



Undergraduate Research Symposium May 17, 2019 Mary Gates Hall

Online Proceedings

SESSION 2A

ART'S HISTORIES AND FUTURES

Session Moderator: Sonal Khullar, Art History

MGH 171

3:30 PM to 5:15 PM

* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

Themes of Morality Present in *The Roses of Heliogabalus*, by Lawrence Alma Tadema

Kathryn (Katy) Caskey, Senior, Art History, Western Washington University

Mentor: Monique Kerman, Art and Art History, Western Washington University

This is an analysis of *The Roses of Heliogabalus* (1888), by Dutch artist Lawrence Alma Tadema. Alma Tadema was an English classicist, creating art in the Victorian era, who participated heavily in the aesthetic movement of the Pre-Raphaelites. Alma Tadema was very successful in his time, mainly due to his use of color, photorealism, and meticulous attention to detail, which are all aspects that are very present, and generally praised, in *The Roses of Heliogabalus*. He is known for painting classic scenes, mainly of middle-class women, performing everyday activities. However, *The Roses of Heliogabalus* departs from this usual rendering, instead focusing on a tyrannical historical event, where a young Roman emperor, Heliogabalus, drowns his dinner guests in an avalanche of rose petals, suffocating, and in turn, murdering them. Many recent critics have denounced this work for being antiquarian; a common critique of this specific piece is that the figures in the scene lack morality in their expressions. However, I think morality is the very thing that can be found in this creation by Alma Tadema. It was common for Victorian art to be created with the thought of moralizing in mind. Alma Tadema, though often depicted as a shallow man who valued schoolboy humor, could not have gone through this era without picking up on the themes of the time. Through visual analysis, comparison to Alma Tadema's peers, and an analysis of the time period and current events, I bring clarity to the themes of morality present in *The Roses of Heliogabalus*, and show that this piece, created by a man who was once dubbed "the worst painter of the 19th century," is more valuable than recent critiques that it is only a shallow, antiquarian artwork.

SESSION 2S

THE POWER OF MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS AND DIGITAL ARCHIVES

Session Moderator: Carmen Gonzalez, Communication

JHN 175

3:30 PM to 5:15 PM

* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

Oversexualized and Misunderstood: A Critical Look at Romani Representation in Western Media

Erin Smith, Junior, Art History, Western Washington University

Mentor: Monique Kerman, Art and Art History, Western Washington University

This presentation compares past and present portrayals of Eastern European Romani women in Western media to show an incredible amount of homogeneity and misrepresentation within publications. It is no secret that the region of Eastern Europe has been plagued by civil war, political upheaval, racism, and genocide. Due to this climate, there has been a level of mystery and complexity that has wrapped itself around the area, perpetuating mythological and romanticized images of its largest ethnic group: the Romani. The Romani are the most heavily criticized and marginalized group in Eastern Europe, seen as intruders and outcasts to this day. These prejudices have deep roots in Western folklore, which paint similar pictures of Romani men and women consistently throughout. I am examining a specific archetype common in Western media, particularly film: the oversexualized Romani woman. I am using anti-Roma propaganda from The United States and Germany and comparing them to popular films from the 20th century. The films used are Paramount Studios' production of *Golden Earrings* (1947), the James Bond film *From Russia with Love* (1963), and Disney's adaptation of Victor Hugo's novel *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1992). The goal is, by looking at these representations, we can see critical connections between the way Romani women have been cruelly depicted in the last century in order to reconstruct misconceptions and establish a framework that illustrates a more accurate and multifaceted story.