

45th International Wolfenbüttel Summer Course

EARLY MODERN VISUAL DATA:  
ORGANIZING KNOWLEDGE IN PRINTED BOOKS

(Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, 17-28 July 2023)

Instructor:

Stephanie Leitch (Florida State University)

**Please do not apply!**



Ole Worm, *Museum Wormianum*. (Leiden, 1655) HAB A: 20.6 Quod. 2° (1)

### Course Topic

As prints taught viewers how to observe and thus arguably democratized knowledge derived from first-hand experience, this seminar considers printed images as critical visual technology that built knowledge acquisition. The extent to which printed illustrations promoted empirical investigation and shaped disciplinary fields of study has been the subject of sustained inquiry in art history and the history of science. Important studies by Susan Dackerman, Suzanne Karr Schmidt, Sachiko Kusakawa, Brian Ogilvie, Lorraine Daston, Katherine Park, Alexander Marr, Volker Remmert, Gianna Pomata, and William Eamon have scrutinized how prints fixed the approach and parameters of the disciplines of botany, anatomy, medicine, astronomy, and natural history. Publications devoted to these topics featured prints that flickered between visual tools and data reserves. These prints had multiple jobs: they documented, recorded, served as mnemonic prompts, and cued first hand engagement with the world. These visual tools—or data—helped shape the practice of field surgery, anatomy, cosmography, natural history, and cartography. They also sharpened the cognitive skill-sets implemented in how-to genres in-

cluding palm reading (chiromancy), books that promised to assist the reader in diagnosing characters of peoples (physiognomy), and even the treatment and care of horses (hippiatria).

Strikingly, but perhaps not accidentally, many of these prints had similar formal properties, some of these driven by the imperatives of publishers busy cultivating new audiences of vernacular readers. Weighing, judging, and observing were just a few of the how-to skills that such prints enabled—but they were important links to empirical experience generally. In this seminar, we will inspect the kindred function of images across diverse and seemingly disparate texts. We will ask to what extent images provided the mortar between different modes of empirical investigation, and how early modern visual data functioned. This course will examine how images helped to sift, filter, and process new information and the visual formats they used to render it. While the development of linear perspective and the rehabilitation of antiquity have held down the cornerstones of Renaissance visuality, we will examine some of the frameworks and imperatives of visualization that were active in early modern knowledge making, especially ones that took the printed page as their canvas.

#### **Topics to be covered**

- visual tools, volvelles, dials
- artists' manuals
- physiognomy, chiromancy
- portraits and peoples
- maps and monsters
- spatial organization
- anatomical publications
- mnemonic and didactic manuals
- role of the copy

#### **Course tutors**

- Joost Depuydt, Museum Plantin-Moretus, Antwerp
- Michael Korey, Mathematisch-Physikalischer Salon, Staatliche Kunstsammlung Dresden
- Sietske Fransen, Bibliotheca Hertziana, Max Planck Institute for Art History
- Thomas Schauerte, Director, Museen der Stadt Aschaffenburg
- Suzanne Karr Schmidt, Newberry Library, Chicago
- Livia Cárdenas, Technische Universität, Berlin
- Chet van Duzer, Lazarus Project, University of Rochester

#### **Organization**

The Summer Course is addressed to masters and doctoral students and will be conducted in English. Mornings will be devoted to presentations by the participants and to workshops led by senior scholars in the field. Key readings (in English and German) will be circulated in ad-

vance. In the afternoons, participants will be able to use the holdings of the Herzog August Bibliothek for their own work and will have opportunities to hold individual or group discussions with those teaching the course.

The library offers up to fifteen places for participants and will cover their expenses for accommodation and breakfast. Each participant will receive a subsidy of 100 Euros to cover living costs. Participants are expected to pay their own travel expenses.

There are no application forms. Applicants should state their reasons for wishing to participate in the course and send a c.v. that describes their academic career and their current research. Please also supply the address of an academic referee who may be contacted to provide a reference if needed. **Please do not apply!**

#### Contact

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