

Scientific Report

‘Palatium’ Copenhagen Colloquium – April/May 2012

Purpose of the visit

Earlier this year, I was awarded a short-visit/ junior researchers grant from Palatium, in conjunction with the European Science Foundation, to deliver a paper at the Copenhagen colloquium entitled, ‘*Beyond Scylla and Charybdis: European Courts and Court Residences outside Habsburg and Valois/Bourbon Territories, 1500-1700*’, hosted by the National Museum of Denmark. My paper, which reflects the recent research I have undertaken in my doctoral studies, was entitled ‘*Standing on Scylla and Charybdis: Iconography and Symbolism in the Visual and Aural Embellishment of the Palazzo Medici*’. Being in the early years of my doctoral project, such an occasion has been hugely beneficial to my personal and professional development, as it has awarded me the opportunity to meet with more senior research practitioners in the field of early modern studies - specifically in the realm of art and architectural history - and to gain from their insightful feedback and advice on enhancing my work, and also to gain from the many edifying and diverse presentations which were given by advanced scholars. The colloquium was also the first international convention in which I have disseminated my work, and thus one important purpose of the visit was to become acquainted with a valuable network of scholars whom I made and will maintain contact with, and whose emerging scholarship offers an introduction to disciplinary fields different from but complimentary to my own, that of Musicology. Therefore, the main objective of the visit was to situate my own work within the wider community of the Palatium network, whose research objectives (court residences as places of exchange) reflect greatly the premise and methodological foundation of my doctoral thesis.

Work carried out during the visit

During the visit, I attended each individual paper of the three-day conference and on the second day I delivered my own paper. I had the opportunity to share in the research findings of many noted scholars, and also to receive a guided tour of two very important historical sites: Frederisksborg castle and Rosenborg castle, each of which harbour their own distinct architectural style, and bespoke embellishments, not least to mention their fascinating role in

the history of early modern Denmark. I also received a tour of the ‘Europe meets the World’ exhibition curated by Poul Grønder-Hansen of the National Museum. Throughout this time, I engaged in various conversations with my fellow delegates which were hugely informative for furthering my research, having received advice on relevant literature and lines of enquiry to follow for my project.

The first day of the conference commenced on Monday 30th April in the National Museum in Copenhagen with a captivating first session of papers which covered the theme of ‘sovereignty’s space and its rituals: staging diplomatic interactions’. The session included presentations on court ceremonial in Lisbon (Nuno Senos), the royal palaces of Henry VIII (Lee Proser), diplomacy and spatial politics in the early modern Tudor and Muscovite courts (Tracey Sowerby, Jan Hennings), ceremonial in the Swedish court (Fabian Persson), and many more papers. This session raised many important issues such as public and private spaces, and formal and informal etiquette in diplomatic interaction at court. Senos approached the issue of how a monarch enforced his presence ‘by proxy’ when absent from court through the employment of visual devices, in this case an armillary sphere which the King ordered to embellish many of his architectural possessions, both on the interior and exterior. This was also a common practice of the Medici family, who embellished many of their properties, both in Florence and on properties outside of the city, with the famous red ‘palle’ of the Medici coat of arms, symbolising their omnipresence and indeed their power. Senos also broached the idea of spatiality and ritual outside of the formal courtly space by looking at court ceremonial on ships, and what the relationship was with the sea. Proser pointed out the prominence of interior architecture in the role of courtly ceremonial in the royal palaces of Henry VIII, over that of exterior architecture. Many of the palaces featured unsymmetrical exteriors (some built with Burgundian brick), while others differed dramatically, showing an incoherent architectural style, but one which by the end of the king’s life, had mellowed with more distinctly French characteristics. The keynote speech that evening was given by Professor Jeroen Duindam who spoke of the concentric circles of court life and the relationship between each element (rulers, dynasties, courts, from court to realm). He restated the importance of the palace topography, and how the movement between rooms (the entrance route of a visiting diplomat/noble), from public to private, was demonstrative of how the given monarch was viewed by the visitor and hence the wider world. Being allowed to enter such spaces and play a role in secluded family life was an

honourable and quite often rare experience, as share in sovereignty meant a share in power. Speaking also of inner and outer spaces, Duindam poignantly reminds us that history was indeed written by outer court officials – a point in objectivity which should be remembered when conducting (archival) research.

