

Holy Space and the Senses
Graduate Seminar with Prof. Alexei Lidov

Wednesday June 1st 2011
Berrick Saul Auditorium 2.00-5.00

Programme

2.00: Helen Hills (University of York): Welcome and Introduction

2.00-2.15: Alexei Lidov (Moscow State University): Opening Remarks

Session 1: The Sensory Interplay between the Micro and Macro Cosmic

2.15-2.30: Meg Boulton (Department of History of Art, University of York).
'The end of the world as we know it': the eschatology of symbolic space/s in Insular Art.'

2.30-2.45: Lizzie Swann (Department of English and Related Literature, University of York)
Sucke ev'ry Letter: Tasting faith in early seventeenth-century England

2.45-3.05: Open Discussion

Session 2: The Sensory Interplay between Devotee and Devotional Space

3.05-3.20: Emma J. Wells (Department of Archaeology, Durham University)
Walking in his Shoes: 'Sensing' the Pilgrimage Experience of the Medieval Church

3.20-3.35: Philippa Turner (Department of History of Art, University of York).
Image and Holy Space in York Minster (1350-1450)

3.35-3.55: Open Discussion

3.55- 4.15: Tea

Session 3: Changing Concepts of the Sacred

4.15-4.30: Charlotte Staniforth, (Department of Archaeology, University of York)
'Beyond the Dissolution': archaeological analysis and virtual reconstructions of monastic churches converted to parochial use - Old Malton Priory and Selby Abbey: 1539-1800

4.30-4.45: James Jago (Department of History of Art, University of York). *Protestant Antiquarianism and Parameters of the Sacred: The Case of John Cosin (1594-1672)*

4.45-5.00: Open Discussion

Paper Abstracts

Session 1

Meg Boulton (Department of History of Art, University of York)

'The end of the world as we know it': the eschatology of symbolic space/s in Insular Art.

The ways in which the Anglo-Saxons articulated space are not overly analysed in the scholarship on the art of Anglo-Saxon England over and above some discussion in studies of Anglo-Saxon architecture. Nevertheless the literature and visual arts of the region in its early Christian period (7th-9th centuries) demonstrate considerable thought on the subject. Bede, for instance, presents complex ideas about the conceptualisation of space in relation to time and place in his treatises on the tabernacle and the temple. Equally complex are the visual articulations produced in Anglo-Saxon England, and this is well illustrated by the so-called 'Last Judgement Ivory', conventionally dated to the turn of the 9th century. This paper will explore the ways in which this object renders time and space in an overtly eschatological setting when such entities cease to have meaning within a Christian frame of reference.

Lizzie Swann (Department of English and Related Literature, University of York)

Sucke ev'ry Letter: Tasting faith in early seventeenth-century England

In early seventeenth-century England, space was not simply something that bodies exist *in*. Contemporary humoural theory represented the body itself spatially, as a miniature world or microcosmos. Attending to the historical specificity of pre-Cartesian conceptions of space, my paper addresses intersections between what might be considered the holy space of the microcosmic body, the space of devotional texts, and the architectural space of the church, in the period. The focus is on the role of taste, understood as a physical sensation with an epistemological application, in apprehending, negotiating and communicating holiness in these spheres. In particular, the work of George Herbert is shown to insist on the spatial dimensions of spiritual experience, and on the importance – even the redemptive capacity – of gustatory sensation in this context.

Session 2

Emma J. Wells (Department of Archaeology, Durham University)

Walking in his Shoes: 'Sensing' the Pilgrimage Experience of the Medieval Church

Using an innovative interdisciplinary approach, this paper explores how the visual and tangible infrastructure of cult churches were sensorily experienced from the perspective of the laity throughout the late twelfth to the early fifteenth-century, with a particular focus on the act of bodily participation with the divine. Miles' suggestion that in the absence of the original worshipper, only the image is left to us (1985, 6) shall be challenged through a unification of worshipper and building by all means available to the modern medieval scholar. The main premise is therefore to reconstruct the relationship between the individual and the material/physical world, and the collective 'lived' experience (incorporating objectives and perceptions) of a specific social group. As such, the paper envelops around the question of whether the settings of shrines were built for pilgrims and to accommodate the cults. By championing an experiential methodology built upon the concept of the sensory encounter of the human agent, I wish to understand the religious nature of the medieval church in an age often concerned only with its aestheticism.

Philippa Turner (Department of History of Art, University of York)

Image and Holy Space in York Minster

During the late medieval period (c.1350-c.1540) the conception and configuration of holy space in York Minster, as well as the sensual experience of it, was very different to that which we encounter today. Images of saints, now no longer extant, were often conspicuous inhabitants of this space, appealing to the senses and emotions of those who encountered them by virtue of their materials, colours, and iconographies. By

focussing on a Virgin and Child image in the Lady Chapel, this paper will demonstrate how documentary and physical sources enable us to reconstruct an image, discuss its sensory appeal, and place it within its wider sensual setting. As well as reassessing the role of the Lady Chapel as holy space, this approach also allows us to ask more fundamental questions about the relationship between images and holy space, both in York Minster and beyond.

Session 3

Charlotte Staniforth, (Department of Archaeology, University of York)

'Beyond the Dissolution'. An archaeological analysis and virtual reconstruction of a monastic church conversion to parochial use at Old Malton Priory and Selby Abbey: 1539-1800.

This paper proposes to touch upon the impact of the Reformation and the process of dissolution on monastic buildings by incorporating a different approach of interpretation in the continuance of these buildings: through the use of 3d visualisation, looking at the case-studies of Old Malton Priory in North Yorkshire and Selby Abbey in East Yorkshire. Techniques of virtual imaging will be employed to analyse the changing physical appearance of how the buildings were transformed from a monastic to parish function, incorporating aspects of light, sound and movement, and how this can potentially illustrate changing concepts and relationships of contemporary religious space, liturgical practices, beliefs and understandings.

James Jago (Department of History of Art, University of York)

Protestant Antiquarianism and Parameters of the Sacred: The Case of John Cosin (1594-1672).

The architectural furnishings associated with John Cosin have long been commented upon by architectural historians. One of the leading churchmen of his generation, Cosin is frequently associated with a revisionist group of like-minded individuals who strove to restore dignity and order to the English Church during the reign of Charles I. This found material expression in the elaborate furnishings he and his associates commissioned for the parishes surrounding Durham in the 1620s, and after the Restoration within Durham Cathedral. Their fusion of Renaissance and Gothic styles raises problems of interpretation. Rather than examining them in terms of 'Gothic Revival' or 'Gothic Survival', this duality can be understood as a deliberate assertion of the reformed Church's antiquity. Cosin's canopied screens also parallel his 'mental topography' of prayer, and can be understood as references to the Temple of Jerusalem; the ultimate precedent for religious architecture.