Model Lives: Saintly Anatomy, Moving Automata, and Ideal Societies in Early Modern Europe

Wednesday, October 31 | 12–2pm | SOS 250
Lunch will be provided to those who RSVP to emsi@usc.edu by 10/25.

"You Gotta Have Guts: Anatomy as Proof of Sanctity in Early Modern Europe"
Brad Bouley,
Provost's Postdoctoral Scholar,
USC History Department

In early modern Europe, the bodies of many saints, popes, and prominent individuals were ritually dissected to investigate their spiritual state. Saintly autopsies brought together religious authorities and natural philosophers to understand the boundaries of nature. The dissections of Filippo Neri, Francis de Sales, and Gregory Barbarigo help illustrate how religious authorities searched for signs of the holy in human bodies and medical experts proved their existence.

"Empire on the Move: Early Modern German Automata"
Jessica Keating,
Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in Early Modern Visual Culture,
USC Art History Department

This project examines the acquisition, circulation, collection, and display of German clockwork automata between 1550 and 1650. These objects engendered new social realities; their imagery and movement directly engaged the imperial politics of the Holy Roman Empire during a period of confessionalization, European global expansion, and the dissolution of the medieval notion of a universal Christian monarchy.

"Francis Bacon and the Misinterpretation of Reality"
Julianne Werlin,
Provost’s Postdoctoral Scholar,
USC English Department

Francis Bacon and his followers envisioned society as a complexly integrated whole, structured by underlying laws and patterns. Such a vision was both realized and refined through social models, which used fictions to reveal the operation of laws and correlations that could not simply be seen in the world at large. Bacon’s New Atlantis reveals the possibilities and the problems of this approach, illustrating the opportunities for misinterpretation associated with building models.

Questions? Email emsi@usc.edu