



Everyday Objects

Art and Experience in Early Modern Europe

Inaugural Early Modern Symposium

10.00 - 17.20, Saturday, 21 November 2009

ABSTRACTS AND BIOGRAPHIES

Samuel Bibby (University College London)

The Triumph of the Everyday: Sculpture, Marriage, and Memory in Fifteenth-Century Florence

As anthropologists have emphasised, the invariably highly-ritualised process of the 'truductio', or marriage cortege, can be reduced to the essential everyday action of moving from one place to another. While the complex ritual gestures imposed upon this basic act have received significant scholarly attention, the afterlife of the 'truductio' remains relatively unaddressed. This paper will examine the way in which residual traces of fifteenth-century Florentine marriage processions – often understood in light of the culture of ancient and Petrarchan triumphs – were left on the everyday spaces of domestic life. The display of sculpture in courtyards and gardens (often the locus for the wedding banquet which followed the 'truductio') will be considered as a strategy for creating a legacy for the ritual, and its associated ephemeral objects, by anchoring it in the visual realm of the married couple's, and their household's, daily lives. Specifically, it will be suggested that the likely display of Donatello's bronze so-called *Atys* on a marble all'antica column, today in the V&A, should be connected with the marriage of Bartolomeo Bartolini and Marietta de' Medici in 1465. By its probable subsequent installation in the garden of the Bartolini Salimbeni family, this sculptural ensemble, and the material and ritual cultures that it recalled, will be located within daily experience, evoking a memory of the couple's wedding celebrations. Through this nuancing of meaning, the validity of any potential binary between the notions of everyday and festive, in relation to fifteenth-century Florentine objects, spaces and rituals, will be questioned.

Samuel Bibby is Assistant Editor of the journal Art History. Formerly a Teaching Fellow in History of Art at University College London, he is also completing his doctoral dissertation there, which examines how the ritual practices of public space in fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Florence informed production and reception of the art and architecture of the domestic realm. His work has appeared in publications including Object, and he is currently preparing an edited collection of essays entitled Locating the Renaissance.

Ariane Fennetaux (Université Paris Diderot)

What's in a Pocket? The Contribution of Material Culture to Social and Cultural History

Following a material culture approach that combines close attention to artefacts with careful study of written and visual sources, this paper proposes to look at women's detachable pockets in order to comment on this everyday object not just as an artefact, but also as a socially embedded object and a carrier of cultural meanings that can bring an important contribution to our understanding of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain.

Specifically female, tie-on pockets, which were rather like bags worn under a woman's dress and accessed through slits in her overdress, were in common use from about 1690 to about 1850 before being gradually replaced by sewn-in pockets and handbags. The long period of their existence spans key evolutions in British political, industrial and social history: the coming together of the United Kingdom and the building of the Empire, the industrial development of the country, the transformations of consumption and retail, what cultural historians have termed the emergence of 'separate spheres', but also such important developments in the history of sensibilities as the birth of privacy or the triumph of notions such as decency and female modesty. The paper proposes to show how the study of an apparently trivial everyday object enables the historian to revisit some of the accepted narratives concerning these key issues of social and cultural history. In particular, notions such as 'separate spheres', the so-called industrial revolution, consumerism, or privacy will be complexified by looking at women's tie-on pockets, the practices they lent themselves to and their representations.

Through a case study of the specific contribution of pockets to our understanding of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain, the paper thus vindicates the everyday object as an irreplaceable tool for the cultural historian.

Ariane Fennetaux, an Ecole Normale Supérieure and Courtauld Institute of Art alumna, completed a PhD on objects and privacy in eighteenth-century Britain at the University of Paris Diderot (France), where she is now a tenured lecturer in eighteenth-century studies. She has published on a range of subjects related to material culture in the long eighteenth century, and in particular on dress in relation to notions of privacy and subjectivity.

Olivia Fryman (Kingston University and Historic Royal Palaces)

'Necessary Stooles' and Necessary Women: Dealing with Royal Dirt, 1660-1714

In 1686 John Riley (1646-91) painted a remarkable portrait of Bridget Holmes, a ninety-six-year-old 'necessary woman', whose task it was to dispose of the contents of royal chamber pots and clean the privy lodgings at court. As in fashionable baroque portraiture, Holmes is depicted in full length within a grandiose classical setting. Yet her role and status are clearly expressed through her simple attire and the broom she brandishes as if ready for work. The commission and subsequent display of this painting within royal residences is suggestive of the complex relationship between monarchical magnificence and domestic dirt.