Day two of the conference saw us moving through three new sessions themed ‘beyond the formal spaces’; ‘between conflicting confessions: creating sacred spaces at court’; and ‘presentations of studies by early career researchers’. These sessions were preceded by a tour of the pleasure gardens of Fredericksborg castle, and a tour of the castle’s main reception rooms and grand hall. The first of the sessions included a presentation by Poul Grinder-Hensen on the use of ‘green spaces’ in the court of Frederick II of Denmark, 1559-1588, in which he talked not only of the significance of the pleasure gardens at the king’s palace at Kronborg, to which there was a secret passage from the prince’s residence, but also of the decoration of the interior of the summer residences which carried a ‘green’ theme throughout the decor with green tapestries on the walls, green cushions on the benches, and green tablecloths, creating a very informal and calm setting. Talking also of the recreational activities of the king at the stables and bath house of Fredericksborg castle, Grinder-Hensen clearly delineated the importance of the informal space at royal courts.

John Robert Christianson followed with a presentation on the spaces and rituals of the royal hunt during the reign of Frederick II, elaborating that there were 90-100 hunting lodges in the King’s possession at this time. Many factors contributed to the success of the hunting season, including the engineering of the royal roads which ensured access to the newly developed hunting reserves of the king, as well as ease of travel for attending to daily business in Copenhagen. Outlining the ritual of the annual great hunt/ring hunt, Christianson describes the elaborate preparation process for the event, which included the preparation of the killing fields and the ordering of tonnes of salt for the preservation of the large amount of meat (approximately 4-8 modern shipping containers full). On the day of the slaughter, the whole family are documented to have taken part, even young children, and the king on his white horse, armed with a short sword, would lead the procession. The day then culminated in a prolonged celebration at the lodges of the king. Christianson’s paper is also a lucid portrayal

of how informal spaces play such an integral role in the representation and identification of the rituals of the royal court and its monarchs.

Charles McKean then transported us to the royal spaces of the Scottish court, presenting a paper which questioned the stylistic and aesthetic model of Stirling castle, and whether it is French, English or just different. He arrived at the conclusion that the architectural model, whilst influenced by the larger European power states of the time, was overall a veritable Scottish model, embodying a unique layout of the royal apartment which therefore determined a different style of ceremonial and private etiquette within the court.

The second session of the day moved through the creation of sacred spaces at court, with papers from Hugo Johannsen on the oratory of the palace church in early modern northern Europe; the space of female cultural agency, with a case study on Magdalena Sibylle 1617 – 1668 by Mara R. Wade; and the sacred space of the double funeral at the Roman court by Martine Boiteux. Finally, it came to the concluding session of the day, with papers by early career researchers, which included my own paper, that those of Rikke Gariel Lagersted-Olsen and Sabine Jagodzinski – the former presented a paper on the performativity of Adrian de Vries' Sculptures in the garden of Drottingholm Palace in Sweden, while Jagodzinski presented on the art and architecture of Noble Residences in 17th century Poland-Lithuania. My paper was entitled *Standing on Scylla and Charybdis: Iconography and Symbolism in the Visual and Aural Embellishment of the Palazzo Medici*, which discussed the iconographic programmes created by the Medici family for the Medici-Toledo wedding of 1539, visible in the art, architecture and theatrical masques patronised for the occasion.

The third day, Wednesday 2nd May, included two more sessions: 'the powers of the past', and 'from invention to construction: building the residence'. In the first session, Stephan Hoppe opened the floor with a paper on architecture as a reference to the past at the court of Cardinal Albrecht of Brandenburg 1490 – 1545. Hoppe identified the neo-Romanesque style of some of the court architecture, and of the role of allegorical statuary and the use of a tripartite structure. He also reminded us that it is important to note that contemporarily, people had very little awareness of the significance of the 'old' buildings of their time, and neither did

they realise the extent of how old they were, especially if they predated 200 years old. This is a reminder of the importance of the socio-cultural factors at play in a renaissance study of any kind.

Sally Rush then followed Hoppe's paper with a presentation on the 'Stirling heads' of Stirling castle, a collection of 34 (surviving) wooden carvings depicting the dynasty of the Stuart family, as well as worthies, ancient roman figures (Julius Caesar, Titus), and the demigod Hercules. Rush examined the origin and identification of each of the heads which were left untitled by the time of their dispersion from the castle in 1777, and has looked at the symbolism behind them, questioning the inclusion of the head of Henry VIII (lost in a fire in 1940, but which has been accurately replicated in illustration), who was not part of the Stuart lineage, and thus has no place within the heads. Rush surmises that the primary function of the heads were as a dynastic family tree, but that they may have created their own satirical imagery of Henry VIII, explaining his inclusion in the collection. She elaborates that Henry needed the support of James V for the enforcement of a political policy, but James had refused. Hence, such animosity would necessarily mean that tensions between the two families would make Henry's inclusion in the heads suspect at the very least. She concluded the heads were a game of strategies, where James V could pick and choose his lineage.

