

**The Sixteenth International Conference of the Taiwan Association
of Classical, Medieval and Renaissance Studies (TACMRS)**

**21–22 October 2022
Tamkang University
New Taipei City, Taiwan**

Call for Papers

Engaging the Audience: From Antiquity to the Renaissance

In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), Erving Goffman likens social interaction to theatre, describing “performance” as “all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers.” The individual coming into contact with other people is like an actor on stage, who will employ available theatrical devices in order to manage the impression made on the audience.

Those who excel at creating the right impression and influencing their audience have been celebrated in literary works and history books. The wily Odysseus, reduced to an embarrassing state of a naked beggar after shipwreck, successfully approaches the young princess Nausicaa without frightening her away and wins her sympathy. Socrates is said to teach philosophy by engaging people in dialogue: he plays the role of someone looking for answers and asks people a series of questions until they admit their initial beliefs are wrong. In his writings on rhetoric, Cicero teaches young orators to speak clearly, logically, eloquently and use appropriate gestures and facial expressions to bring about a persuasive speech. In lecture halls, courtrooms, churches, and marketplaces, great skills are called for to attract attention, convey messages, and influence thoughts and behaviour of the audience. As for theatrical performances proper, a well-crafted play skillfully acted could “catch the conscience of the king,” a strategy Hamlet uses to good effect.

Consider, too, the audiences that are not physically co-present with the performer. The advent of the printing press in fifteenth-century Europe was a game changer and dramatically enlarged the sphere of potential social interaction. The

number of people who heard Martin Luther lecture and preach in person might have been fairly limited, but his ideas spread far and wide beyond Germany thanks to the many pamphlets that were swiftly and cheaply printed and made available to an expanding reading public. Like printed materials, visual arts are mostly viewed in the absence of the artists; yet painters, sculptors, and architects have an audience in mind when creating their works. Precisely because visual artists are usually not around to explain their ideas, they use various strategies to invite viewers to participate in the experiencing and interpreting of the artworks.

Although performers seek to influence the audience, performance is not unidirectional: performers affect spectators, and the spectators' responses in turn affect the performers and the other spectators. Moreover, a performance could be mediated in a variety of ways: tradition, word of mouth, authoritative commentary, endorsement or criticism from influential figures, and so forth. The involvement of all the participants gives a performance a certain degree of unpredictability; there is ultimately no guarantee what the audiences will take away from the event.

This conference welcomes proposals for 20-minute papers on issues involved in the social activity of engaging the audience in classical antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance. All disciplines in the humanities are welcome.

Suggested topics include (but are not limited to):

- Public speaking: oration/sermon/disputation/lecture
- Theatre: classical/medieval/Renaissance
- Theatricality: courtroom/parliament/church/palace
- Hospitality and entertainment
- Festivals, ceremonies, games
- Architecture, performer, and audience
- Collecting and displaying: cabinets of curiosities/museums/libraries
- Unusual spectacles
- Rhetoric and culture
- Social etiquette and impression management
- Artist and patron
- Oral tradition

- Visual communication
- Spectatorship/readership
- Adaptation and remakes
- Cross-cultural narratives
- Transnational audiences

TACMRS warmly invites papers and sponsored panels (of 3 to 4 speakers), in either English or Chinese. Please submit proposals (250 words in English, or 500 words in Chinese) along with a brief CV to tacmrs2022.tku@gmail.com by **10 January 2022**.

There is no registration fee for the conference. Presenters residing in Taiwan should be members of TACMRS. The membership application form can be downloaded from the TACMRS website or can be obtained via email upon request.

Contacts:

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