

Icons of Sound: Voice, Architecture, and Imagination

Symposium

Saturday, November 5, 2016, 9-5pm

Oshman Auditorium, McMurtry Art Building, Stanford University

9:00-9:15 Opening

I. Session

Chair: Fiona Griffiths, Stanford University

9:15-9:45

Eric Palazzo, University of Poitiers, Centre d'études supérieures de civilisation médiévale - CESCUM, and Institut universitaire de France

The orchestration of liturgy through the Senses in Western Medieval Art

The lecture will explore several aspects of the sensory activation of the western medieval liturgy based on the activation of works of art, especially liturgical objects. After a brief general overview of the theme and its new approaches, I will describe and analyze some case studies taken in a material like illustrated books and others liturgical objects. I will also focus on some aspects of the sensory "mise en scène" of the liturgy by exploring some architectural monuments and others that are only described. To conclude, I will briefly explore the question of the contemporary "re-activation" of the medieval liturgy through performances and digital instruments.

9:45-10:15

Gudrun Bühl, Curator and Director of the Byzantine Art Collection at Dumbarton Oaks Research Institute, Washington, D.C.

Exhibiting Byzantium: Museum Makers' Intentions and Museum Objects' Realities

The principle museum dilemma is well known: while almost always the displayed objects in a gallery space that have been carefully selected and creatively displayed by 'museum makers' were not meant to be seen together, the majority of displayed things were manufactured with the intention to be touched, handled, carried - or to state it simply: used. This experience, though, is reserved to researchers, curators and scholars; a regular museum visitor can only rarely obtain it.

The point in question is not how we may convey engagement with the original "function" of objects on an intellectual level with the current museum-goer. At the same time, it's not about

critiquing the traditional approaches - explaining via label text what usage these objects would have fulfilled, what need they may have met, what spiritual/magic/political messages the representations on the objects' surfaces may have carried. It is about exploring and recognizing the many layers of the 'felt value' - the multi-sensory experience that is evoked through the physical appearance of the objects. This engagement with objects was integral to the medieval 'viewer' and 'handler' of the works on display. But how to display, mediate, and provoke these sensorial encounters with 'Byzantine culture' in a museum setting? The paper will discuss theoretical and practical approaches of display concepts with a focus on selected themes--light and lighting in Byzantium; fabric and interior design in Byzantium.

10:15-10:45

Discussion

10:45-11:00

Coffee Break

II. Session

Chair: Elaine Treharne, Stanford University

10:45-11:00

Ivan Foletti, University of Lausanne and University of Brno

A Singing Door: Images, Space and Sound in the Santa Sabina Narthex

In recent years the narthex of the fifth-century basilica of Santa Sabina in Rome was designated as a liminal zone; a space for the preparation of neophytes for baptism. The images carved on the doors, one of the key monuments of the space, and written sources have confirmed this interpretation. Current restorations have however permitted a new and fascinating discovery that the main wooden doors were conceived to let the sound through. The neophytes, standing in front of the closed gates and their carved images, had the opportunity to encounter – with their eyes and ears – the promised mystery.

11:30-12:00

Christina Maranci, Tufts University

Sights and Sounds of the Armenian Night Office As Performed at Ani: A Collation of the Archaeological, Historical, and Liturgical Evidence

This talk brings together a series of disparate pieces of evidence. First, there are the ruins of the medieval Armenian church of Gagkashen, at Ani, dated to c. 1001-1005. It was built by the

Bagratid king Gagik I (r. 989-1017/1020), and consisted of a tetraconch of four open exedrae enveloped by a round perimeter wall. Second, there is the report in the *Universal History* of Step'anos Tarōnets'i that Gagik attended and sang regularly in the Armenian Night Office. Third, there is the excavation, at the church, of a magnificent chandelier of bronze and copper, hung from a chain at least nineteen meters long, and made to hold around 116 lamps and glass containers of white, yellow, and turquoise. Fourth, there is the report, again by Step'anos, that the church was constructed by the famous architect Trdat, who repaired the dome of the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople after its collapse in an earthquake of 989. Drawing together the architectural, archaeological, historical, and liturgical information, what can we learn about the sights and sounds of the night office, as sung in Gagik's royal chapel at Ani?

