

A Driving Force. On the Rhetoric of Images and Power

edited by Angelica Bertoli, Giulia Gelmi,
Andrea Missagia, Maria Novella Tavano

Introductory remarks

The proceedings of the conference *A Driving Force: On The Rhetoric Of Images And Power*, edited by Angelica Bertoli, Giulia Gelmi, Andrea Missagia, and Maria Novella Tavano, explore from a multidisciplinary point of view the rhetorical nature of the intersection between images and power. The collection features a diverse array of themes and topics, spanning a vast chronological and geographical range including Byzantine art, Late Medieval and Renaissance Venice, France during the revolution and the Directory, Russia in the early twentieth century, Italy in the 1970s, and contemporary China, thus intertwining a multitude of subjects and images.

This is the Fifth Postgraduate International Conference organized by the Ph.D. students in History of Arts at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. This event has now firmly established not only its staying power – which I saluted as so upon its third edition, a testimony to its consolidation and to its becoming an upstanding point of reference – but also its richness and significance, as demonstrated by the remarkable level of involvement on both a national and international scale. What is more, the organizers' outstanding efficiency has made it possible for the proceedings to be published just shortly after the conference was held, from 4 to 6 October 2023.

Besides the customary introductory lines, having reached the end of my term as Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program, and without any rhetoric, I would like to thank the Ph.D. students who have passionately, intelligently, and curiously brought to life the five conferences

that have truly, and most certainly not to my credit, accompanied my years as Coordinator within the broad and shared horizons of the many disciplines or fields that represent the Doctorate. This is further demonstrated by the diverse and inclusive composition - beyond the Department and the University - of the Faculty Council.

I hope that this Conference, which has now become well-established, may continue into the future, once these most committed doctoral students earn their degrees and find new forces to carry on with an enterprise that has become, through their work, central to and defining for the Ph.D. Program in History of Arts.

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A Driving Force. On the Rhetoric of Images and Power is the Fifth Postgraduate International Conference of the Department of Philosophy and Cultural Heritage at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. As Vice-Coordinator of the Doctoral Program in History of Arts and Full Professor of Contemporary Art History, I am proud to have conceived the idea for this annual meeting and encouraged its development. Such moments serve as the perfect opportunity for our doctoral candidates to develop their research skills as well as to gain managerial and organizational experience. I would like to thank Angelica Bertoli, Giulia Gelmi, Andrea Missaglia, and Maria Novella Tavano for all their efforts in organizing the conference that took place in 2023 and editing its proceedings. This volume is a tangible proof of their endeavors. It explores the rhetorical nature of the intersection between image and power from a multidisciplinary perspective, by bringing together the various contributions to this year's conference theme. I would like to point out the problem – as well as the potential – of the complex, and ambiguous, relationship between art and power expressed by images as both objects of human creation and visual vectors of power. Art played a crucial role during the Cold War as much as in today's global politics. It has an ideological function which makes it a powerful tool even when subjected to the market's fits of inclusion and exclusion. Politically charged art was produced under Totalitarianism, Socialism, and post-Communism. In today's mainstream Western Art, as it frequently adheres to the norms of ideological propaganda, this art continues to exist, often as a mass product and features at international exhibitions, biennials, and festivals. The paradox of contemporary art is that art can be an image, a critique, or a negation of images themselves.

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