

Reading the Country House

Manchester Metropolitan University, 16-17 November 2018



Call for papers

Country houses were made to be read—as symbols of power, political allegiance, taste and wealth. This places emphasis on the legibility of their architecture and decorative schemes, and the paintings, collections and even the furniture they contained. It also draws our attention to the skills required to decode—to read—these signs and symbols. The messages and processes of reading were carried further by the growing number of images of country houses produced through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: in private sketch books and journals and as engravings published as collections or incorporated into written guidebooks. These allowed the country house to be read in very different ways, as did its appearance in the pages of novels, sometimes as the backdrop or stage for the action, but also symbolic of social structures and relations. This conference seeks to explore all of these perspectives on reading the country house and links them to how the country house is read today, by house managers and visitors and by viewers of period dramas.

We invite papers on any aspect of reading the country house, but we especially welcome papers which examine:

- The country house and the novel
- The presentation of country houses guidebooks and gazetteers
- Visitors' perceptions and readings of the country house, both historic and present day
- Processes of reading the architecture and aesthetics of the country house
- Engravings and paintings, both as representations of the country house and as collections in the country house

We are particularly keen to encourage contributions that take a comparative approach:
national, international and across time.

Keynote speakers:

Prof. Phillip Lindley (Loughborough) and Prof. Kathryn Sutherland (Oxford).

If you would like to present a paper, then please send a title and 200 word abstract together with a very brief biography to Prof. Jon Stobart: j.stobart@mmu.ac.uk by 31 August 2018.