

Session at CAA (New York, 15–18 Feb 17)

College Art Association (CAA) Conference, New York, Feb 15–18, 2017

Deadline: Apr 12, 2016

Gabriella Cianciolo

The Long Life of Italian Mosaics

Medievalism, Orientalism and Nationalism

ICMA (International Center of Medieval Art) sponsored session at the Annual Meeting of the College Art Association, New York, 15 -18 February 2017

Session organized by Gabriella Cianciolo (Technische Universität München) and Erik Thunø (Rutgers University New Brunswick)

During the nineteenth century, early Christian and medieval mosaics from Italy were rediscovered and revived across the entire European continent. Several new workshops, reawakening the ancient craftsmanship, emerged in places such as Venice, Rome, Berlin, Paris, London, Vienna, and St. Petersburg, and generated such splendid mosaic decorations as inside the Pantheon and the Opéra in Paris, Saint Paul's Cathedral in London and the German neo-medieval churches commissioned by the Prussian king William II. In geographical terms, this revival – promoted and disseminated by Historicism's research on the art and architecture of the Middle Ages and documented through field trips by architects and decorators – focuses on the early Christian and medieval mosaics of Ravenna, Venice, Rome, and Palermo. But what engendered this new and rather sudden enthusiasm for Italy's medieval mosaics which culminated in the Nazi and Fascist periods of the twentieth century? When precisely did architects and art historians begin to discover them and what were their ambitions? To what extent can we talk about this phenomenon as a "revival", or "reception"? What were the different kinds of choices made during this process of adaptation and how do they relate, for example, to the nineteenth-century idea of nation and empire? What role did the Byzantine mosaics of Venice or the eclectic mosaic decorations of Sicily, fusing Norman, Byzantine and Islamic traditions, play in creating an orientalist "flavor" among nineteenth-century European rulers?

This session welcomes papers that explore how Italian early Christian and medieval mosaics were studied, restored, interpreted, and adapted from the beginning of the nineteenth until the middle of the twentieth century. In particular, it aims to discuss the variety of aspects – aesthetic, iconographic, technical, art historical, architectural and ideological – that were decisive for the afterlife of these venerated and famous mosaics. As such, the overall goal of the session is to call attention to the "Long Middle Ages", the complexity of the period's reception and the meaningful ways in which it continued to shape both the art and its academic discipline in subsequent centuries.

If you would be interested in participating in this session, please send your proposal, limited to max 400 words, together with a brief CV, by April 12th, 2016 to gabriella.cianciolo@tum.de and thuno@rci.rutgers.edu

Reference:

CFP: Session at CAA (New York, 15-18 Feb 17). In: ArtHist.net, Mar 29, 2016 (accessed Sep 20, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/12529>>.