

## Figure and Ornament – Caucasus Region from 400 to 1700 (Tbilisi, 29 Sep/1 Oct 11)

Tbilisi (Georgia), Sep 29–Oct 1, 2011

Tim Urban

Figure and Ornament

Aesthetics, Art and Architecture in the Caucasus Region, from 400 to 1700

Conference

29th September – 1st October 2011

Tbilisi, Georgian National Museum

Organised by:

George Chubinashvili National Research Centre, Tbilisi

Kunsthistorisches Seminar, Universität Basel

Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz - Max-Planck-Institut

Figure and ornament have generally been considered as opposites. Figurative representations, however, can be ornamented or framed by ornaments, and ornaments are frequently formed by repeated figural motives, such as animals or plants. In fact, ornaments and figures are related in manifold ways and define or articulate pictorial or architectonic spaces, elaborating various aesthetic concepts. Traditionally, the distinction between figure and ornament has been understood as a consequence of specific religious belief systems and their attitude towards images. Whereas medieval Western and Byzantine Christian art has primarily been considered as figurative even if images have not always been uncontested, Islamic art, in turn, has often been perceived as iconophobic and mainly ornamental. Recent art historical research has strongly argued against such polarization, indeed the respective role of figure and ornament can no longer be seen as a basic difference between "Christian" and "Islamic" art. This opens a wide range of new questions especially for regions where Christians and Muslims were neighbours or have interacted over the centuries.

Under these premises, the conference will be dedicated to the various relationships between figure and ornament in the arts of the Caucasus from the Middle Ages until the early 17th century, in particular in Georgia, Armenia, Eastern Anatolia and Azerbaijan, also including Iran. While the current debates on the coexistence of and the cultural exchange between Christianity and Islam are mainly concentrated on the Mediterranean, the conference will take a closer look at the region between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, which has hardly been considered from this perspective. From early times, the Caucasian area has been characterized by an encounter and conflict between the Greco-Roman and Persian or Central Asian worlds of the Middle Ages and by the formation of Georgian and Armenian Christianity relating to Byzantium on the one hand and various

Islamic cultures on the other. However, religion represents just one major aspect for understanding the arts of the Caucasian area, and another no less important aspect concerns the competing or related models of kingship and monarchical representation, often transcending religious divisions.

The cultures the conference will discuss are not to be seen as given or static units but as having been formed and transformed in relation and interaction with each other. Thus, on the one hand, the conference examines the cultural transfer of phenomena beyond regions and borders, and on the other hand it aims to diagnose and compare the elaboration of different visual cultures in the Caucasus and their aesthetics regarding figure and ornament.

## PROGRAM

29th September

10.00

Welcome

Marika Didebulidze (Tbilisi), Barbara Schellewald (Basel) and Gerhard Wolf (Florence)

10.30

Manuela DeGiorgi (Florence/Lecce) and Annette Hoffmann (Florence)

Figure and Ornament. Conceptual and Aesthetical Considerations for an Introduction

11.00 break

## SPACES, FRAMES AND SURFACES

Chair: Marika Didebulidze (Tbilisi)

11.30

Nina Chichinadze (Tbilisi)

Framing the Sacred: Repoussé Revetments of Medieval Georgian Painted Icons

12.15

Ekaterina Gedevanishvili (Tbilisi)

Representation of the Saints Making the limitless Sacral Space

13.00 lunch

14.30

Margaret Graves (Glasgow)

Figural Necessity? Architecture as Ornament in the Secular Sphere

## RELATIONSHIPS IN FORM AND CONTENT

Chair: Barbara Schellewald (Basel)

15.15

Barbara Schellewald (Basel)

Image versus Ornament or vice versa?

16.00

Kitty Machabeli (Tbilisi)

Ornament – Figure – Symbols (Early Medieval Georgian Reliefs)

16.45 break

17.15

Vera Beyer (Berlin)

Ornaments and Figures. Contextualising an Ornament within a Miniature in a Manuscript of Nizami's Iskandernama (Topkapi H. 788 f.319r)

18.00

Simon Rettig (Berlin)

Tricky Images? Analysing the Presence of Figurative Elements in Persian Ornamental Illuminations

30th September

BETWEEN FIGURE AND ORNAMENT

Chair: Manuela DeGiorgi (Florence/Lecce)

9.30

Dionysios Mourelatos (Athens)

Interpretation of motifs in royal panels. The case of a panel at Sinai

10.15

Maria Raffaella Menna (Viterbo)

Paintings of Ishkhani Cathedral (Tao-Klarjeti) (1032): Between Figure and Ornament

11.00 break

11.30

Joachim Gierlichs (Berlin)

Figur und Ornament an mittelalterlichen Bauten im Kaukasus und in Anatolien

12.15

Antony Eastmond (London)

Between Figure and Ornament: the Functions of Text on Georgian Icons

13.00 lunch

PATTERNS AND FUNCTIONS

Chair: Nino Kavtaria (Tbilisi)

14.30

Bärbel Dümmler (Tübingen)

Meaning and Function of Geometrical and Vegetable Ornamentation within the Iconographic Program of Armenian Khachkars

15.15

Sophia Vassilopoulou (Berlin)

Secular or mystical? - The image of a "couple around a tree" on Persian lustre tiles

16.00 break

16.30

Leila Khuskivadze (Tbilisi)

The Issue of Cultural Correlation (In the Ornamental Repoussé Art)

17.15

David Khoshtaria (Tbilisi) and Marcus Bogisch (Copenhagen)

Palmettes with Concentric Ribs. Study of an Ornament in Medieval Georgian Art and Beyond

18.00

Nino Kavtaria (Tbilisi)

Canon Tables Types, Ornamental Decorations and Aesthetics of the XI-XIII Century Georgian and Armenian Book Art

1st October

MIGRATIONS

Chair: Gerhard Wolf (Florence)

10.00 Eka Quatshadze (Tbilisi)

Seljuk Ornament in Georgian and Armenian Architectural Sculpture

10.45

Alexander Saminski (Moscow)

The Canon Tables in the Program of Illumination of the Mokvy Gospels

11.30 break

12.00 Iván Szántó (Vienna)

Figures on Canvas, Ornaments on Silk: the Caucasian Element in the Art of Early-Modern Eurasia

12.45

Tamar Khundadze and Ana Shanshiashvili (Tbilisi)

Figures and Ornament Confirming Georgian Diplomatic and Missionary Activities in the North Caucasus

13.30 lunch

ENCOUNTERS

Chair: David Khoshtaria (Tbilisi)

15.00

Irine Giviashvili (Tbilisi)

Meeting of Two Traditions: Sculptures of the Georgian Church in Armenian Ani

15.45

Sarah Laporte-Eftekharian (Paris)

Figure and Ornament – the Case of Bethlehem Church in New Julfa

16.30 break

17.00

Christiane Esche-Ramshorn (Cambridge)

Western Image and Armenian Ornament: The Dominican Monasteries at the Ararat and in Nachitschevan/Azerbaijan and their Arts

17.45

Gerhard Wolf (Florence)

Figure/Ornament and the Question of Caucasian Aesthetics. Concluding remarks

18.30

FINAL DISCUSSION

with Marika Didebulidze, Barbara Schellewald and Gerhard Wolf

POSTER SECTION

Marina Kevkhishvili (Florence/Berlin)

Medien der Heiligenverehrung in Svanetien – Bild, Text, Ritual

Location

Georgian National Museum

3, Rustaveli Ave, Tbilisi 0105

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Further information

<http://www.khi.fi.it/en/aktuelles/veranstaltungen/veranstaltungen/veranstaltung290/index.html>

Reference:

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