

Conference: 'The British School of Sculpture': Rethinking Sculptural Practice c1650-c1830

University of York in collaboration with the Henry Moore Institute
(Kings Manor, K133, University of York, 13 November, 10 -5pm)

This conference will consider the emergence of a native school of sculpture in Britain in the period c1650-c1850. For writers at the start of the nineteenth century looking back on the development of the arts in Britain, sculpture had finally reached its apogee, after years of subservience to 'foreigners', with the arrival of home grown sculptors who displayed 'true antique feeling' in their works. It was a piece of nationalistic fiction that saw British sculptors finally 'triumph' over their foreign rivals and heralded the consolidation of a native artistic tradition. It was a potent political vision and despite its inaccuracies is one that has continued to influence modern art historians - resulting in the acclaimed 'neo-classicists' receiving a disproportionate amount of scholarly attention. Indeed, to perceive alternatives to the mythology surrounding the development of British sculpture is to seriously challenge our current understanding of sculptural practice in the period.

This conference aims to readdress this imbalance and uncover the reality of the 'British School of Sculpture'. It looks to investigate discontinuity and divergences in a history that has persuasively argued for a systematic sense of progression. It will assess the relationship between different generations of sculptors and the impact new sculptural theory played in influencing taste: considering whether there ever really was a specifically 'British' aesthetic. It also aims to consider the nationalistic and patriotic agenda sculpture was ascribed in the period and rediscover the profound connections sculpture maintained with manufacture and the decorative arts.

The day will be chaired by the University of York's Dr Sarah Burnage, Prof. Mark Hallett, and Dr Jason Edwards. Papers include:

10.00 – 10.30: Registration and coffee

10.30 – 10.40: Introduction by Dr Sarah Burnage

Session 1 – Chaired by Professor Mark Hallett (The University of York)

10.40 – 11.20: Prof. Nigel Llewellyn (Tate): 'Nation and Religion in the History and Historiography of post-Reformation Funeral Monuments'.

11.20 - 12.00: Dr Adam White (Lotherton Hall): 'Sculpture in England during the Commonwealth 1649-1660'.

12.00 – 12.40: Dr Leon Lock (Independent): 'Reflections on Anglo-Italo-Netherlandish relations in sculpture c.1650-1720'.

12.40 – 2.00: Lunch

Session 2 – Chaired by Dr Jason Edwards (The University of York)

2.00 – 2.40: Prof. Malcolm Baker (University of California Riverside): 'Reconfiguring the Genre of the Statue in the 1750s'.

2.40 – 3.20: Dr Joan Coutu (University of Waterloo): 'Whig Ideology and the forming of National Taste'.

3.20 – 3.40: Coffee

Session 3 – Chaired by Dr Sarah Burnage (The University of York)

3.40 – 4.20: Dr Matthew Craske (Oxford Brookes University): 'A path of error defined: the rise and fall of Read's monument to Admiral Tyrell'.

4.20 – 5.00: Dr Martin Myrone (Tate Britain): 'Thomas Proctor: British Sculpture as National Art in the 1790s'.

The above conference will coincide with a reception to celebrate the publication of A Biographical Dictionary of Sculptors in Britain, 1660-1851 which will be held at the Henry Moore Institute that evening to which all delegates will be invited.

There is no charge for this conference. Tea and coffee will be provided. If you would like to attend please contact Dr Sarah Burnage at s1172@york.ac.uk or at 01904 432978