

S22 **PERFORMING THE PAST IN URBAN CULTURE, 1900-50**

Organisers: Prof Roey Sweet (University of Leicester)
 Dr Paul O'Leary (University of Aberystwyth)

Period: Modern

Date: Friday, 31 August, 2012

Time: 16:00-17:30

Room: 301

Description

How did the inhabitants of European towns and cities engage with their local and national past in the interwar period? Studies of twentieth-century urban culture tend to focus on symbols of modernity, such as the flâneur, 'modern' art and architecture, film, sport and new forms of recreational leisure. The failure, however, fully to incorporate the past into the study of twentieth-century urban culture has limited, and to some extent skewed our perspective on it. One medium through which the twentieth-century's engagement with the past can be studied is through the historical pageant. In Britain, the historical pageant developed into a national movement in the first half of the twentieth century, staged in towns across the country, from historic cathedral cities such as Winchester to modern manufacturing centres such as Bradford. This session seeks to explore the varied ways in which urban culture engaged with the past in a period of rapid urbanization, particularly through the mass media of theatre and performance and to understand the importance of the past in the construction of modern urban identities.

We invite proposals from across Europe and potential themes include:

- What other forms of public display and celebration included explicit reference to the local and national past and how widespread was the phenomenon of 'performing the past' in European cities?
- How far did the urban pageant, or similar forms of public display, help to define the town? To what extent did the pageant contribute to a sense of civic consciousness and urban identity?
- How far did the public performance of the past become a vehicle for wider regional, national and imperial identities? How did regional and national capitals negotiate the relationship between their civic and wider identities?
 - To what extent did the urban pageant, and similar forms of public display, draw on pre-existing forms of public display and ritual, and on established historical narratives, and how far did they contribute to the 'invention' or 're-invention' of tradition? Was the pageant an agent for or brake on modernization?
- How far were pageants engaged in the commercialization of the past? To what extent were they used to sell towns? What role did they play in inter-urban competition, in particular in the pursuit of the tourist heritage market?
- How did the form of the urban pageant change over time? How far did the inter-war years see the emergence of new types of urban pageantry that reflected the changing economic and political context?

Scientific Programme

- 1593 PAGEANTRY, CIVIC IDENTITY AND THE POLITICS OF HISTORY: THE NATIONAL PAGEANT OF WALES**
Paul O'leary (Aberystwyth University, History and Welsh History, Aberystwyth, U.K.)
- 1583 URBAN GOVERNMENT AND CIVIC PAGEANTS: MAKING CITIZENS OF THE CITY IN MANCHESTER AND CHICAGO**
Tom Hulme (University of Leicester, Centre for Urban History, Leicester, U.K.)
- 1513 THE DECLINE OF THE PERFORMED PAST IN AMSTERDAM 1898-1923**
Nancy Stieber (University of Massachusetts Boston, Department of Art, Cambridge, USA)
- 1050 PERFORMING NATIONAL, FAMILIAL AND URBAN PAST? THE CENTENARY OF THE COMPANY FRIEDRICH KRUPP IN ESSEN IN 1912**
Lena Krull (Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Cluster of Excellence "Religion and Politics", Münster, Germany)