

S04 CULTURAL WORKERS IN THE URBAN ECONOMY 1850-1939

Organisers: Jill Steward (Newcastle University)
Dr Malcolm Gee (Northumbria, UK)
Prof Tim Kirk (Newcastle, UK)
Dr Dobrinka Parusheva (Plovdiv, Bulgaria)

Period: Modern

Date: Friday, 31 August, 2012

Time: 09:00-10:30

Room: 215

Description

In *What is Art* (1904) Leo Tolstoy noted 'the people who do all the work...the people who always sit below the stage moving the decorations, winding up the machinery, working at the piano or French horn, and setting type and printing books' (p 69). Elsewhere he mentions 'the professional artists, who lived by the trade, receiving remunerations from newspaper editors, publishers, impresarios, and in general from those agents who come between the artists and the town public – the consumers of art' (p. 119). In recent years the impact of cultural activity on the fabric and organisation of cities has received increased attention from urban historians. This session aims to focus on some of the distinctive features of this aspect of urban life during a key period of change. Between the mid-nineteenth century and the Second World War the role of culture in the economic life of European cities not only expanded, but was transformed. Mass education, technological innovation, professionalization, and the development of the cultural industries and their associated institutions gave rise to new patterns and types of employment. Elite culture flourished, supported by an expanding art market, the specialist press and public and private patronage. At the same time new forms of popular culture developed, catering to a growing public of literate workers and lower middle class employees. Both sectors of cultural production generated distinct forms of work for large numbers of 'cultural workers' with a diversity of skills. Alongside the 'stars' of cultural production – artists, actors, composers, and performers – battalions of 'backroom' workers shifted scenes, made costumes, set type, took photographs, made instruments, edited copy, framed and dispatched pictures, and carried out all the other tasks required by the making, presentation, and dissemination of cultural products. The establishment and growth of the cultural quarters found in many metropolitan cities was dependent upon the workers who serviced and staffed the agencies involved in cultural activity. This session will explore and analyse the contribution of different types of cultural worker to the nature and texture of urban life and the cultural economy within the comparative framework of European cities in the period. Papers should address the key question of the impact of changes in technology, commercial and cultural practices, and forms of cultural transmission on the lives of people employed by, or involved in, the cultural sectors of the urban economy.

Other questions might include the following:

- What particular sites of cultural activity can be found in towns and cities?
- What categories of cultural workers can be identified and how did their patterns of work, life experiences and lifestyles interact with and help to shape urban life and culture?
- What role was played by distinctively urban sites of sociability and leisure?
- What part was played in the development of urban cultures by professional and industrial networks and

organisations?

- How important was the mobility of cultural workers within and between cities?
- How did the experiences of those employed in the 'cultural industries' of the private sector differ from those in state or municipal institutions?

Scientific programme

1530 THE MODERN ART TRADE IN THE URBAN SPACES OF BERLIN AND PARIS C.1900-1930

Malcolm Gee (Northumbria University, Arts, Newcastle upon Tyne, U.K.)

1290 'CHARM OF NOVELTY': THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE LONDON ZOO AND THE CULTURAL INDUSTRIES IN MID-NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITAIN

Takashi Ito (Kanazawa Gakuin University, Department of History, Kanazawa, Japan)

1405 THE CONDITION OF THE CULTURAL CLASS IN AUSTRIA

Tim Kirk (Newcastle University, Historical Studies, Newcastle upon Tyne, U.K.)