

Call for Papers

Iconography

Editors: Perrine Lachenal, Georg Leube

Publication date: Spring 2017

The peer-reviewed online journal “Middle East – Topics & Arguments” (META) is calling for submissions for its eighth issue, which will be entitled **Iconography**.

When regarding the flourishing array of murals in post-revolutionary Cairo, one is as impressed by the broad variety of pictures and words employed in these famous graffiti as by the range of performative responses these newly created “icons” of the revolution draw from the audience of contemporary Egypt and beyond. While here as in other depictions of “martyrs”, social actors play out larger political debates concerning the legitimacy or illegitimacy of violence, the pictures created in turn force their audience to some form of engagement, a process aptly described as an “entanglement” by A. Gell.¹ They are in this aspect surprisingly parallel to the canon of royal pastimes known as the *Princely Cycle* in the study of Medieval Islamic material culture, depicting rulers in recurring scenes of hunting, feasting and music to an audience in all likelihood striving to emulate these princely pastimes in performances of their own.

Synchronistic studies of the combination of discrete elements in spatially and temporally bounded areas such as these form one of the most adaptable approaches in the field of Cultural Studies. The META issue “Iconography” aims to critically engage with this approach and shed light on the underlying assumptions of a “grammar” of a Language of Forms (*Formensprache*) and the interplay of visibility and structure in representations produced in a given society. We welcome papers that address the overarching theme of the call, including those that consider, but are not limited to, the following topics and questions:

Permeability

Drawing on concepts derived from the fields of Visual Culture Studies, Visual Anthropology and other disciplines, we are especially interested in permeabilities between discrete repertoires, traditions and mediums. With due awareness of the looming pitfalls of essentialisms, it is highly interesting how some Languages of Forms tend to be seen as static realms conceptualized as distinct with regard to other iconographic traditions. At the same time, however, the re-actualization of living iconographic traditions leads to a constant incorporation of novel elements, structures and technologies. We aim to shed light on this interplay of permeability and seclusion by asking the following questions:

- How does the construction of coherent iconographies work?
- How is the functioning of permeability regulated?
- How is permeability and seclusion moderated across separate genres?

¹ *Art and Agency*, A. Gell, Oxford 1998.

Performativity

A second major issue connected to studies of an iconographic nature lies in the relation of representations produced in a given society to their grounding in performative actions. Drawing on concepts of Judith Butler and others, we approach the public sphere as a set of performances enacted by means of representations. The specific nature of these representations is mediated by means of the actualization of existing iconographical vocabularies and grammars to formulate claims to visibility and relevance.

- What is the relation of the iconographical vocabulary of a representation to the worldview of its producers?
- How is the performance of social roles in a given society governed by existing iconographical vocabularies?
- How and in which potentially different ways is a given representation or performance understood as a relevant claim in the public sphere?

Technology

A further crucial role in iconographic studies of all epochs is played by the relationship between the formulated claim and its underlying technology. We understand technology in the broadest sense to encompass all aspects that are brought to bear on circumstances of production.

- How does the social technology of communication regulate the coordination of claims formulated in a given iconographic tradition?
- What is the relationship between the technical aspects of production and the ways in which a claim is formulated and read?
- What is the social relationship between the designer and the producer of a given claim? In which ways may design and production eventually overlap?

We call for articles from a broad array of disciplines, including political science, sociology, anthropology, literature studies, cultural studies, media studies, linguistics, history and economics, which critically engage with iconographical approaches related to the Near and Middle East.

Submissions relating to the issue's focus topic are published in the FOCUS section and reflect original research. Articles in this section should be between 2,800 to 4,600 words. In addition to papers for the FOCUS section, we call for contributions for META's special sections:

The CLOSE UP section features a short written portrait of a person who has a special relation to the issue's main topic, e.g. a researcher who has constitutively contributed to the field. It links that person's biography with their contribution to the field. Article length is 1,500 to 3,000 words.

The META section also relates to the issue's focus topic, with the papers in "meta" discussing the main topic from a theory-centered perspective. Regional scope is not limited to the Middle East, but may also consider theoretical approaches involving other world regions. Article length is 2,800 to 4,600 words.

The ANTI/THESIS section juxtaposes two rivaling positions that highlight different lines of argument, pros and cons, and/or competing narratives. These can be presented either by one author together, or by two different authors in two different articles. Article length for each paper is 1,500-3,000 words.

All articles that fall into the general framework of the journal, but do not relate to the special topic "Iconography", will be taken into consideration for the OFF TOPIC section.

Prior to developing a complete manuscript, authors are asked to submit an abstract (300 words max.), a short CV (150 words max.), and 3-5 key bibliographic sources. Please clearly indicate the research question, the method to be used, and the empirical material your research will be based on. Papers are accepted in English only.

The editors will make a preliminary decision regarding the topic's relevance to the journal's aims and scope and will provide suggestions for developing the manuscript. Please consult our website for further information about the journal's concept, sections, and authors' guidelines.

The deadline for abstract submissions is June 30th 2016.

The deadline for article submissions is September 30th 2016.

Proposals, manuscripts and other editorial correspondence should be sent to: submissions8@meta-journal.net.