Noam Andrews (Harvard)

The Geometrical Aesthetic of Lorenz Stöer's Polyhedra

During the 16th century, polyhedral geometry, hitherto confined to Euclidean proofs or the philosophical neo-Platonism of the Italian Renaissance, became widely accessible to German craftsmen and artists, who apart from bettering their drawing skills, recognized the aesthetic potential of geometrical forms and exploited them as base motifs for "decorative" or ornamental artwork that were exported across the continent in lavish prints, drawings, and as cabinet marquetry. No artist was more obsessed with polyhedra than Lorenz Stöer, a self-professed painter in Augsburg, who spent over three decades drawing hundreds of flamboyant "irregular solids." Stöer's fantastical repertoire of polyhedra were in understandably high demand – as a source of inspiration for other artists, as base prints for marquetry, and as models of geometrical information which could be apprehended by apprentices only through copying. With reference to Stöer's best known work *Geometria et Perspectiva* (1567) alongside unpublished manuscripts, notebooks, and rare individual drawings, tracing the transference techniques that spirited Stöer's polyhedra from the confines of his work out onto other media surfaces exposes a rapacious appetite for cutting-edge geometry and for the coveting of visual motifs that communicated a "geometrical aesthetic" to the late Renaissance eye. How exactly elements of Stöer's geometrical images migrated off the page and onto 16th century furniture, and why polyhedra were deemed so conducive to this fluidity of media will be the central question of the paper.

Benjamin Sacks (Princeton)

Surveying Dynasties and Better Societies: The Norwood Family and the Diffusion of Colonial Planning across the British Atlantic World, 1615-1730

Who was the early modern English surveyor? Existing studies of geographers, planners, and cartographer often restricted or removed the surveyors' personal lives, networks, and voices. When they are discussed, surveyors were often examined via relatively narrow, modernist professional definitions: field mathematicians, explorers, or mapmakers. But if we reconstruct the English surveyor's world from the ground up, *on their terms*, we find entrepreneurial 'chameleons', individuals continually shifting between humanist, amateur scientist, colonial planner and administrator, real estate speculator, plantation owner, lobbyist, and man of letters. Like any careerist, surveyors were self-interested, socially sensitive individuals, seeking material reward and status. Through family relationships, apprenticeships, and patronage, surveyors cultivated powerful, dynastic networks throughout the Atlantic world. They

conceived, tested, implemented, and transferred cartographic and planning knowledge, spreading concepts and ideas from Europe to the English Empire's nascent outposts and settler colonies, and back again. Between 1615 and the 1730s the Norwood Family established a surveying empire that stretched from London and Bermuda to St. Christopher's (St. Kitts), Barbados, and Staten Island. Led by the experimental, reformist efforts of Richard Norwood, the Norwoods tested and practiced concepts in socioeconomic organization, property management, surveying and cartography, arguably setting the standard for seventeenth century English surveys. In so doing, Richard Norwood and his sons embraced new professional and personal guises to advance their own social position at home and abroad.

Valeria Lopez (Princeton)

Juan Páez de Castro, Language, and the History of the New World from Afar

In his *Method to Write History*, the royal chronicler and Greek scholar, Juan Páez de Castro (1512-1570), urged the recently crowned Phillip II to support the writing of a universal history that encompassed all of Spain's realms. In devising a plan for this ambitious endeavor, Páez de Castro claimed, similar to other scholars at the time, that gathering information for a region's history required paying close attention to the toponyms, the languages that had been spoken in an area, and the works of reliable historians. He also included among the mandated sources the testimonies of the most elderly and distinguished members of a community. This principle extended to the provinces of the New World where the lack of alphabetic writing made the reliance on oral traditions all the more necessary. This paper examines a set of knowledge gathering projects either initiated by Páez de Castro or furthered by members of his scholarly circle, such as the questionnaires known as the *Relaciones Geográficas* and the compendia of popular sayings or *Refraneros*, that relied on oral evidence to reconstruct historical traditions. It argues that scholars like Sebastian Fox Morcillo (d.1559), the art collector Felipe de Guevara (d. 1560), and Páez de Castro himself, influenced by an influx of information and objects from the New World, formulated early interpretations as to the role that oral evidence and glyphic writing played in the writing of history in the New World and in the Iberian Peninsula's own ancient past.

Nathan Vedal (Harvard)

Numerological Phonology in Ming China: Philology before the Rise of "Evidential Learning"

One of the most striking trends in Ming dynasty (1368-1644) scholarship is the obsession with numbers, patterns, and all-encompassing schemes. Shao Yong (1011-1077), a Song dynasty numerological scholar who also composed a set of rhyme tables, achieved a high position in the minds of many Ming scholars. However, the world of Ming scholars was different from that of Shao and the Song dynasty. Shao Yong was not primarily a phonologist, and his rhyme tables were exclusively part of his method for demonstrating a numerological basis for all phenomena. In the Ming, Shao's approach was revived and refashioned in several scholarly works in which phonology was in fact the primary concern. It is this uneasy balance of universal theory and scholarly discipline that I am concerned with in this paper. The approach of Ming scholars came to be considered misguided in the subsequent Qing dynasty, which in turn has set the tone for our current understanding of scholarship in the Ming. The problem I attempt to answer in this paper is what the widespread appeal of the Shao Yong approach was to Ming scholars, particularly in the context of what could be termed a scientific field. For the scholars discussed in this paper, there was a real connection between phonology and underlying patterns of the universe. At the same time, they hoped to contribute to the specific field of phonology, and framed their studies in response to a tradition of phonological scholarship. By refashioning an older numerological method, they hoped to create a more coherent and objective framework for linguistic analysis.

Katlyn Carter (Princeton)

Secrecy in French and British political discourse on the eve of Revolution

My paper examines how, why, and with what impact critiques of state secrecy became prominent in French and British political discourse in the 1770s and '80s. Rooted in this growing concern with secrecy in politics, reformers in both the French and British contexts began to advocate transparency as a way to guarantee accountable government. In my paper, I trace the conceptual evolutions of secrecy and transparency in both French and English from the early eighteenth century up to the eve of the French Revolution in 1789. I then look at how these concepts were applied to the political realm in both countries and used to critique absolutism in France and ministerial corruption in Britain. The paper asks the following questions: When contemporaries criticized their governments for being secretive, what practices did they identify as problematic? Why did secrecy become a core component of critiques of government in this period? What was the political impact of concerns with secrecy?

Hannah Marcus (Stanford/Harvard, visiting)

Why Would a Lay Person Become a Censor for the Roman Inquisition?

While the Catholic Church tried to enlist teams of lay censors around Italy in the 16th century, nearly all evidence points to the fact that they largely obstructed the censorship efforts in which they nominally took part. However, Rossi produced numerous expurgations for medical works by Cardano, Grataroli, Erastus, Lusitanus, and even took the corrector's pen to his own manuscript compositions. Working from records of the Inquisition and Index in Rome and Rossi's personal papers in Ravenna, I'll speculate on how and why his expurgations had such influence at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries.