptures into a series of temporary triumphal arches. Second, hundreds of figures were given an actual voice through accompanying Latin chronograms written in first-person. Saints and ancient rulers alike thus rejoiced that the triumph of the Catholic faith included the restoration of sacred images. Finally, these words worked together with formal aspects of the depicted figures to create a virtual sacred conversation that echoed not only throughout the streets and squares of Antwerp, but also into eternity. In many respects this conversation continued without interruption until 1793, when the city suffered its second major wave of iconoclasm.