Following these papers were those of Barbara Uppenkamp on the 'Statua Danielis as a political image of the Translatio Imperii', which was a fascinating presentation of the imagery of Daniel in German courts of the 16th century art, depicted allegorically as he so often was, with the biblical panther, bear, beast and lioness, representing the roman empire and the coming of Christ on judgement day. These images, representing the coming of a golden age, were employed by the king in the 16th century after an embarrassing period of exile, and were also reused in the refashioning of the castle in the 17th century. Other papers this day included those of Birgitte Boggild Johannsen who delivered a paper on the appropriation of anachronism in Copenhagen castle; Herbert Karner on 'the dignity of the king's architecture on the edges of the holy roman empire', Charles Wemyss on the great baronial houses of post-restoration Scotland, and two papers on the building administration of Northern European courts, and on the artists and architects of the courts of the polish kings Sigismund III Vasa and Laislaus IV Vasa. The day then culminated with a walking tour of

Copenhagen by Jeppe Priess Gersboll, and a tour of Rosenborg castle with commentary by Jorgen Hein, which offered to opportunity to look at the interior decor of the palace, and to see highly unusual architectural features, such as the music vents of the dining room whereby the acoustics of the musicians playing in the basement would have travelled upwards to the ears of the visiting nobles in the room.

Descriptions of the main results obtained

The above section delineates the educational content obtained from such a varied and intriguing conference, with the result of many research findings being circulated and discussed by a large group of scholars, inspiring further individual projects, and also collaborations across similar fields and areas of research. I was able to receive feedback on my own paper to a great degree also, including suggestions from Konrad Ottenheim on altering aspects of an illustration which was included in my presentation; from Krista De Jonge on researching closer the experience of the spectator (servants) from the vantage of the loggias...what would they have experienced from there? And indeed, would they have been able to see anything with the stage setting of Antonio da Sangallo taking up as much room as it did?; from Sally Rush on the design of Flora's costume, and to look at other incarnations of abundance figures at that time in 16th century Florence in order to compare them – and also to take into context the role of astrological symbolism in the artwork of Cosimo il Vecchio, (as articulated by Sandra Cox-Rearick's 'Dynasty and Destiny') and how he placed considerable weight on his horoscope as it was supposedly the same as an ancient roman leader. This would suggest that the multitude of connections to the past (ancient Rome) inherent in the costumes of the Medici-Toledo wedding masques were drawing on much greater dynastical symbolism than is perceived at first glance.

Other aspects of consideration I drew from the conference and from individual advice, was to look at the agency of the individual subjects involved in the occasion (Medici-Toledo wedding), and seek to piece together what they were wearing, where were they sitting, did Cosimo address the visiting nobles in a speech in the course of the evening, how was he presented to the public by his advisors, how did he represent himself, his lineage and his

power to the public? What were the colours worn by Eleonora at the banquet? Look at the occasion as a representation of ‘memory’... how was this propagated publicly – how would the public have understood such erudite imagery (which someone of a high level of humanistic education would only have been expected to understand)? Sally Rush also advised me to look at later festivals of the Medici, and work backwards in order to negate a lack of documentary evidence for the 1539 wedding. If I look at later practices at court, I can then assimilate how they reflected and developed earlier styles. It is also possible to look at other Medici courts as a cross-comparative method, and review the music, theatre and courtly spaces of those courts in order to assess what elements were authentically Florentine, and what elements were borrowed. Ultimately, I was able to obtain an abundance of information and advice for my own research project, and advice which I have since followed up on and which has proved extremely constructive for my PhD thesis.

Projected or related publications/articles resulting or to result from the grant

It is possible that Palatium may include my paper in a publication they will be compiling later in this year of the proceedings of the Copenhagen conference. However, details of said publication have not yet been disclosed, and therefore I have no confirmation of this.

Other comments

This conference was a very memorable experience and a unique learning opportunity, and I am delighted to have been part of the event and to share my work with the Palatium community and with the broader network of esteemed scholars who took part. I hope to be able to develop my research in order to take part in future meetings with ESF Palatium.