

# Questioning the frame in the decorative systems of the modern era



09-10 May 2014

Institut national d'histoire de l'art, Paris

International symposium organized by the CHAR (HICSA, University Paris 1 Panthéon - Sorbonne), the Centre François-Georges Pariset (Université Michel de Montaigne - Bordeaux 3) and the GEMCA (Catholic University of Louvain)

In its ability to create *systems*, modern *decor* emerges as a phenomenon of artistic practice that deserves further analysis. Between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, decoration reached a particularly high degree of elaboration and complexity through the multiplication of presentation devices in the visual discourse, while simultaneously integrating the spatial constraints imposed by supports. This symposium seeks to explore the originality of this phenomenon through the question of the *frame*. Often neglected and marginalized in studies pertaining to decoration, the frame constitutes one of its essential dimensions, which conditions not only modes of perception but also provides paths towards understanding the mechanisms of decorative systems. Indeed, if decorative systems are the place *par excellence* of experimentation with the boundaries between real and representational spaces, subtle and varied framing games are the active agents, and shall be explored during this event.

*Quadri riportati*, architectural elements, anthropomorphic and hybrid figures, feigned materials (tapestries, parchment, leather, etc.), medallions, cartouches, and festoons are some examples of framing devices which, far from being accessory or gratuitous, carry a multitude of illusionistic, syntactic, and semantic implications, all-the-while participating in the visual splendor and the *mise-en-scène* of the representation. Through the definition and articulation of these particular spaces and discursive registers, framing devices create interpretative solutions, conditioning and guiding the perception and comprehension of visual discourse. Even when the frame appears as a disjunctive element, which separates and differentiates, it can still allow for conjunctions and transitions through space, or, through an excess of reflexivity and a tendency for autonomy, blur and provoke a crisis in the hierarchy between the visual regions. By taking into consideration this perpetual shifting of frontiers, these games and perspectival challenges, the goal of this symposium is to question the framing devices of decorative systems in the modern era. In other words the objective is to understand how the *frame* participates in the

transformation of *decor* into a system that produces meaning across a variety of supports and mediums.

Among the many issues raised by this topic, some possible themes include:

- What are the specific mechanisms in decorative practice used for defining and creating spaces, images, and graphic or symbolic representations? Could this use of the frame contribute to the definition of certain tendencies or aesthetic currents?
- In terms of reception, what are the devices used to create frontiers or passages between the decor and the viewer? In what ways does decor create effects of presence and distance, thus contributing to the viewer's experience?
- How does the ornament of the frame respond to the principle of *decorum*? To what extent does this constitute a transgression? How does the relationship between *ergon* and *parergon* apply in this context? How do the boundaries and transitions between these different areas challenge the traditional hierarchies of representation and create spaces of freedom and autonomy?
- How can the transition between different mediums and contexts provoke, for similar devices, varied readings corresponding to particular challenges? How does the use of different materials, real or feigned, participate in the framing process, from an aesthetic as well as a symbolic point of view?

Developing on studies which, since the 1960s, have been problematizing the issues of the frame in the visual arts, and adhering to the current revival of interest in question of the *ornamental*, this symposium aims to shed light on this essential issue in the art of the modern era, which is the *decor*.

Abstracts of no more than 300 words (in French or English) should be sent before **October 15, 2013** by email to the address: [cadre.decor.2014@gmail.com](mailto:cadre.decor.2014@gmail.com)

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