PS19: Rethinking Medieval Rome: Architecture and Urbanism
Society of Architectural Historians 2017 Annual International Conference
Glasgow, Scotland — 9 June 2017, 8:30 AM, Auditorium A
Sponsored by the Italian Art Society, www.italianartsociety.org
Conference information and registration at www.sah.org

Organizers:

Marius B. Hauknes, Collegiate Assistant Professor of Humanities, University of Chicago
Alison Locke Perchuk, Assistant Professor of Art History, California State University Channel Islands

Session Overview

In the past decade the medieval humanities have opened up new perspectives on the past by focusing on questions of materiality, agency, temporality, spatiality, cross-cultural interaction, and ecocriticism. These new approaches, many of which are informed by interdisciplinary research and contemporary cultural interests in the natural and built world, are fundamentally reshaping how we conceive of and study medieval architecture and urbanism. This panel will examine how new methodologies and theoretically informed approaches are changing our understanding of the architecture and urban forms of Rome from the end of the Gothic War (ca. 554) to the re-establishment of the papacy under Pope Martin V (ca. 1420). The city of Rome has long occupied a particular place in scholarly narratives as the seat of the papacy, as a destination for pilgrims, and as a mythical symbol of past grandeur and decline. Historians of Rome's medieval architecture and urban fabric have traditionally focused on such issues as the distinctively retrospective character of the city's basilicas, the relationship between architecture and liturgy, the reuse of ancient materials, the topographical distinctions between the city's inhabited and uninhabited regions, or the polemical character of Rome's baronial tower houses. This session inquires into the current status of medieval Rome, both within the field of architectural history and in relation to the broader discourses of the medieval humanities.

Schedule

Marius Hauknes & Alison Perchuk, "Introduction" (8:30 AM)
Nicola Camerlenghi, Dartmouth College (U.S.A.), "Mapping Medieval Rome" (8:35 AM).
Christina Videbech, University of Bergen (Norway), "Fora as Sites of Collective Memory in Gothic and
        Post-Gothic Rome" (8:55 AM).
Joan Barclay Lloyd, La Trobe University (Australia), "The Dominican Church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva
        in Rome" (9:15 AM)
Katherine Rinne, Independent Scholar (U.S.A.), "The Power of Thirst: Water and Power in Late-Medieval
        Rome" (9:35 AM)
Melissa Fitzmaurice, Binghamton University (U.S.A.), "Fascist Medievalism: Architecture, Authority and
        Dissent in Rome" (9:55 AM)

Abstracts

Nicola Camerlenghi, Dartmouth College, "Mapping Medieval Rome." Perhaps the greatest challenge to studying Rome between the years 400 and 1400 is the absence of a holistic, spatiotemporal understanding of that city's medieval urban fabric. Before posing questions—let alone answering them—it is essential to know what was where when. The "Mapping Medieval Rome" project proposes to assemble extant and extinct evidence onto a historically and topographically accurate digital map. The collaborative project is made possible by a robust cartographic platform devised by an interdisciplinary team of art historians, architects and designers centered at the University of Oregon, Stanford University and Dartmouth College. "Mapping Medieval Rome" will reveal the complexity of the city beyond what has been possible in the absence of such digital, collaborative approaches. Our new map builds upon cartographic enterprises from the pre-digital age augmented by archaeological, visual and written sources. Never before have the city's churches, towers, houses, roads, bridges, streets and wells, as well as pilgrimage paths, processional routes and the like been united in a meaningful way to permit complex analyses. By considering such a diversity of evidence, we both aim to reevaluate existing hypotheses about the forces that shaped and reshaped city life, and to expose previously invisible networks of influence—be they demographic, familial, spiritual, topographic, aural or otherwise. All told, our map of the medieval city will provide new insight into the social and physical factors that shaped lives and spaces over centuries. The project's significance reaches beyond the confines of medieval Rome by not only promising to become one of the main tools for investigating the city writ large, but also—given Rome's rich urban fabric and its spiritual and political importance—by permitting us to revisit the medieval period and the history of urbanism more broadly.

Christina Videbech, University of Bergen (Norway), "Fora as Sites of Collective Memory in Gothic and Post-Gothic Rome." The sixth century was a time of change in the city of Rome. While the city was not the capital of the Roman Empire anymore, it transformed into the cultural capital Roma Aeterna. Earlier the Forum Traiani and the Forum Romanum were important locations for political interactions, but also places where ideals of Roman identity were embodied. The architecture of the fora, relating to the Roman past, was important for Roman self-understanding and legitimization. The buildings and the fora themselves, being memorytransfers or fixed-points of history, were parts of a process, which both constructed and stabilized the selfimage of Roman society and established the ever important continuity with the past. A continuity, which had in fact been broken by the Gothic rule. This presentation examines how the fora were used in this period and what the old monuments meant as memory-transfers of Roman identity in a city that was not ruled from Rome anymore and sometimes not even by Romans. The development of the sites will be used to explain the meaning Rome developed as a symbol of the Roman Empire and as an important part of the narrative of the Goths about themselves as "new" Romans. How did the inhabitants of the city maintain their Roman identity in a world, where they were under the rule of the "barbarians"? Did the fora and their architecture become battlegrounds of collective memory with the old Roman aristocracy on the one side and the Goths on the other, or were both parties joined together in a struggle to uphold the idea of Rome as part of the Roman Empire? Furthermore, what were the implications for Roman identity, as expressed through the architecture of the fora, when Rome was returned to the control of the Eastern Empire?

