

## Strand: Religion, Architecture and Material Culture

'Situated Knowledges: Consumption, Production and Identity in a Global Context'

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### **Sioned Davies** *Department of Welsh, University of Wales, Cardiff* **Palaces of the Oral Arts: The Chapel as Storytelling Arena**

There has always been a tendency to see the Middle Ages as the Golden Age of Welsh Storytelling. Certainly from the sixteenth century onwards, there is a clear impression of an oral narrative tradition in decline. However, from the mid-eighteenth century an extremely rich oral culture came to the fore in the context of nonconformist religion, evidenced in particular by the sermon. This paper focuses on the nineteenth century dramatic sermon in the context of performance theory, drawing on sources such as biographies, chapel histories, and oral testimony from the archive at the Museum of Welsh Life. It is argued that the preacher was a performer, and that the chapel itself was his storytelling arena. He would exploit all the architectural features of the building -- the pulpit, the *Sêd Fawr* (the 'Big Seat' for deacons), and the gallery to further enhance his performance, making full use of lighting and props. The Nonconformists condemned the fair, the interlude, the festivities associated with saints' feast days; yet the pulpit offered to the people that which they condemned, namely popular entertainment.

### **Charlotte Dew** *Documentation Officer, The Woman's Library, London Guildhall University and Project Documentation Officer, Textile Conservation Centre, University of Southampton* **Dinah Eastop** *Senior Lecturer, Textile Conservation Centre, University of Southampton and Director of the AHRB Research Centre for Textile Conservation and Textile Studies* **Protective Practices: Documenting and Raising Awareness of Garments in Concealed Caches**

This paper reports the practice of deliberately concealing worn garments in buildings. Several early garments, including two doublets of c.1600, a boned stomacher, and a corset (the latter now in the Museum of Welsh Life, Cardiff) have been preserved in this way. These concealment caches, which have been found in both secular and religious buildings, can include bottles, shoes, and animal remains. The concealments are thought to be part of a long-standing folk practice intended to protect the households from harm. The artefacts and the practice (recorded in both the UK and Upper Rhine area) raise interesting questions about the object/subject boundaries that are relevant to the conference themes (consumption, production, and identity). The finds present challenging dilemmas for curators and conservators, for example, should the finds be removed from their place of concealment? Should they be returned to their place of concealment after documentation? Should soiling and creasing be removed from garments finds, or should such evidence of use be retained because it is considered of evidential value? What happens when such finds are offered to museums? Are they held in collections of archaeology or dress or local history?

**John Harvey** *School of Art, University of Wales, Aberystwyth* **Seen to Be Remembered: Image and Recollection in Evangelical Visual Culture**

Protestant Nonconformity has, since the establishment of the denominations and permanent places of worship, adapted and adopted religious artefacts as aids to evangelism, teaching, church and domestic decoration, commemoration, and devotion. Collectively, they represent the visualization of popular piety, and the emergent iconography of large ecclesio-social groups (Evangelical in theology) drawn from the working- and middle-classes. These groups have seceded from and actively define themselves against the ethos, organization, and liturgical traditions of the High Church. In this respect, the commercial kitsch -- which largely comprises these artefacts and mediates the visual culture of Evangelicalism -- reflects a confluence of low-church religion with low-cultural forms, and of mass-religion with mass-production. The paper examines examples of, what might be termed, Evangelical 'tie-ins' in the context of the movement's culture of Scriptural memorization, teaching, and proselytising. The discussion focuses on the relationship between the artefacts' combination of image and text, using twentieth-century examples, and addresses Evangelicalism's choice of imagery, its deployment of the visual as a conduit for memory and for internalising the textual (percepts as pretexts for precepts), and the associative function (as opposed to the intrinsic worth) of such imagery.

**Crispin Paine** *Convenor MA Museum Studies, University of Southampton* **The Victorian Parish Church - A Mirror of Society**

The paper argues that the design and furnishing of churches reflect not just the theology of their builders and the fashions of their period, but the structure of the society in which they were created. It concentrates on the reign of Queen Victoria and will discuss both why and how English churches and chapels came to be built, and how their design reflected their social context and function. The appearance of the typical English Parish Church changed dramatically during the reign. The contrast reflects not just sixty years of controversy and changes in fashion and theology, but massive societal change. Churches are a cultural product like any other, and reflect economic and social relations in why they are created. The paper considers how the Victorian church was built, and will discuss the three periods Brooks identified in rural Devon, giving some other examples. What mattered in the countryside was who paid. In the cities, the pattern was rather different; the withdrawal of state support in the 1830s created a vacuum filled by private initiative and a spirit of competition, which created a large over-supply of churches. Finally, the paper will consider questions of style. The Gothic Revival was not purely fashion, but reflected a changing understanding of the nature of society, as seen by those in a position to do something about it. What they did was stylistic rather than real.

**Melanie Unwin** *Administrator, National Life Story Collection, British Library* **The Ascension and the Astronaut: The Development of an Iconography of 'Modernity' in the Church Murals of Mary Adshead**

In 1932 Mary Adshead (1904-1995) received a commission for a vast east wall reredos from architect Bernard Miller for his new church St. Christopher's, Withington, Manchester. One of the many new inter-war churches, St. Christopher's served a new housing estate created to house those moved from the slums of central Manchester. Ascending Christ was the visual centre point of, what Peter Anson described as a 'notable' example of the craze for vividly coloured church interiors. However, St. Christopher's provided far more than a fashionable interior, reflecting not only Miller and Adshead's responses to the material and liturgical culture of contemporary church design but also the lives and experience of the residents of the new 1930s suburb. Adshead continued to carry out church commissions, however it was 1960 before she had the opportunity to produce another east wall mural work. Designed by architect Peter Dunham, St. Francis's, Luton, like St. Christopher's, was built to service a new housing estate, but this time as the result of post-war industrial expansion. For this building Adshead produced the 'space-age mural' by the press it provides an interesting contrast not only to St. Christopher's but also to Sutherland's east-wall tapestry at Coventry. These two churches share a number of concerns; both served two communities, both reflected liturgical reform and both responded to fashions in architecture. Within these buildings Adshead's work also had to respond to the ideological demands made on church decoration. This paper compares these two buildings, concentrating on their east-wall murals and reflecting on their role and relevance as religious 'works of art' and as signs of 'modernity', not only within the Church but within the wider social and cultural contexts of their increasingly secular communities.