While much historical research has been focussed on royal pomp and spectacle, this paper aims to shed light on the way in which everyday objects and practices were a fundamental component of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century notions of monarchy. Through a focus on the design and use of royal close stools, chamber pots, and stool rooms, this paper will explore contemporary attitudes towards privacy and the monarchical body. Furthermore, the work performed by necessary women in emptying

and cleaning close stools will be considered in relation to understandings of cleanliness, health, and the complex issue of royal dirt. It will be argued that personal, corporeal and domestic concerns were not simply subjugated to the performance of public ritual and splendour. Moreover, domestic work was not concealed or unmentionable. Rather, dealing with royal dirt was a subject of much consideration, and a vital aspect in constructions of kingship.

Olivia Fryman is an AHRC doctoral award holder at Kingston University and Historic Royal Palaces. Based at Hampton Court Palace, her current research seeks to explore housekeeping practices, and in particular the role of servants in caring for royal bedchambers between 1689 and 1838. During a two-year MA in the History of Design at the Royal College of Art and the Victoria and Albert Museum, Olivia specialised in eighteenth-century interior design and furniture, and spent time working as an assistant curator. She is also currently employed as an undergraduate dissertation supervisor at the University of Creative Arts.

Sheila McTighe (The Courtauld Institute of Art)

Sheila McTighe is Senior Lecturer at The Courtauld Institute of Art. Her various publications on seventeenth-century southern European art include Nicolas Poussin's Landscape Allegories (Cambridge University Press, 1996) and The Imaginary Everyday: Genre Painting and Prints in Italy and France, 1580-1670 (Periscope Press, 1st edition 2007, 2nd edition 2009).

Chris Meyer (Harvard University)

Psychic Objects, Material Subjects: Edmé Bouchardon's Cris de Paris

Garçon boulanger (1737), one of Edmé Bouchardon's sanguine *Cris de Paris* drawings housed in the British Museum, depicts a young man trudging along a bare street. He bears the weight of a bread-filled basket filled to the brim, cradling the basket with one hand while tipping slightly forward to counterbalance its weight. Bread held an intimate relation with everyday life in eighteenth-century France. Entire histories of the century have been written from the perspective of bread. In a practical sense, it constituted the most basic component of the daily diet: grains provided roughly half of calories consumed. Almost one-fifth of the average Parisian's total expenditures was spent on bread, despite its low cost relative to meat and wine. The government was keenly aware of bread's determining role in social stability; it retained control over setting the ration and establishing prices to avoid riots in the case of a fruitless harvest. The *Encyclopédie* listed sixteen types of bread and Diderot's entry, 'BOULANGER, s. m.', is among the longest in the whole encyclopedic project. One can even argue that the very concept of the everyday is tied to bread. In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the term 'quotidien' most frequently appeared as 'pain quotidien' in Christian instruction manuals as part of the Dominican prayer.

When considering the *Garçon boulanger* in the context of Bouchardon's other *Cris* images, we remark that material, everyday objects are conspicuous both in their prominence and occasionally in the strangeness of their presentation. The shape and form of the basket and bread cry for the viewer's attention as much as the body or the face of the boy. The typical reading of Bouchardon's *Cris de Paris* images is largely social historical. While individual images such as the *Garçon boulanger* lend themselves to detail-oriented historical research on everyday objects such as bread, the task of the art historian is not so straightforward. The *Cris* series is treated by most scholars as a transparent illustration or reflexion of what eighteenth-century Parisian streets were 'really like'. Yet, in viewing the series as the product of Bouchardon's

subjective/constructed artistic vision, Chris Meyer argues that the images represent a meditation on the materiality of physical objects in a general sense rather than what that particular object was.

Edward Payne (The Courtauld Institute of Art)

Edward Payne is Visiting Lecturer at The Courtauld Institute of Art. His research focuses on seventeenth-century Spanish and Neapolitan painting, prints and drawings, and he is currently completing his PhD thesis, Violence and Corporality in the Art of Jusepe de Ribera, supervised by Sheila McTighe.

Melinda Rabb (Brown University)

Mimesis Reconsidered: Everyday Objects in Miniature

The material culture of early modern Europe produced detailed miniature versions of everyday objects: books, paintings, furniture, china, clothing, 'baby houses', and implements of glass, silver, and brass. These objects could be more technologically difficult, time-consuming, and artistically painstaking to create than their life-size counterparts. Melinda Rabb's talk will focus on miniature furniture. Not intended for children, miniature furniture was prized by adults. Why? What Samuel Johnson's Imlac says of the giant pyramids might apply as well to these minuscule wonders: 'no reason has ever been adequate to the cost and labour of the work' (*Rasselas* xxxii). Were they samples from which full-scale objects could be ordered? Or 'masterpieces' that proved competence at the end of an apprentice's training? Were they decorations, status symbols, models of taste, or mere whimsies? What practical or cultural work can 'the small' perform, and how are size and scale implicated in changing modes of beholding, knowing, and desiring? Bill Brown's 'thing theory' asserts: 'the story of objects . . . is a story of a changed relation to the human subject'. Rabb wishes to argue (referring to both objects and objects in literature) that miniaturization participates in the history of cognition, that it provides a way of understanding new imaginative possibilities in the early modern period. Her argument draws across disciplines to engage resources such as Susan Stewart's study of exaggeration as 'a metaphor for the interior space and time of the bourgeois subject', and the experimental work of psychologists like Judy S. DeLoache, who uses miniatures to assess processes of human cognition with respect to language, symbolization, and representation.

