Editing the Antique (Saint-Louis, 13-14 Oct 17)

Saint-Louis University, Oct 13–14, 2017
Deadline: Mar 10, 2017

Sabine Utz

Session at the 44th Saint Louis Conference on Manuscript Studies

Editing the Antique: Copies of Illustrated Antique and Late Antique Manuscripts between 800 and 1200

Organizer: Sabine Utz (University of Geneva)

Deadline for proposals: March 10th 2017.

Faithfulness to the model played a particular role in one specific type of object produced in the early Middle Ages: illustrated manuscripts of antique and late antique texts. Often linked with didactic purposes, the content of these books ranges from classical authors like Terence and Virgil, to astronomical poems and mathematical or medical texts. Antique texts were repeatedly copied throughout the Middle Ages with sets of images or diagrams forming closely-knit iconographic traditions that have enabled scholars to trace their genealogies and attempt reconstructions of the archetype when it was lost.

Rather than looking at these manuscripts as copies of a model, what happens if we consider each of them as a specific new edition that adapts the old material to its own means and audience? Be it a drawing of an aloe vera plant or the constellation of Orion, a mathematical diagram or an illustration of Virgil's poems, why were these images so diligently reproduced from one manuscript to the next? The authority of the Antique reference works seems to have limited the autonomy not only of the text but also of its images both on the iconographic and the stylistic level. On the other hand, each new exemplar altered the model in its own way, sometimes by slight changes, sometimes by more important ones. While style most obviously reflects its context of production, these alterations also affect layout, the relationship of the image with the text and some iconographical details. The aim of this session is to explore questions that arise from this tension, such as the necessity of these images, their visual functions and specificities, or their understanding by the medieval copyist and audience.

Papers are welcome both on case studies of particular manuscripts or groups of manuscripts and on broader approaches. They could also explore other visual material for which this editing process can be questioned. In parallel, papers may consider the implications of this data as regards reception and circulation of the antique and late antique texts between 800 and 1200.

Please send proposals with paper titles and 200-word abstracts to Sabine Utz at

Sabine.Utz@unige.ch by March 10th 2017 and do not hesitate to write with any questions.

Reference:

CFP: Editing the Antique (Saint-Louis, 13-14 Oct 17). In: ArtHist.net, Feb 11, 2017 (accessed Nov 13, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/14759>.