Call for Papers

International Conference, November 7-9, 2022, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz

Colour Schemes and Surface Finish of the Roman Architectural Orders

This conference will explore the richness of colour and texture in Roman architecture. More specifically, it will consider colour schemes and surface finishes of the architectural orders in relation to regional variation, ‘global’ trends, and semantics.

Unlike the polychromy of ancient sculpture or the use of colour and paint in Greek architecture, the use of colour in Roman architecture has received relatively little attention. Compared to the clearly defined ‘Archaic color triad’, or even to the broader Hellenistic palette, Roman architects seem to have used more and different painted colour schemes, surface treatments, and a wider variety of materials with diverse tones and optical qualities. Moreover, they blended these things in seemingly unorthodox ways. For example, polished white marble, sometimes highlighted by gilding, was juxtaposed with rough stone textures. Dull stucco-coated columns and brick facades painted in monochrome red or yellow coexisted with lush veining and luxuriant vegetation emulated in paint.

The aim of this conference is to bring together scholars, working on different regions of the Roman empire, to discuss the striking plurality (or unity) of concepts of colour in Roman architecture. Moreover, we are interested in scholarship that considers intermedial and intermaterial aspects of paint and colour in architectural decoration. We welcome presentations of new research or, alternatively, critical engagements with existing themes or datasets that go beyond the presentation of individual architectural works. Possible questions to be addressed include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Where and in what condition have traces of paint survived on elements of the architectural orders from within a given region of the Roman empire?
- How was paint applied to elements of the orders or how was a texture created? What were the logistical, technical, and economical requirements involved?
- Can recurring schemes in the use of colour and texture be reconstructed for a certain region or time period of the Roman empire?
- How do trends across the Empire relate to local developments? Were there trendsetters and followers? How were design trends transmitted? What accounts for the widespread adoption of certain trends and the rejection of others?
Have colour, paint and texture been used to imitate or emulate different materials? How do colour schemes or surface finishes relate to other media than architecture?

Do colours in Roman architecture make sense? How was colour used to create meaning or to appeal aesthetically? Is it possible to detect semantics of colour in Roman architectural design?

How was the colour and surface texture of architecture described and conceptualized in Roman literary or epigraphical sources?

We invite researchers to submit abstracts of approximately 300 words by email (colour.mainz@gmail.com) **no later than April 30, 2022**. Presentations are accepted in German, English, French, or Italian. Speakers will be allotted 30 minutes. Travel expenses and accommodation in Mainz will be covered. The organizers plan to publish the proceedings of the conference.

Organization: Matthias Grawehr and Johannes Lipps