



**Call for Papers**  
International conference  
**Law and Art in the 19th Century: Power in Images**

Verona 19-21 October 2022

The Coronation of Napoleon by Jacques-Louis David; the courthouse of the Court of Cassation in Rome; the statues of Justice or Liberty; the caricatures by the painter Honoré Daumier: these are just a few examples of the artistic representation of law, power, justice and rights in the 19th century. Sometimes faithful reproductions of the legal values produced at the time, sometimes exaltation, transfiguration or denunciation of certain aspects of the legal system.

Art, like law, is a human factor that is sometimes able to assert itself from below, from the society that produces it; at other times it comes from above, in tune with the designs of those who hold political power and who use art to put forward a certain image of power, as well as to disseminate a precise idea of the juridical.

The importance of artistic images and, more specifically, of the iconographic representation of key themes and concepts of law in their various legal contexts, requires no lengthy demonstration. The evocative capacity and symbolic potential released by images has often been used in Western history to effectively express, and at the same time to reinforce, key ideas from the legal world through the strength and immediacy of an iconic message, so as to obtain the broadest possible understanding and adherence in the community of reference for the model of legal organisation in force at any given moment.

The research team set up to further study the project *Images, Law and Power in the Modern Age*, within the framework of the *Excellence Project* of the Department of Legal Sciences of the University of Verona (2018-2022), is organising a conference on the theme of the artistic representation of law in the 19th century, from the French Revolution to the early twentieth century.

The purpose is to investigate the ways in which, during the nineteenth century, the substantial change in the structural characteristics of the legal phenomenon, and the emergence of an alternative legal experience, corresponded to the replacement - or re-semantization - of the symbols and images traditionally expressed in the law, so that they were more suitable to convey the new concept of the juridical in society.

By studying the painting, sculpture and architecture of a particular epoch, it is possible to understand and delve into the legal reality, observing law in its complexity, as well as its ability to reside within society and give it order and structure. In this sense, the nineteenth century is a complex century, which begins with the French Revolution and the great break with the social and legal order of the *Ancien Régime*, and with the simultaneous establishment of a new socio-political order, marked by the affirmation of bourgeois society. The century ends with the emergence of a plural and complex



society, marked by the advent of positivism, Darwinism and an unprecedented technological and industrial order.

The cultural, political and economic changes are intertwined - in a play of reciprocal influences - with the legal and institutional ones, and are also expressed in an extensive and coherent iconographic system, either new or repurposed, which not only serves to describe the new order but also aims to make it empathetically present to the minds and hearts of those who confront it.

These were sometimes the result of a specific cultural policy expressed on an iconographic level with reference to the world of law, and sometimes the result of a series of progressive 'adjustments' of the iconic baggage of the past to the new situation of modernity. Art follows the movement of history and the needs of society. Taking up the simple forms of the past in neoclassicism, it at the same time felt the urgency to describe the new, perceiving a cultural and social restlessness capable of evolving rapidly at the turn of the century. Architecture, with its harmonious neoclassical geometric forms, clashed with the *utilitarian* architecture desired by governments and required by the prevailing era of industrialisation. Painting initially followed revolutionary suggestions, then adapted to the magniloquent exaltation of Napoleon's exploits and the monarchies during the Restoration period, before becoming a denunciation of social injustice in satirical caricatures in tandem with the rise of Impressionism and Realism. Partially different movements followed in sculpture, which asserted itself in the 19th century as a monumental representation of political power in statues of monarchs and emperors, but also as an exaltation of the rights of freedom to be made present and visible in the urban spaces of the new cities.

The subjects connected with the theme of the conference are therefore multiple and concern the connection of the varied artistic world with law and thus with political power, justice, legislative power and the fundamental rights of the individual. It is also possible to question the influence of the legal phenomenon on art, exploring the relations between artists and jurists, as well as painters and rulers; or again, to analyse artistic works that oppose a given legal and political system, denouncing the abuses of power or the injustice of laws.

From this point of view, the historical reconstruction of this evolution is essential to grasp its deep implications as well as to highlight caesuras and continuities with respect to previous legal experience. The contributions of the history of art, architecture, and culture in general can lead to a deeper and more conscious reading of the legal phenomenon, one which takes into account its irreducible specificity but also its vital connection with contemporary cultural and artistic manifestations.

The conference, therefore, aims to analyse the theme of the artistic representation of law in the 19th century via a multidisciplinary and comparative approach, stimulating discussion and dialogue among the participants, so as to ensure the historical profundity and depth of interpretation of an topic pervasive but underestimated, that of the translation into images of the values and 'myths' of law and power. It will thus be possible, starting from the notion of the changes experienced by society and, therefore also by its law in the 19th century, to lay bare first of all the operation of the ideological configuration of the rule of law and bourgeois society, which certainly benefit significantly from



recourse to images capable of constructing a shared ideal and which is also disseminated through artistic images.

The conference organisers invite all interested scholars to participate in the *call* by sending the title and *abstract* (minimum 300 words - maximum 500 words) of the proposed paper and also indicating name, surname and university of affiliation, together with a *curriculum vitae* (of no more than four pages).

In addition, the organisers are also accepting proposals for *panels*, consisting of three speakers and a chair and possibly a *discussant*; in this case, a title and an *abstract* of the *panel* (minimum 300 and maximum 500 words) are required in addition to the *abstracts* of the individual papers and the *curriculum vitae* of each speaker, chair and discussant.

The conference will be held in Italian, French and English, so proposals can be submitted in any of these languages.

Applications must be sent **by 30 June 2022** to:

[immagini.diritto@ateneo.univr.it](mailto:immagini.diritto@ateneo.univr.it)

Proposals will be accepted **by 31 July 2022**.

The conference will take place in Verona in October 2022, potentially in person, although we are also considering online transmission of the event (candidates who know already that they will not be able to travel to Italy are requested to indicate this, and to specify the time zone of their country).

The organisers will bear the cost of accommodation and meals for the conference participants.

The conference papers will be published following successful peer review. A prerequisite for participation in the conference is the delivery of the text ready for publication (maximum limit: 60,000 characters including spaces and notes) on the date of the conference, in one of the languages used for the work.

For any further communication or information:

[immagini.diritto@ateneo.univr.it](mailto:immagini.diritto@ateneo.univr.it)

The Chairman of the Scientific Committee: Prof. Giovanni Rossi: [giovanni.rossi@univr.it](mailto:giovanni.rossi@univr.it);

The person in charge of the organisation: Dr Pietro Schirò: [pietro.schiro@univr.it](mailto:pietro.schiro@univr.it).