

CALL FOR PAPERS

Postcolonial re-readings of the artistic and cultural exchanges between Europe and Northern Africa (Algeria, France, Italy, Morocco and Tunisia) – 18th-21st centuries

International colloquium organized by the Académie de France à Rome-Villa Médicis, the F.G. Pariset Centre at the University of Bordeaux-Montaigne, the École Française de Rome, the École du Louvre, Paris, the Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art (Globalization group), Paris, the Institut de Recherche sur le Maghreb Contemporain (IRMC), Tunis, the Laboratoire d'Archéologie et d'Architecture Maghrébines de l'Université de la Manouba-Tunis and the Louvre Museum (Department of Greek, Etruscan, and Roman Antiquities; Department of Islamic Art), Paris.

Three sessions are planned: Paris, 12-13/12/14, Rome, 9-10/04/15 and Tunis, 4-6/06/15

Organizing committee:

Éric de Chassey, director of the Académie de France à Rome-Villa Médicis, professor of art history, École Normale Supérieure, Lyons

Karima Dirèche, director of the IRMC, Tunis, researcher at the CNRS

Philippe Durey, director of the École du Louvre, conservateur général du Patrimoine

Jean-Luc Martinez, director of the Louvre Museum, conservateur général du Patrimoine

Catherine Virlouvet, director of the École française de Rome, professor of ancient history, University of Aix-Marseille

Stéphane Bourdin, director of studies, ancient civilizations, École française de Rome, senior lecturer in ancient history, University of Picardy

François Dumasy, director of studies, modern and contemporary civilizations, École française de Rome, senior lecturer, IEP, Aix-Marseille

Dominique Jarrassé, professor of modern art history, University of Bordeaux-Montaigne and member of the research group at the École du Louvre

Annick Lemoine, project leader at the Académie de France à Rome-Villa Médicis, senior lecturer in art history at the University of Rennes 2

Ahmed Saadaoui, professor of architectural history, University of Manouba

Sophie Saint-Amans, PhD in ancient history, head of scientific databases in the Department of Greek, Etruscan, and Roman Antiquities, Louvre Museum

Scientific committee (current state)

Badia Belabed-Sahraoui, architect, professor at the University of Constantine

Stéphane Bourdin, director of studies, ancient civilizations, École française de Rome, senior lecturer in ancient history, University of Picardy

Éric de Chassey, director of the Académie de France à Rome-Villa Médicis, professor of art history, École Normale Supérieure, Lyons

François Dumasy, director of studies, modern and contemporary civilizations, École française de Rome, senior lecturer, IEP, Aix-Marseille

Benoît de L'Estoile, director of research at the CNRS, Iris

Hannah Feldman, associate professor in art history, Northwestern University

Ezio Godoli, professor of architectural history, University of Florence

Mohamed Sghir Janjar, directeur adjoint de la Fondation du Roi Abdul Aziz Al-Saoud pour les Études Islamiques et les Sciences Humaines, Casablanca
Dominique Jarrassé, professor of contemporary art history, University of Bordeaux-Montaigne and member of the research group at the École du Louvre
Yannick Lintz, director of the Islamic Arts department, Louvre Museum
Zahia Rahmani, scientific advisor, INHA, Globalization group
Ahmed Saadaoui, professor of architectural history, University of Manouba-Tunis
Daniel Sherman, professor, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

PRESENTATION

This colloquium, which will bring together specialists from the northern and the southern shores of the Mediterranean, and elsewhere, wants to examine the construction of cultural and artistic relationships between France, Italy and Northern Africa at crucial stages in their history, namely before, during and after colonization. The point of view adopted will be that of today, in terms of the legacy of these attitudes, exchanges and representations. These relationships were certainly at work in art, in architecture, in archaeology and in cultural institutions such as museums, but they should not be seen in connection only with the history of art and of archaeology. They should be viewed in a perspective which brings into play the social sciences in a larger sense: sociology, anthropology, postcolonial studies...

These questions should be revisited in the light of postcolonial thought and also of a systematic deconstruction of views and knowledge, a process which is well underway today. The first aim is therefore to consider current relations and the management of a shared legacy. These exchanges have often been viewed as functioning in only one direction, seen in terms of domination or the transfer of models from a metropolis toward peripheral regions; they were however richer and more complex than this model suggests. It will not be a question of sugaring the pill of the colonial relationship, but of replacing it within a longer timescale and showing how European culture was changed thanks to these close contacts and how the experience gained from the “fieldwork” in North Africa contributed to the development of the human and social sciences. It will also be important to study the effects on culture of the Maghreb countries of the French and Italian occupations: population movements, intertwining and evolution of communities with plural identities and histories which did after all share some common features. This area of the world, on both shores of the Mediterranean, therefore offers us today a shared history which should be rewritten.

