



## ***Open Arts Journal* research seminar - 25 November, 6pm**

The Open University in London, 1 - 11 Hawley Crescent, Camden NW1 8NP

We are delighted to announce that the *Open Arts Journal*, in collaboration with the Department of Art History, The Open University, is hosting a research seminar on **Wednesday 25 November, from 6pm**, at The Open University in London. This event celebrates the publication of [issue 4](#) of the Journal earlier this year. Our speaker is Helen Hills (University of York), whose paper is entitled, *Silver & Salvation: Colonial Excess and Baroque Naples*. The proceedings will be followed by a reception.

All are welcome!

Follow this link to our event bookings website (eventbrite) to reserve your place:

<http://openartsjournal-researchseminar.eventbrite.co.uk>

or email Alice Sanger, Deputy Editor, *Open Arts Journal*, [a.e.sanger@open.ac.uk](mailto:a.e.sanger@open.ac.uk).

### **Abstract: *Silver & Salvation: Colonial Excess and Baroque Naples*.**

Helen Hills, Professor of Art History, University of York

This paper examines the materiality of silver in relation to trauma, transaction and transformation. It focuses on Naples, under Spanish rule, to explore the effects of colonialism within Europe through art and sculpture. Thus I consider the presentation of 'the nature of the Neapolitans' and their practices as 'excessive' through the material of silver. Silver was imported into Naples from Spanish territories in the so-called New World. In Naples silver is naturalized through artifice – both rendered to represent 'nature' and made into an apparently intrinsic part of 'Neapolitan culture'. Indeed, the profligate display of silver in Neapolitan churches is remarked upon by foreign visitors as a mark of the very 'nature' of Neapolitans' themselves.

Baroque Naples was tarnished in Protestant Europe with a reputation for excess – particularly an excess of silver in its churches and chapels, part of the mortmain of the Spanish church, a prodigious resource that was gathering dust rather than fighting wars or generating interest. Silver was the material par excellence for chalices, pyx and plate, for *carte di gloria* and sacred and liturgical objects of many kinds, including the spectacular solid silver reliquaries in the Treasury Chapel of San Gennaro in Naples, unsurpassed amongst European treasuries. Silver was particularly implicated in discourses of the sacred, yet silver was implicated, too, in the violence of Spanish colonialism. Silver seemed to offer the imperial Spanish what they most desired – a means to substantialize every relation, even with the divine. And it was in Naples above all, emblem and testing ground of Spanish rule in Europe, that silver was beaten into splendid submission. Scholarship has made much of colonialism and its relationship with culture outside of Europe. But what of colonialism within Europe? Silver offers an opening.