Illuminating Metalwork (St. Louis, 14-15 Oct 16)

Vatican Film Library, Saint Louis University, St. Louis MO, Oct 14–15, 2016
Deadline: May 1, 2016

Shannon Wearing, Los Angeles

Illuminating Metalwork: Representations of Precious-Metal Objects in Medieval Manuscript Illumination

43rd Annual Saint Louis Conference on Manuscript Studies, Vatican Film Library, Saint Louis University, St. Louis MO, October 14–15, 2016

Manuscript illuminations frequently place special emphasis on precious-metal objects both sacred and secular, such as chalices, reliquaries, crosses, tableware, and figural sculptures. Artists typically rendered these objects using gold, silver, and metal alloys, “medium-specific” materials that contrasted dynamically with the surrounding color pigments. The visual characteristics of these depicted metal objects — lustrous yet flat, almost anti-representational — could dazzle, but perhaps also disorient, the viewer: they catch the eye while creating a fertile tension between the representation of an image and the presentation of a precious stuff, between the pictorial and the material. A gold-leaf chalice signals its real-world referent both iconically, via its shape, and indexically, via its metal material, a doubled representation unavailable to the remainder of the painted miniature. Such images can take on added complexity if intended to represent known real-world objects.

This panel seeks to take inventory of how these precious-metal objects were depicted and how they generated meaning. Possible themes include: chronological/geographical specificities in the representation of metalwork in manuscript illuminations; depictions of precious-metal figural sculpture, including idols; technique (e.g. pigment vs. leaf); the semiotics of metal on parchment; and whether we can speak of “portraits” of particular objects and/or visual “inventories” of particular collections. We welcome proposals that consider Western, Byzantine, and/or Islamic manuscript illumination from the early through the late Middle Ages.

Please send (1) an abstract of no more than one page, and (2) a c.v. with current contact information by Sunday, May 1, 2016 to both panel organizers: Joseph Salvatore Ackley (ja2998@columbia.edu) and Shannon L. Wearing (slwearing@gmail.com). Selected papers are to be twenty minutes in length.

Please note that conference registration fees, and travel and accommodation expenses, are the responsibility of the panelists and/or their institutions.

[The Saint Louis Conference on Manuscript Studies is the longest running annual conference in North America devoted exclusively to medieval and Renaissance manuscript studies. Organized

by the Vatican Film Library in conjunction with its journal, Manuscripta, the two-day program each year offers a variety of sessions addressing the production, distribution, reception, and transmission of pre-modern manuscripts, including such topics as paleography, codicology, illumination, textual transmission, library history, provenance, cataloguing, and others.]

2016 Guest Speaker: Madeline H. Caviness (Mary Richardson Professor Emeritus, Tufts University), "Medieval German Law and the Jews: The Sachsenspiegel Picture-Books"

Reference:

CFP: Illuminating Metalwork (St. Louis, 14-15 Oct 16). In: ArtHist.net, Mar 18, 2016 (accessed Nov 14, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/12508>.