The various partners and the centres chosen for the colloquium – Paris, Rome and Tunis – each have their own specific features, and this should guarantee a plurality of approaches. The use of the word « postcolonial » in the colloquium title is an indication of the wish to confront these objects of study with the hypotheses offered by this area of research and reflection which in turn presents some fruitful critical principles: the need to contextualize all reflection in the current debates, the chance to surmount the obstacles of the ethnocentric approach and of orientalism, the introduction of a true dialogue between these cultures which have been marked in one way or another by the colonial experience. Born out of a refusal to accept the essentialism which is enshrined in the colonial relationship and combined with the need to rethink the linear accounts of the modernization of “the Others”, the project aims not so much at accumulating new knowledge and facts as at the decentring of our ideas.

The political and aesthetic vitality of these areas, and the shift in geopolitical balances, offer ideal conditions for new research dynamics.

SECTION THEMES

The colloquium *Post-colonial re-readings of the artistic and cultural exchanges between Europe and Northern Africa (Algeria, France, Italy, Morocco and Tunisia) – 18th-21st centuries* is articulated around three themes, three sessions and three locations, situated along a geographical axis which unites the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean.

The first section of the colloquium will be devoted to the legacy of colonial museums and the colonial heritage of museums. As a result, we shall not analyse, on one shore of the Mediterranean, the Museo coloniale in Rome, whose most recent manifestation (IsIAO) has just been closed down without any explanation, or the Quai Branly Museum, which has to a great extent been expected to bear alone (largely because of the history of the collections which it houses) the responsibility for an ill-digested past and, on the other shore, museums created during the colonial period, as though there were no link between them. It is important to combine the two fields of study and more especially to extend the range to include all types of museum (from the Louvre to the controversial Museum of the history of France and of Algeria and also the MuCEM whose mission as a bridge between the two shores has been clearly stated). It would also be important to include the impact on these museums of colonial culture and of acquisitions made during the colonial period – in terms of their conception and their collections – and likewise the current policy of these museums with regard to the former colonies in the Maghreb... For the exchanges are, even today, still intense. Of course there are some overlaps between this section focussing on the history of museums and museology and the section on archaeological and patrimonial colonization; the processes of dispossession and appropriation function here on the same footing and need to be studied together in order to be comprehensible. Taking a long-term view, it should also be possible to appreciate the role of the first collectors, especially in *pre-colonial* Maghreb (which was nonetheless already subject to some forms of western imperialism): figures such as the Bey, the son of the Prime Minister Kaznadar or the English Consul Reade, in Tunisia, could here be better understood. We should like to re-examine the place of the Maghreb regions in specialized national museums, such as the Quai Branly and the Islamic Art section in the Louvre, in the French and Italian archaeological and ethnographical collections, but also in the museums in the Maghreb which have fine arts, archaeological and ethnographical collections... Some museums, particularly in Morocco, have been set up to offer a home to or offer models in view of a “regeneration” of native arts. The methods of collection and classification of the musealized objects, the performative use of the categories exploited in European art history (Roman or Early Christian archaeology, “Muslim” archaeology which is now referred to as “Islamic”, “popular” arts and traditions, civilizations...) and of a theory of anthropology characterized by the evolutionary paradigm have all contributed to creating implicit hierarchies... It should be remembered that the intellectual disciplines in these fields – and the institutionalization of these disciplines – occurred within the context of the rise and then the apogee of colonialism; these conditions weighed heavily on not only the development of a hierarchy between European and Maghreb cultures but also on the very construction of the collections. The current context, in a *post-colonial* epoch, should incite us to rethink the characterization of these objects and the functioning of inherited or remodelled museums...

The second section is devoted to visual arts from a historical and a contemporary point of view, considering artistic production in a colonial context and contemporary art in connection with the countries under consideration here. The aim is to revisit the notions of heritage and of essentialism inherent in the artistic productions which we call postcolonial. For reasons of simplification, of communication or of economics, it turns out that the works

