

Smith ICJS to take ‘classical’ approach at Rome conference

THE DEEP INTEREST in the ancient world held by Thomas Jefferson and many of his contemporaries will be examined in Rome this fall at an international conference organized and conducted by the Robert H. Smith International Center for Jefferson Studies.

The conference, “Thomas Jefferson, the Classical World, and Early America,” is scheduled to be held Oct. 13-15 at the American Academy in Rome.

Jefferson and those of his generation so deeply embedded references to ancient Greece and Rome into the fabric of the new republic that to this day public buildings, monuments, and iconography employ motifs from the classical world, often in preference to distinctively American images.

But while the Founding Generation’s esteem for the ancient republics has been widely acknowledged, it has seldom been studied as a topic in itself.

“It is hoped that papers presented at this conference will explore a wide variety of topics, from public symbolism and political writing to the private scholarship of Jefferson’s generation,” said Andrew J. O’Shaughnessy, Saunders Director of the Smith International Center. “American interest in the classics coincided with renewed antiquarian and scholarly interest in the classics in Europe, and Americans remained dependent on European scholarship and publications. Yet their own reception of the ancient world escaped European models and was driven by their own concerns.

A goal of this conference will be to identify the distinctive features of American interest in the ancient world during this period.”

Among the scholars who have accepted invitations to participate are

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Maurie McInnis, Peter S. Onuf, and Richard Guy Wilson of the University of Virginia; Nicholas Cole and Peter Thompson of England’s Oxford University; Franca Barricelli of the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh; Paul A. Rahe of Hillsdale College in Michigan; Jennifer Tolbert Roberts of the City University of New York; Eran Shalev of Israel’s Haifa University; Rachel Sternberg of Case Western Reserve; Susan Ford Wiltshire of Vanderbilt; Caroline Winterer of Stanford; Gordon Wood of Brown; and Michael P. Zuckert of Notre Dame.

The conference’s sessions will be held at the American Academy in Rome, which is housed in a series of buildings on the crest of the Janiculum Hill in the western part of the “Eternal City.”

The American Academy in Rome is one of the leading American overseas centers for independent study and advanced research in the arts and humanities. Established in 1913 through a union of the American School of Architecture in Rome (founded in 1894) and the American School of Classical Studies (founded in 1895), the academy has no faculty, curriculum, or student body. Instead, it supports artists and scholars working in up to 18 different disciplines through fellowships, residencies, symposiums, performances, exhibitions, publications, and other programs.

The academy’s president is Adele Chatfield-Taylor, a member of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation Board of Trustees.

The Robert H. Smith International Center for Jefferson Studies, which was established in 1994, has organized and conducted more than 20 scholarly conferences at Monticello and other sites, including Paris; London; Berlin; Warsaw; Prague; Edinburgh, Scotland; Bellagio, Italy; and Salzburg, Austria. These gatherings of eminent think-

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Thomas Jefferson
MONTICELLO

Monticello is a newsletter published twice each year by the Thomas Jefferson Foundation, Inc. The Thomas Jefferson Foundation is the private, nonprofit corporation that has owned and operated Monticello since 1923. Its mission is preservation and education.

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ers are among the vehicles the Smith International Center employs to advance its mission of fostering Jefferson scholarship, disseminating information about Jefferson to diverse audiences, and highlighting the currency of Jeffersonian principles in today's world.

Collections of papers presented at three Smith ICJS conferences are scheduled to be published this year, by the University of Virginia Press (Paris and Salzburg) and Palgrave Macmillan of New York (Prague).

A 19th-century engraving of the Maison Carrée in Nîmes, France, an Augustan-era Roman temple that served as Jefferson's inspiration for the design of the Virginia State Capitol in Richmond.

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