

Session: 51. Int. Congress on Medieval Studies (Kalamazoo, 12–15 May 16)

Kalamazoo, MI

Deadline: Sep 15, 2015

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Visual Cultures of Death in the Medieval Islamic World

The medieval Islamic world produced a rich variety of commemorative images, practices, and materials. Much scholarship over the past century has focused on specialized forms of architecture such as shrines, monumental tombs, and the lavish mausolea erected in Iran by the Ilkhanids or in Egypt by the Mamluks. Less attention, however, has been paid to the broader sphere of death's visual cultures; Finbarr Barry Flood recently noted "a remarkable dearth of serious analysis" of cenotaphs and sarcophagi. How might we mine different objects and images made in the service of death? How might our understanding of death's visual cultures change if we looked beyond monumental architecture? What new configurations of (inter)disciplinary inquiry might yield a fuller accounting of death?

This session solicits papers on the visual culture of death (broadly construed) in the medieval Islamic world. Artistic engagements with death attest powerful points of convergence between social, theological, and philosophical imaginaries. Further, different regimes of representation figure death differently. Probing the broader question of visual evidence's role in histories of Islamic death, this session might raise questions of how specific material practices inflect notions of commemoration, or of how intersections between art and death can better inform our understanding of the medieval body. Additionally, the session will seek points of theoretical and historical convergence across the broader discipline of medieval studies, noting both the methodological potential of cross-cultural perspectives and the diverse forms of exchange between populations across the Islamic world.

Possible topics might include (but are not limited to) techniques of bodily preservation, vernacular tombs, urban topographies, relics, vampires, hauntings, hadith literature, procedures of graveyard contemplation, illustrations of death, and funerary textiles.

Please send brief abstracts (no more than 500 words) and a completed Participant Information Form (<http://wmich.edu/medieval/files/medieval-pif-2016.pdf>) by September 15 to Luke Fidler (lfidler@uchicago.edu).

Reference:

CFP: Session: 51. Int. Congress on Medieval Studies (Kalamazoo, 12-15 May 16). In: ArtHist.net, Jul 4, 2015 (accessed Mar 30, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/10702>>.