Melinda Rabb is Professor of English and American Literatures and Language at Brown University. She has published on a wide range of eighteenth-century writers and topics, most recently Satire and Secrecy in English Literature 1650-1750 (Palgrave, 2007). She serves on the advisory board of Brown's Women Writers Project and Women Writers Online. Her current projects are Parting Shots: Embodiments of Masculinity from the English Civil Wars to the American Revolution and Miniature in Eighteenth-Century Literature and Material Culture.

Paula Rea Radisich (Whittier College, California)

Theorising 'Things' in French Genre Painting of the 1740s

Nicolas Lancret (d. 1743) supposedly said 'that history painters who draw a nude foot well, do not know how to draw it when it is in a shoe', a statement isolating feet fitted with shoes as a site for the culture of everyday life in art at the time. Shoes are things. However, a thing theorist would maintain that once 'things' enter representation, they become 'objects' – entities into which the beholder instinctively projects various frames

of reference and interpretation. This paper will think about shoe-clad feet from the perspective of thing theory, exploring common ground between genre subjects created by Chardin, Lancret and Boucher around 1740, in particular Chardin's *The Diligent Mother*, c. 1740, Boucher's *Woman Fastening her Garter*, 1742, Lancret's *Attaching the Skate*, c. 1741, and (possibly) Chardin's *The Attentive Nurse*, 1747.

Three of the images denoted above were acquired by Carl-Gustaf Tessin before 1743 (*The Diligent Mother* as a 'repetition'), thus permitting us to speculate about the problem of the everyday object and social class. Although today many seem to assume an everyday object experienced by an eighteenth-century Swedish count will differ from an everyday object experienced by a diligent bourgeois mother and that each one will gravitate towards its own projected rituals of everyday life on paper or on canvas, this is a myth. Such oversimplifications vastly underestimate the complexity of genre scenes to allude to how eighteenth-century people 'experienced the world around them'.

Paula Rea Radisich is Professor of Art History at Whittier College in Los Angeles. Her book, Hubert Robert: Painted Spaces of the Enlightenment, was published by Cambridge University Press in 1998. She has published articles and essays on works of art by Vigée-Lebrun and Hubert Robert. She contributed an essay about Lovisa-Ulrike, a patron of Chardin, to Women, Art and the Politics of Identity in Eighteenth-Century Europe, edited by Melissa Hyde and Jennifer Milam in 2003. The papers presented at a conference in 2005, organised by the Center of Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Studies at UCLA on a folio of late eighteenth-century hand-coloured prints, now in the possession of the Costume and Textiles Department at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, is planned for publication by the conference organiser, Kate Norberg. Radisich's contribution to that volume is entitled Fashion, Frenchness & the 'Cris de Paris'. Her current project is a book-length manuscript about the genre subjects created by Chardin, provisionally titled Looking Smart.

Katie Scott (The Courtauld Institute of Art)

Cochin's Handkerchiefs

In his essay 'What is an author?', Michel Foucault puts into question the relationship between the 'author' and his or her work by asking how it is that we define the 'work' to which authorship can legitimately and meaningfully be ascribed. By way of illustration of the conventional and historical difficulties of delimiting an oeuvre, he asks hypothetically of Nietzsche, 'What if, within a workbook filled with aphorisms, one finds a reference, the notation of a meeting or of an address, or a *laundry list*: is it a work, or not?'. Phrased somewhat differently, what is the relation between the author and the proper name or the realms of the extraordinary and the everyday?

The present paper aims to explore these questions with respect not so much to a laundry list but to the handkerchiefs that might have been on it, with a view to articulating some provisional propositions about the interrelations of art history and material culture in early modern France. The handkerchiefs in question belonged to the draftsman, printmaker and art theorist Charles-Nicolas Cochin the younger and were the object of extended discussion and transaction with fellow painter Jean-Baptiste Descamps in the 1780s. Points of intersection are identified in the body, homo-sociality and the law.