12:00-12:30

Discussion

12:30-1:30

Lunch

III. Session

Chair: Marisa Galvez, Stanford University

1:30-2:00

Francisco Prado-Vilar, Director of Cultural and Artistic Projects at Real Colegio Complutense at Harvard University

Aula siderea: Eschatology and the Transfiguration of Time and Space in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela

The three-story narthex crowning the Romanesque fabric of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, known as the Portal of Glory (ca. 1188), constitutes a dazzling artistic environment that combines architecture, sculpture and painting to create a stirring vision of the events narrated in the Book of Revelation. By effectively translating the “enargeia” of eschatological textual imagery into an enveloping physical experience, this edifice served to transport pilgrims reaching the end of the road to the splendor of the phenomena marking the end of time, which culminated in the Second Coming of Christ and the establishment of the Heavenly Jerusalem. By exploring the ways in which this scenography became activated by the sounds and movements of liturgical ceremonies, and by its phenomenological and symbolic connection with the stone choir that once stood in the central nave of the cathedral, this paper offers new insights into its meanings and effects, additionally considering its political dimension as a stage for coronations and other events of exaltation of the monarchy.

2:00-2:30

Alexander Nemerov, Stanford University

Voice from beyond the Grave: Tintoretto and the Art Historians

The fantasy of imagining the sound of the past can take many forms. One is to conjure what the past—back then—sounded like. Another and stranger fantasy is to imagine that the past is talking to you. Odd thought it is, perhaps this fantasy is even part of the common working practice of cultural historians. It is the practice of trying to listen attentively for what the past is “saying” to you, the hints it gives (“warmer,” “colder”) about what is the right answer to the phenomenon one is studying. This sound, moreover, is not one-way but takes the form of an imagined “conversation” between the historian and the past, in which the two sides go back and forth, see-saw fashion, in an ever-greater approximation of the way it was, or perhaps as a way of “agreeing to disagree.”

It is even possible that certain artists—working in a nascent era of art history—could imagine this posthumous back-and-forth, this give and take between artist and art historian, in their work. This paper will explore one such conversation, in the form of Tintoretto’s great painting *The Finding of the Body of St. Mark*, at the Brera in Milan.

2:30-3:00

Discussion

3:00-3:15

Coffee Break

IV. Session

Chair: Alexander Lingas, City College, London and Artistic Director of Cappella Romana

3:15-3:45

Deborah Howard, University of Cambridge

Sound, Space and Sensory Perception: The Use of Digital Technology in Research into the Liturgy of San Marco, Venice

Infused with Byzantine characteristics in its architecture, decoration and liturgy, the church of San Marco served as the focus of Venetian devotional life and state ritual for almost a millennium. As exemplified by the ceremonial of the Easter Mass, the whole space became a multi-sensory theatre for religious drama, in which the secular and religious were intertwined. This paper explains how a recent Cambridge-based research project examined the acoustics of the church in order to show how the musical innovations of the sixteenth century depended on the optimal placing of singers and listeners within the space. How can digital technology be

used to interpret performance practice of the past? Devotional experience cannot be quantified, but scientific examination of the boundary conditions can help us to understand its impact.

3:45-4:15

Bissera Pentcheva, Stanford University

Transcendent Visions: Voice and Icon in Hagia Sophia

Hagia Sophia enveloped the faithful in its immense interior covered in reflective marble and glittering gold mosaics. The moving light of sunrays and flickering oil-lamps imbued these rich surfaces with liveliness. Synergistically human breath expelled in chant activated the reverberant response of the building, immersing the faithful in a paradoxical non-intimate but resonant surround sound. The aural dominated; human voice engendering icons of sound remained a powerful agency working on the Byzantine imaginary. The Great Church had no figural representations until 867 when the mosaic of the Virgin and Child was set in the apse. Yet, the scale of the building dwarfed the figural, reducing its emotional impact. In contrast to the monumental décor, small portable icons appearing on luxury materials channeled intimate encounters of the liturgical visions. Some of these images responded to the new body of poetry created in the ninth and tenth centuries, which unlike the standard psalmody chanted in the cathedral liturgy, could engage the faithful directly in the emotional intensity of the performed events. Among these hymn-writers was emperor Leo VI (886-912), who composed text and music and directed the elite choir of Hagia Sophia to chant his works.

How does the singing voice engender visions of the divine; how does an image-less interior foster this process through the energy of light and reverberation; and how do portable icons inflect these visionary experiences? These are the questions the paper addresses by focusing on Hagia Sophia's interior, emperor Leo's hymn for the Holy Passion, and an ivory of the Crucifixion.

4:15-4:45

Discussion

4:45-5:00

Closing Remarks

5:00-6:00

Reception atrium of McMurtry

Lora Webb and Daniel Smith, Ph.D. students in Art History art installation