

GRHAM AND GHAMU SYMPOSIUM

12-13 June 2025,

Paris, Galerie Colbert, salle Jullian (Université Paris 1/INHA),
2 rue Vivienne, 75002 Paris.

CALL FOR PAPERS (deadline for submissions: 31 March 2025)

TRADE AND ITS REPRESENTATIONS

COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY IN ART AND ARCHITECTURE DURING THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES



Gerrit Adriaensz Berckheyde, *The "Dam" in Amsterdam*, 1668,
oil on canvas (detail), Antwerp, Royal Museum of Fine Arts.

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CALL FOR PAPERS

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the many transformations and significant expansion of commercial activities led to the diversification of consumption and the expansion of commercial areas. These phenomena reflected improvements in transport conditions, better organisation of trade networks and the resources of capitalism. The images and literature related to the world of commerce diversified and transformed society's perception of this practice and its players (pedlars, itinerant merchants, manufacturers, wholesalers, entrepreneurs, etc.). While the ideal of the *mercator sapiens* (Caspar van Baerle, *Athenaeum illustre*, 1632) gradually came to fruition, culminating in the eighteenth century, the opposition between *otium* and *negotium* continued to change, with the nobility becoming increasingly interested in the lucrative activities of commerce and industry. How did artists perceive these sociological transformations, which thrust into the spotlight characters who had hitherto often been ignored?

The development of trade in all its forms also calls for the renewal of existing types, their multiplication and the introduction of new programmes. From the shop counter to the square, from the market and the bazaar to the annual fair, from the Atlantic ports to the great Dutch and Hanseatic exchanges, to the *han* of the Islamic world, the places of exchange are multiple, polymorphous and hybrid. In their turn, specialised trading spaces transformed the city (major routes, storage areas, etc.), whose urban growth could no longer be confined to guild houses and market squares.

Anchored in the city, the corporate system was shaken by the transformation of trade. Although they had helped to defend and protect the interests of each profession since the Middle Ages, the arts and crafts associations in Europe were increasingly seen as restrictive. Conflicts between these different players and institutions changed the way trade was conducted in the city. How do the representations of these places of professional sociability reflect these societal changes?

The rise of commercial capitalism was accompanied by an improvement in communication routes: river navigation benefited from the expansion of canals and road links were developed and paved, supporting the development of both domestic and foreign trade. Founded in the seventeenth century, the European colonial companies underwent unbridled expansion in the eighteenth century, as trade shifted into triangular. How did artists reflect this attraction to international trade? What emblematic projects did architects undertake to establish the reputation of companies involved in transatlantic trade?

The conference is organised around the following three main themes:

- **Axis 1:** Merchants' strategies of representation;
- **Axis 2:** Ways in which commerce is represented 'in action' and places where it is practised;
- **Axis 3:** Commercial activity as a vector of forms, ideas and images on a European and extra-European scale.

Proposals may fit into one or more of these areas, but the axes remain indicative. It should be noted that the selection committee will favour contributions that break out of the paradigm of the art dealer and the marchand mercier.

The first axis looks at the merchants' strategies of representation. In addition to the varied images of these actors – often positive, sometimes picturesque – this section will look at the artistic practices and representations they have used to develop an image of themselves, their role or their place in society. These practices include patronage, collecting, speculation and socially valued techniques such as learning and drawing. The different types of portraits, whether individual or group, can also be explored. Similarly, we could look at architectural formulas that were codified or designed to be practical in terms of the status and activity of the client. These various approaches will also provide an opportunity to question the existence of a distinctive “merchant taste”, whether it was voluntarily established by the merchants themselves or formed on the basis of criticism from other classes in society and disseminated through printmaking, among other means. However, the aim will not be to essentialise the bourgeois merchants, but to identify in greater detail common representations or specific features.

The second axis will explore the ways in which commerce is represented “in action” and the places where it is practised. How did the visual arts and architecture reflect, accompany, frame or guide the practice of commerce? The economic upheavals of pre-industrial societies and the expansion of the field of the representable by artistic modernity have challenged the iconography of commercial practices. This focus will encourage formal and iconographic analysis of trades that are poorly represented in the arts; studies questioning the iconographic domination of certain commercial scenes; and examinations exploring the gap between the reality of practices and their representation. Alongside the study of the shop, its decorations and the art of “window-dressing”, the aim will also be to open up perspectives to European and non-European commercial architecture. How do architects design these commercial buildings? This type of architecture will be understood in its broadest sense: all buildings with a commercial purpose as well as buildings and public spaces linked to the commercialisation of pleasure and leisure.

This corpus of graphic, pictorial, sculptural and architectural works will be enriched by all the images which, without representing a specific commercial practice or location, convey a commercial discourse with political or religious connotations. What representations and iconography do artists use to evoke the idea of commerce in their work? Drawing on allegory, fable, philosophy or books of words, these discourses, often disseminated through engraving, were also displayed on façades or asserted through major building programmes.

The third axis will aim to open up the subject to the various forms of commercial activity, understood as a vector of forms, images and ideas, as well as the circulation of people and materials, on a global scale. Trade between cities and nations encouraged the development of

trade routes (roads, bridges, lighthouses, ports, etc.) and the production of facilities (trading posts, stock exchanges, new cities, etc.). Here we examine the impact of the development of internal and external trade on the territory, in terms of architectural and visual production.

PROPOSALS

Proposals for papers, individual or collaborative, in French or English, of approximately 300 words, may take the form of general statements or case studies. Please attach a curriculum vitae

Deadline for submissions: **31 March 2025**.

Submission of proposals and contacts: asso.grham@gmail.com

ORGANISING COMMITTEE

Élisa Bérard (doctoral student, Sorbonne Université), Maxime Bray (doctoral student, Sorbonne Université), Justine Cardoletti (doctoral student, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne), Florence Fesneau (PhD, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne), Barbara Jouves-Hann (PhD, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne), Maxime-Georges Métraux (expert, Galerie H. Duchemin), Alice Ottazzi (post-doctoral fellow, Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz), Maël Tauziède-Espariat (lecturer, Université Paris-Nanterre), members of the board of the Groupe de Recherche en Histoire de l'art moderne (GRHAM).

Clémence Pau (Phd, Sorbonne Université), Jean Potel (doctoral student, Sorbonne Université), members of the Board of Directors of the Groupe Histoire Architecture Mentalités Urbaines (GHAMU).

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