

CAA 2020 Session, Buildings in Bloom (Chicago, 12–15 Feb 20)

Chicago, IL, Feb 12–15, 2020

Deadline: Jul 23, 2019

Meg Bernstein

Buildings in Bloom: Foliage and Architecture in the Global Middle Ages
College Art Association Annual Conference
Chicago, February 12-15, 2020

Session sponsored by the International Center of Medieval Art

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This panel seeks to explore foliate forms in a cross-cultural context across geographies and cultural traditions from roughly 300 to 1500 CE. Foliate forms can be found in many types of buildings from the medieval period, displayed in prominent locations or hidden from the casual viewer's gaze. From the Gothic cathedrals of western Europe to the Hindu temples of south Asia, builders and artisans filled their structures with flowers, leaves, fruits, and vines. These organic interventions took many forms and adorned architectonic elements in sometimes unexpected ways. They were also executed in a variety of media: sculpture, glass, mosaic, ceramics, and painting. The study of foliate forms has the potential to enliven discussions of artistic production and authorship in medieval architecture. A generation of new scholarship has richly re-integrated the decorative into architectural discourse; vegetal forms need not be filed neatly under "architecture" or "decoration," as foliage often occupies a liminal space that defies such categorization. Furthermore, the ecological turn has reinvigorated debates concerning liveliness, between-ness, and nature in art, and this research presents a promising opportunity to apply new thinking to previously overlooked aspects of medieval monuments on a global scale while examining one of the most fundamental relationships in the history of architecture, that of nature and the built environment.

We seek papers from scholars working in any cultural context (including Western Medieval, Pre-Columbian, Byzantine, Islamic, African, South Asian, East Asian, etc.) and any building typology (sacred architecture, palace architecture, commemorative monuments, vernacular architecture). Potential questions may include but are not limited to:

- What role or roles do vegetal motifs play in articulating space, creating meaning, or mitigating identity?
- How do these forms connect to the broader cultural context?
- As historians of medieval art, how should we approach this aniconic imagery methodologically?
- What new methodologies or technologies can be employed in studying a large corpus of foliate

decoration?

- What lessons might be learned from examining foliate forms across traditional cultural boundaries?

We invite interested applicants to submit a 250 word abstract and c.v. to Emogene Cataldo (emogene.cataldo@columbia.edu) and Meg Bernstein (megbernstein@ucla.edu) by July 23, 2019.

Accepted speakers may be eligible to apply for ICMA Kress Travel Grants to support travel to and from Chicago. For more information, see: <http://www.medievalart.org/kress-travel-grant>.

Reference:

CFP: CAA 2020 Session, Buildings in Bloom (Chicago, 12-15 Feb 20). In: ArtHist.net, Jun 13, 2019 (accessed Apr 6, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/21060>>.