

Florence « city of the arts » and the French : the creation of a myth

International conference

Florence, Villa Finaly, 18-20 September 2019

International conference organized by Sorbonne Université

Steering committee:

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The object of this conference is to examine the role of the French in the construction of a myth of Florence as a « city of the arts » in history, art history and diverse forms of artistic production. In Florence, more than anywhere else in Italy, the beauty of the city, the urban landscape, the great artists and their masterpieces were subject to a veritable process of cultural mythologizing starting in the 19th century. Florence thus appears in French culture as an ideal and central location whose representations have an enormous impact on the general conception of the arts, of humanism, of the Italian Renaissance, of artistic genius. If the persistence of the Florentine myth has been well-documented by our European neighbors, particularly in England and Germany, the presence of the French in Florence, the importance of the Florentine myth and its intellectual and artistic evolution in France remain comparatively neglected by critics.

This conference aims to illustrate how Florentine works of art, artists and cultural hotspots were perceived and received by the French, the sorts of consideration and critical analysis generated in intellectual circles by the study of works of art, but also the numerous poetic evocations of the city, of Florentine art as well as the history of the Medici family in artistic and literary works in France (literature, fine arts, music, photography, cinema). In addition to purely historiographical subjects, the conference will also focus on representations of Florence in other forms of artistic and intellectual activity, as well as in publishing production, print images and certain types of cultural industries which have continued to promote the Florentine myth in France up to the present.

For the Florentines as well as the French, the historical origins of the myth are often quite ancient, sometimes even contemporary with the creation of Florence as a « city of the

arts » during the Renaissance. The influence of Florentine art in France, Franco-Florentine relations and the history of the Medici family's' « patronage » may constitute the subject of an introductory discussion. However, the main focus will be the relationship between the Florentine myth and the Romantic spirit in France, the 19th-century resurgence of interest in medieval and Renaissance arts, the rise of historical schools of thought, the development of public library collections, the trend of long journeys, etc. The conference will thus focus on the period (between 1850 and the Second World War) during which the myth of Florence became ingrained among writers, collectors and artists, followed by the rapid diffusion of these ideas and images among the social elites via education, reading and extensive travel, and ending up in a sort of democratization of the myth, in the first half of the 20th century, with the development of cultural tourism.

Applying to participate in the conference:

Propositions must be sent **before Saturday December 1, 2018** to the following address: colloquevillafinaly2019@gmail.com

For all information on the conference, please write to one of the following addresses: alain.merot@paris-sorbonne.fr, anne.lepoittevin@gmail.com, emmanuellurin@yahoo.fr

Applications should include a full title, an abstract of around 1500 characters as well as a short curriculum vitae.

Languages accepted for presentation in Florence: French, Italian, and English.

Thematic orientations for presentations:

- **French historians and the myth of the Florentine « Renaissance »**
The perception of Florence in the works of French historians, past and present (« cradle of the Renaissance », « origins of mannerism »). Reception of great medieval and Renaissance Florentine literary works (Dante, Machiavelli, Vasari, etc.) in France. Positivist works by 19th-century French art historians.
- **The « city of the arts »: Florence as seen by French artists and writers**
Art-lovers, artists and writers: how the French contributed to the construction of a great European myth (historical paintings, theater, music, novels, poetry, etc.). The reactions of French artists before the great masters of the Florentine Renaissance (Giotto, Botticelli, Michelangelo, Pontormo, Cellini, etc.).
- **The Florentine model in France: in collections, museums and academies**
The rediscovery of Florentine art in France in the 19th century and its role in the history of taste and collections. The role of Florentine artistic figures in the construction of an artistic imagination and pantheon. Great exhibitions of Florentine art.

- **Cultural tourism, technology and industry: the Florentine myth in the contemporary world**

French tourists in Florence after 1850 : sites, figures and objects of an artistic cult ; the role of technology in the construction of the Florentine myth (engravings, photography, guides, art books) ; the Florentine myth and the business of art (souvenirs, artifacts, etc.) ; the Florentine myth in the age of technology.