Landscape and the Visual Hermeneutics of Place, 1500-1700

Co-organizers: Walter Melion (Emory University) and Karl Enenkel (Universität Münster)

Scholars of Northern and Italian art have recently called attention to the exegetical form and function of landscape in various genres and proto-genres of early modern painting. Bruegel’s Seasons (1565), for example, viewed through the lens of Augustine’s reading of Psalm 47, operate as signifiers of divine beauty, goodness, and being, even while insisting, through their mutability and inconstancy, on the immutability and constancy of God. The descriptive effects that make these landscapes visually compelling, are complementary to motifs and structural devices—such as analogy, antithesis, chiasmus, and periphrasis—that invite or, better, demand sustained hermeneutic engagement. Between 1500 and 1700, the efflorescence of pictured landscape went hand in hand with the literary and rhetorical exploration of landscape’s affective and signifying effects. Countless lyric poems and cycles visualize landscape as the place whither one goes in search of the poetic source; in heptameral poetry, it epitomizes divine potency of the Creator; in epic poetry, it is the place through which one journeys to achieve a goal; in sacred literature, it marks the stages of the soul’s journey toward God. The visual evocation of place also constitutes one of the chief topics of rhetorics and poetics. These literary and pictorial examples bear witness to the discursive context within which landscape imagery functioned as a visual hermeneutic in paintings, drawings, and prints produced in Italy, Germany, and the Low Countries between 1500 and 1700.

Thursday, March 21
Opening Remarks: 9:00-9:15
Sarah McPhee and Walter Melion, Emory University

Session 1: 9:15 – 11:45
Margaret Goehring, New Mexico State University
Gardens of Eloquence: The Late Medieval and Early Renaissance Garden as Ornamentum of Nobility

Denis Ribouillault, Université de Montréal
Hermeneutics and the Early Modern Garden

Luke Morgan, Monash University
"False Art's Insolent Address": The Enchanted Garden in Early Modern Literature and Landscape Design

11:45 - 1:00 — Lunch

Session 2: 1:00 – 3:15
Sarah Crover, University of British Columbia
Landscape as Parable: Women, Cities, and Dales in Shakespeare’s “The Rape of Lucrece” and “Venus and Adonis”

Walter Melion, Emory University
Parabolic, Periphrastic, and Ekphrastic Landscape in Hans Bol’s “Emblemata Evangelica” of 1585

Paul Smith, University of Leiden
Landscape in Marcus Gheeraert’s Fable Illustrations

3:15 – 3:30 — Coffee Break

Session 3: 3:30 – 5:00
Lucas Reddemann, Universität Münster
Epic Salvation: Christ’s Descent into Hell and the Topography of the Underworld in Neo-Latin Christian Epic

Michel Weemans, EHESS
Bruegel’s Birds: Sight and Insight in Bruegel’s Bird’s-Eye View Landscapes

Friday, March 22
Session 1, 9:15 – 10:45
Reindert Falkenburg, NYU Abu Dhabi
Puddled Places: On ‘Schilderachtig’ Landscape Paintings in early 17th-Century Dutch Art

Stijn Bussels, Leiden University
Landscape with Landmark: Jacob van Ruisdael’s Panoramic View on Amsterdam (1665-1670)

10:45 – 11:00 — Coffee Break

Session 2, 11:00 – 12:30
Sarah McPhee, Emory University
The Stratigraphy of Poetic Landscape at the Esquiline Villa

Andrew Yeung Bun Hui, Yale-NUS
Poussin’s Allegory of Ruins

12:30 – 12:45 — Concluding Remarks: Publication
12:45 – 2:00 — Lunch