of both yesterday and today are constantly perceived in terms of their relationship to the identities and the culture of the communities from which their creators originated. It is however understood that colonial identity cannot be a fixed measurement and that it is constantly being redrawn. Artists have shown their experience of this fact in a number of highly diverse artistic creations. The anthropological turn which marks art today encourages us to observe that the functioning and the legacy of these identity processes have played and still play a central role in the creation process and its reception. Be it a question of the attempt to create “schools”, in the sense not only of an educational structure, but mainly of artistic groups implanted in a region (the Alger school, the Tunis school, the Italian artists in Tunisia...) or on the other hand a constant de-territorialization, the result of exiles and migrations which have affected numerous individuals caught in the grip of history and its vicissitudes. A notable example of this is the way in which identities have been appropriated and reduced to common denominators such as “Arab”, “Jewish”, “pieds-noirs”, “Roumi”, “white” ... - in all of these cases, the artists find themselves unable to escape an epithet which refers to their “origin” even if de-territorialization proves to be an important founding experience implying a new type of existence which nourishes to a great extent their artistic life. With the advent of contemporary art, the last international artistic scene has repeated this pattern. It has brought artists scattered by the diaspora or who experienced migration back to a “Maghreb” regionalism whose productions bear the cultural clues. The aesthetic criteria of artistic evaluation do not seem to affect these works, often also described using the label “postcolonial”. This double perspective will offer the chance to create continuity with earlier processes, such as orientalism which developed before colonization and easily metamorphosed into “colonial art”, a notion which was particularly developed in Italy during the period between the two World Wars. This can be seen in the *Mostre internazionali d’Arte coloniale* held in Rome (1931) and in Naples (1934) where an Algerian section, juxtaposing Western artists and native arts, was organized by Jean Alazard. There were some convergent points of view in the French and Italian colonial attitudes, despite ideological foundations which were quite different. The colonial art commissioned by the institutions, scholarships for study journeys, official décors, etc., represent a vast field of study which has as yet been little studied, and when it has been studied the readings offered have been too black-and-white or have been unable to avoid viewing these arts as anything other than a form of “propaganda”. It will be appropriate to continue the demystifying work already undertaken in Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, combining the analysis of aesthetic values and geopolitical readings. It is not only necessary but also appropriate to submit Said’s intellectual aims to a reading which analyses his subtext. The act of deconstructing our representations of the other does not necessarily mean that the other that we have “summoned up” actually exists. The system of art actually perpetuates this fiction. Why should this be so? We are here at the very heart of the representations that postcolonial thought and contemporary artists attempt “to exhibit”. These latter are often required to give the “original” expected note, consistent with the categories of identity which they tend to use in order to carry out their critical work. But this “strategic essentialism” also reveals its limits.

The third section brings together three fields of study which are closely intermeshed in a number of ways and which have more often been studied. These are architectural transfers, archaeological colonization, the “invention” and the usage of patrimonies. For example, an impressive series of works supervised by Ezio Godoli has served to illustrate the role played by Italian architects in all the countries on the eastern and southern shores of the Mediterranean. Likewise, research programmes organized by Euromed Heritage have studied Euro-Mediterranean heritage and other programmes organized by the IRMC have examined the links between patrimonialization and architectural creation... Debates on “arabisation” and

the neo-Moresque, on the fantasy of a “Mediterranean” or “rationalist” architecture, on the utopian architecture of both architectural and urban projects in the colonies (especially the Italian projects), have privileged the question of identities and modernity... However, many archives have not yet been exploited and there are many architects, archaeologists or actors of the heritage sector who still need to be discovered or at least better known; thus research groups working in Tunisian, Algerian or Moroccan universities have been set up to investigate them, and doctorates have been or are currently being written on the Fine Arts Museum in Algiers, on the history of archaeology in the Maghreb region, on Prosper Ricard, who studied “native arts” in an area extending from Morocco to Libya, etc. Here, therefore, it seems that the post-colonial re-reading may base itself on important contributions whose approaches sometimes remain too essentialist, because of the identity and ideology related issues involved. For this reason, it is hoped that this section will propose the following directions: identifying the processes at work in the production of hybrid architectures (even before the period of colonization), reflections on the current impact of these studies on architects who have worked in a colonized area, the role of intermediaries at different periods, the exchange of knowledge and skills between colonial and national systems, the reinventions – one could even talk about politically correct recycling – of architecture built during the colonial period, the complicated role of colonial institutions in the patrimonialization process, the question of reappropriation after independence... It is true that these three domains – architecture, archaeology and patrimony, important for questions of identity – very quickly attracted the attention of the authorities responsible for each area, and this largely for obvious political and economic reasons. But their role remains central today as well, since they relate both to the reconstructed identities and to tourist stereotypes. Tourism first developed during the colonial period and weighs heavily on representations in each country since independence. The aim of these questions is to overturn approaches which are too often unidirectional and which insist on a pattern which can be summed up in centre/periphery. Secondly, it should be possible to cast some light on the implications which can be seen in architecture, in the studies of antiquity (ancient history, archaeology and epigraphy for which the contribution made by North-African documentation was essential), or the human sciences in general, in the definition of patrimonial objects.

The colloquium languages will be Arabic, English, French and Italian.

Proposals, including a title, should not exceed 3000 signs and also contain a short biography (not exceeding 350 signs); a proposal in Arabic should be accompanied by an abstract in French or English. The proposals for the three sections should be sent no later than July 15 2014 to:

colloques@ecoledulouvre.fr

A reply will be sent in late September
Coordination: Dominique Jarrassé