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Reflections and Impacts of Environmental Exploitation in European Visual Cultures 1200–1900

8–9 June 2023, Brno, Czech Republic

How environmental exploitation, industrialization, and urbanization shaped late medieval and modern visual cultures, landscape, environment, and built environment in Europe (and beyond). An international conference at Art History Department of Masaryk University in Brno (Czech Republic) 8–9 June 2023, organized by Tomáš Valeš, Jan Galeta, Martin F. Lešák, and Veronika Řezníčková as 3rd Biennale of Centre for Early Modern Studies (<https://cemsbrno.org>).

During the Anthropocene, the planet Earth has witnessed several environmental shifts, closely affecting not only the current existence of living species but also the overall future of the planet. The exploitation of the environment creates wealth and simultaneously leads to the various ecological, social, economic, and humanitarian crises that contemporary societies are forced to address, especially in reaction to climate change. In the past centuries, the extraction of precious materials (silver, gold, coal, pearls, coral, whale bones, ivory, or even wood) financed the running of states, cities, Churches, monasteries, influential families, and clergy who, in turn commissioned luxurious art and opulent buildings, using the mined materials themselves.

Industrialization and urbanization had a tremendous impact on the environment and landscape. Currently, these issues also resonate in the field of art history, or rather eco-art history, for example, in connection with groundbreaking studies or edited volumes, such as those by Sugata Ray (*Climate Change and the Art of Devotion Geoaesthetics in the Land of Krishna, 1550–1850*), Andrew Patrizio (*Ecological Eye: Assembling an Ecocritical Art History*), or Karl Kusserow (*Picture Ecology: Art and Ecocriticism in Planetary Perspective*). Following this line of research, the conference's main aim is to tackle a broad spectrum of relevant questions that have not been asked yet.

We intend to investigate the interconnections between the environment, its exploitation, art, architecture, and urbanism in a broader European frame with global overlap between 1200 and 1900 (thus taking a *longue durée* perspective). This explicitly includes the transformation of raw mined materials into luxurious objects; sumptuous and prestigious artistic and urbanistic projects financed by the wealth raised by exploiting nature; iconographies that reflect how the environment was treated, shaped and used in late medieval and modern times.

We are particularly interested in bringing together scholars specialized in different academic areas to confront the human impact on past environments and connect it with the sometimes somewhat self-righteous world of art and beauty. Ultimately, the aim is to explore future perspectives of environmental approaches in art history and lay the foundations for further cooperation between researchers from diverse academic backgrounds.

Possible topics may include but are by no means limited to such issues as:

1. The role of industrialization and urbanization and their foot prints on the landscape, environment, and built environment.
2. Visual representation of human impact on the natural world, e.g., mining, logging, whaling etc.
3. The mechanisms of exploitation of natural resources in connection to artistic production, e.g., in the case of ivory, coral, or various building materials.
4. Appropriation of nature for collecting purposes or personal representation (taxidermies, live specimens, parts of animal bodies, herbariums, portraits of animals, menageries and zoos etc.)
5. The origins of appreciating wild nature and the reflection of this appreciation in visual culture, e.g., the beginning of mass tourism, scientific research of nature or how travellers mediated non-European nature in their homelands.

The keynote lecture of the conference will be given by **Dr. Hannah Baader** (Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut).

We invite senior as well as junior scholars and advanced PhD candidates for 20 minutes long papers in English. Please submit your proposals of around 200–300 words, accompanied by a short CV, by **22 January 2023** to: brno.conference.2023@gmail.com

Notification of acceptance of proposals will be issued before **22 February 2023**.

Selected papers will be published in an edited volume with Brepols publishing house (Belgium).

