Female patronage of religious institutions (London, 4 Jun 20)

The Courtauld Institute of Art, London, Jun 04, 2020
Deadline: Apr 10, 2020

Nicholas Flory

‘Remarkable women’: Female patronage of religious institutions, 1350-1550

This conference seeks to explore the ways in which women patronised and interacted with monasteries and religious houses during the late Middle Ages, how they commissioned devotional and commemorative art for monastic settings, and the ways in which these donations were received and understood by their intended audiences. The artistic donations of lay patrons to religious institutions has become a fruitful area of study in recent years, but the specific role played by women in these networks of patronage has been subject to less thorough scrutiny. Similarly too, the interests of female patrons have often been considered separately from the contexts of the places to which they made their donations, without a thorough consideration of their very different status from their male counterparts and how this shaped their pursuit for commemoration and memorial after death and their reception as patrons by monastic houses and religious institutions.

Applicants are encouraged to consider these issues and to think about the placement of objects and works of art commissioned by women within religious buildings, the devotional practices and beliefs of various religious orders, the physical materials of donations, and the ways in which female patrons situated themselves within monastic spaces. Was there a dialogue between these benefactors and the religious institutions they patronised? What can such donations tell us about the role and position of women in late medieval society and the ways in which they used religious patronage to articulate their own status? By examining a category of patrons that was clearly highly aware of a variety of devotional and commemorative practices, this conference seeks to gain a better understanding of art commissioned for monasteries by female lay donors, and how this more broadly reflects the position of women in late-medieval Europe.

Proposals are encouraged to address these issues throughout Europe between circa 1350 to 1550. Topics might include, but are not limited to considerations of:

-Issues of access and entry for women into religious spaces
-The agency of women in donating to monastic orders
-The significance of widowhood
-How women made themselves present, either in images of burial, in spaces often unavailable to them in life.
-The relationships between a female patron and a male religious institution.
-The role of materials in articulating identity or expressing specific aims, ideas or associations

-The differences in donations, and their reception, between male and female patrons
-The positioning of chapels, memorials or objects within monastic spaces
-How concepts of death and the afterlife may have been expressed in visual terms, and the ways in which this may have been gendered.
-The political nature of female patronage, and the ways in which women contributed to dynastic or familial ambitions
-How different monastic orders may have received and understood female patronage
-The types of object given by female donors to monastic audiences

Proposals are welcome from postgraduate, early-career and established researchers working in all relevant disciplines. Please send a title and an abstract of no more than 300 words for a 20-minute paper, together with a short CV and 100-word biography, to Nicholas.Flory@courtauld.ac.uk, by Friday 10 April 2020.

Reference:

CFP: Female patronage of religious institutions (London, 4 Jun 20). In: ArtHist.net, Jan 31, 2020 (accessed Nov 4, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/22533>.