Joan Barclay Lloyd, La Trobe University (Australia), "The Dominican Church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva in Rome." The non-reception of Gothic architectural principles in the design of large churches in medieval Rome has been a problem that has vexed architectural historians for some time. Apart from some features, such as windows with pointed arches and occasional ribbed vaulting, the large churches of the city were not built in the Gothic style. In recent years, however, some other Gothic structures have caught the attention of scholars, and are now considered among the medieval city's most interesting medieval buildings – for example, the 'Aula Gotica' in Cardinal Stefano Conti's palace at SS. Quattro Coronati, built in 1246-54, or the Sancta Sanctorum Chapel at the Lateran, as rebuilt and redecorated in 1277-79. These structures show that medieval Romans knew and appreciated Gothic architecture. Why then, was it not used in the building of large churches? An exception was S. Maria sopra Minerva, which was a big Gothic church the Dominicans built in the centre of Rome near the Pantheon from 1280 onwards. To understand its design, it is important to see its Dominican as well as its Gothic features. One has to reconstruct its original form,

because the appearance and structure of the church have changed radically since it was built. To do this one has to leave aside many later additions from the fourteenth to the eighteenth century, as well as the nineteenthcentury 'restoration' by Fra Girolamo Bianchedì in 1848-49, and the subsequent decoration of the church before and after its rededication in 1855. Reconstructions proposed so far are not completely satisfactory. For this reason this paper will consider afresh the original Gothic and Dominican character of the building and assess its importance in the history of architecture in medieval Rome.

Katherine Rinne, Independent Scholar (U.S.A.), "The Power of Thirst: Water and Power in Late-Medieval Rome." The Power of Thirst investigates water scarcity and its privatization in Rome between the late-tenth century-when references to ancient aqueducts and the public water supply essentially cease-and the pontificate of Nicolas V (1447-1455), when the ancient Aqua Virgo was partially restored after centuries of decreasing flow. Since the 1990s, Rome's medieval water supply has received wide scholarly interest, particularly among archaeologists. This is especially so for the period between 537/38, when the Visigoth army cut Rome's aqueducts and laid siege to the city, and the late-tenth century when the restored aqueducts are no longer mentioned. Once the big-boned technological infrastructure disappears from the urban scene, so too does the interest of most scholars of medieval and Early Modern Rome. Rather than focus on aqueducts, in this talk I will concentrate on smaller local sources specifically urban springs, streams, and the Tiber River, and simpler technologies associated with digging wells, creating irrigation systems, and building cisterns. Based on archival, topographic, and cartographic research, this talk introduces issues of the ownership of and rights and access to urban springs, streams, wells, and fountains. I explore how the papacy, cardinals, monasteries, and Rome's noble families developed, distributed, utilized, and administered a scarce water supply, and the various impacts-social, political, economic, technological, and topographical-that these strategies had on Rome's urban development, particularly between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries.

Melissa Fitzmaurice, Binghamton University (U.S.A.), "Fascist Medievalism: Architecture, Authority and Dissent in Rome." The demolitions involved in the excavation of the Mausoleum of Augustus and the creation of a surrounding piazza began on October 22, 1934, and eventually led to the destruction of 27,000 square meters within the city of Rome.* What was selected to remain is as important as what was destroyed: Mussolini routinely called for the isolation of ancient monuments, but in the case of the Mausoleum, there were buildings that stood in the way of the ideal isolation. Three medieval churches were protected and worked into the various plans for the piazzale over 30 years. Despite this and other cases, in the study of Italian Fascism and the regime's urban and architectural interventions in Rome, the medieval city is often overlooked- the antique world looms much larger. But the medieval offered a certain ideological utility to the regime as well, which must be examined. Using digital mapping and modeling tools, and case studies including the preservation of medieval buildings during the production of the Piazzale Augusto Imperatore and the destruction of churches during the excavation of the Via dell'Impero, this project constitutes a palimpsestuous exploration of the legacy of medieval Rome. Beyond recognizing the use, manipulation, or destruction of medieval sites, this paper seeks to highlight the enduring power of medieval architecture on the Roman landscape, identifying the possibility or actuality of production of political and ecclesiastical authority, and dissent from that authority, in order to produce a deeper understanding of the continuities and ruptures between the medieval city, the fascist city, and the present.

* Spiro Kostoff, "The Emperor and the Duce: The Planning of Piazzale Augusto Imperatore in Rome," in Art and Architecture in the Service of Politics, ed. Henry A. Millon and Linda Nochlin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 270.