Katie Scott is Reader in History of Art at The Courtauld Institute of Art. A specialist in eighteenth-century French art, she has published widely on the intersections between art, architecture and the decorative arts in the history of early modern material culture, most notably in her book The Rococo Interior: Decoration and Social Spaces in Early Eighteenth-Century Paris (Yale University Press, 1995). More recently, her research interests have turned to the relations of art theory, commerce and the law, from which

has derived her current book project, *Becoming Property: Art, Theory and Law in the Age of Enlightenment*.

David Solkin (The Courtauld Institute of Art)

David Solkin is Professor of the Social History of Art at The Courtauld Institute of Art, and the Institute's Dean and Deputy Director. A leading authority on eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British art, his many publications include Richard Wilson: The Landscape of Reaction (Tate Gallery, London, 1982), Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England (Yale University Press, 1993), and Painting out of the Ordinary: Modernity and the Art of Everyday Life in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain (Yale University Press, 2008). Professor Solkin is lead curator of the current Turner and the Masters exhibition at Tate Britain, and has edited and co-authored the accompanying catalogue.

Beth Fowkes Tobin (Arizona State University)

Women, Decorative Arts, and Taxidermy

The decorative arts, ranging from embroidery to painting ceramics to lacquer work, held a central place in the daily lives of British women of the middling and upper classes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Among these domestic arts was taxidermy, a practice that we today tend to associate with big game hunting and to reject as morally repugnant. This paper seeks to re-locate taxidermy within the more ordinary domestic and feminine arts that produced such objects as shell-encrusted frames and stuffed pet birds posed on twigs and placed under bell-shaped glass containers. Such objects, derived from the detritus of nature, graced many a bourgeois parlour and aristocratic cabinet. This paper will focus on the material practices of taxidermy, the techniques, tools, and chemicals that women used to alter and preserve animal bodies, and the art practices of turning these bodies into decorative objects. Focusing on shellwork and stuffed birds, this paper explores these domestic taxidermic projects as complex social acts that brought together art, nature, and science as well as dealt with anxieties concerning death, decay, and immortality.

Beth Fowkes Tobin, Professor of English at Arizona State University, is the author of Superintending the Poor: Charitable Ladies and Paternal Landlords in British Fiction, 1770-1860 (Yale University Press, 1993), the award-winning Picturing Imperial Power: Colonial Subjects in Eighteenth-Century British Painting (Duke University Press, 1999), and the award-winning Colonizing Nature: The Tropics in British Arts and Letters, 1760-1820 (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005). She has written extensively on the art, literature and science of colonialism. For her research on the representation of the tropics, she received a fellowship from the National Endowment of Humanities and a Caird Fellowship from the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich. She is currently studying eighteenth-century natural history collections, in particular the shell collection of the 2nd Duchess of Portland, for which she received a National Science Foundation Scholar's Award and a fellowship from the British Academy. She is the co-editor along with Maureen Daly Goggin of three Ashgate volumes on women and material culture scheduled for publication at the end of 2009.

Hannah Williams (The Courtauld Institute of Art)

Hannah Williams is an Associate Scholar at The Courtauld Institute of Art, where she is currently completing her PhD. Her research focuses on the visual culture of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France and her thesis, A Portrait of the Artist: Cultural Meaning and Social Order in the Académie Royale (1648-1793), is supervised by Katie Scott.

Joanna Woodall (The Courtauld Institute of Art)

Laying the Table. The Procedures of Still Life

Are still lives depictions of inanimate objects? The ambiguous term 'stilleven', which is perhaps best translated as 'stilled life', appeared in Dutch in about 1650, while the term 'nature morte' was not coined until the end of the century in France. This paper explores the assemblages depicted in the Netherlands during the first half of the seventeenth century, a period in which the status of natural and man-made objects was being contested. A universe invested throughout with divine spirit was being challenged by an understanding of the material world as empty of life and meaning except for that given to it by human agents. Joanna Woodall is interested in the ways in which these issues were negotiated by still life, where the specific selection, arrangement and depiction of still life objects implied the attentive engagement of the artist in the space of the studio. At the same time, the completed pictures imaginatively transpose these procedures of production into spaces of ingestion or consumption that involve both display and repetition.

Joanna Woodall is Professor of Early Modern Netherlandish Art at The Courtauld Institute of Art. Her research is concerned with portrayal and, more broadly, the sense of unmediated presence or life in works of art. On the other hand, she is also concerned with the work of art as the image of its maker and the emergence of the artist as a figure for subjectivity in the early modern period. Her publications include Portraiture: Facing the Subject (Manchester University Press, 1997), Self Portrait. Renaissance to Contemporary (National Portrait Gallery, London, 2005) and Anthonis Mor. Art and Authority (Waanders, 2007). Envisioning the Artist in the Early Modern Netherlands, co-edited with Perry Chapman, will be published early next year.