

Research Project Minou Schraven

Worlds of Wonders

Jesuit Festival Culture, Collecting and the Circulation of Knowledge in Early Modern Rome and the Low Countries

Synopsis

The research project 'Worlds of Wonder' studies the way in which festivals and collections were used to produce and advance artistic, scientific and ideological concepts in the early modern period. Special interest is given to the role of festivals and collections in the exchange of knowledge between Jesuit colleges in Rome and the Low Countries.

Outline Individual Research Project 'Worlds of Wonders'

The highlight of the marriage of Michele Peretti, nephew of Pope Sixtus V (1585-1590), and Anna Maria Cesi in February 1614 was the staging of the play *Amor Pudico* in the Palazzo della Cancelleria in Rome. Curated by the Accademia degli Umoreisti, the *apparato* contained four chandeliers, or *stelle medicee*: for the invited *intendenti* a reference to the most recent astronomical discovery of Galileo Galilei. Federico Cesi, brother of the bride, headed the Accademia dei Lincei, of which Galilei was a member.¹ Francesco Barberini, scientist and collector himself, would join the Lincei in 1623. He was a close friend of the Jesuit Athanasius Kircher (d. 1680): "master of a hundred arts," among which Egyptology, botany, geology, and founder of the famous 'Musaeum Kircherianum' in the Collegio Romano: the much-celebrated center for scientific research and debates between patricians, scientists and their extended networks, in Italy and beyond.

Early modern festivals and collections were indeed hot spots for the production and circulation of knowledge, and the Jesuits understood their potential for the export of artistic, scientific and dogmatic values as no other. From its dedication in 1584 onwards, the Gesù in Rome took pride of place in the busy festival life of the Eternal city, with elaborate and numerous processions and celebrations. As part of their curriculum, students of the Collegio Romano participated in numerous festivals and theatrical events. After their graduation, they exported these models and values to other Jesuit colleges and missions.²

Research Questions

The first step in this research is to define a corpus of Jesuit festivals, staged in the Collegio Romano and in the Low Countries in the period of investigation (1585-1685), for instance those for the canonization of Ignace and Franciscus Xaverius

¹ Dissertation applicant 218-222; Paula Findlen, *Possessing Nature. Museums, Collecting and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Berkeley 1994). David Freedberg, *The Eye of the Lynx. Galileo, His Friends and the Beginnings of Natural History* (Chicago 2002);

² B. Dompnier (ed.), *Les cérémonies extraordinaires du catholicisme baroque* (Clermont-Ferrand 2009); J. Verberckmoes (ed.), *Vreemden vertoond. Exotisme en spektakelcultuur in de Spaanse Nederlanden en de Nieuwe Wereld* (Leuven 2002); A. Piéjus (ed.), *Plaire et instruire. Le spectacle dans les collèges de l'Ancien Régime* (Rennes 2007); M. Feingold (ed.), *Jesuit Science and the Republic of Letters* (Cambridge 2003).

(1622) and the first centenary of the Jesuit Order (1639).³ It is also important to establish the contribution of the Jesuit colleges on religious and civic festivals organized in Rome – the pupils were asked to write eulogies and verses and to perform during translation ceremonies of relics and during obsequies. For instance, during the translation ceremonies of Gregory of Nazianzen in 1580, some unfortunate pupils of the Collegio Germanico, dressed as angels, were hanging over the street, to sing while the procession passed through the ephemeral arches built near S. Agostino.

The following aspects are of interest:

- The forms, components, and (intended) effects of festivals, theatrical and scientific demonstrations. In what way were they agents of social and cultural transformation?
- Identify the institutions and networks. What is their contribution to the production of festival culture and the culture of collecting?
- The exchange between Rome (Gesù and Collegio Romano) and Jesuit colleges in the provinces, particularly those in the Low Countries.

Primary Sources

Of obvious importance are printed festival books and unpublished accounts of festivals and scientific demonstrations in correspondences, diaries and other sources. In order to study the networks of patricians, scientists and collectors, the following archives in Rome will be consulted: the archive of the Institutum Historicum Societatis Jesu (Curia Generalizia); those of the Collegio Romano and Collegio Germanico (Archivio Storico at the Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Rome).

Plan of Work

	Research	Teaching
Year 1 2011-12	- Establishing corpus of Jesuit festivals; Case Study I (Article 1) - Research periods in Italy (Rome, Bologna) and Belgium - Consolidation of network; workshops (Belgium - Rome) - Apply for funding for concert and exhibition in Rome	- Research seminar 1: Early modern festival culture - Summer school in Rome
Year 2 2012-13	- Case Study II (Article 2) - Research periods in Italy (Rome, Florence) - network workshops (Belgium, Rome)	Summer school in Rome
Year 3 2013-14	Recreation of baroque festival	

³ M. Fagiolo Dell'Arco, *Corpus delle feste a Roma* (Rome 1997); E. Corswarem (ed.), *Musique et Jésuites en provinces flandro- et gallo-belges aux XVII et XVIII siècles* (Liège 2008); M. Soenen, "Fêtes, cortèges et cérémonies publiques à Bruxelles" (Bulletin trimestriel du Crédit Communal 51 (1997): 95-105; R. DeKoninck e.a., *Quatre siècles de présence jésuite à Bruxelles* (Bruxelles 2010).