

Display and Displacement in Medieval Art and Architecture (online, 18–19 Feb 21)

online / The Courtauld Institute of Art, Feb 18–19, 2021

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Display and Displacement in Medieval Art and Architecture

26th Annual Medieval Postgraduate Colloquium, The Courtauld Institute of Art

From the chalices that glisten behind glass museum cases to the ritual staging of powerful relics, from the architectural fragments of once towering cathedrals to fresco schemes designed to envelope the senses of the viewer, the display and location of medieval art and architecture matter. Though often meticulously designed and executed for specific temporal and physical loci, objects frequently moved – whether purposefully, forcefully or even only imaginatively – into new contexts and topographies. Natural disasters, wars and religious conflicts – the 1202 Syria earthquake, the 1204 Sack of Constantinople, St Lucia's Flood in 1297, or the 1492 expulsion of Jews from Spain, amongst many others – contributed to the displacement of people, objects and buildings.

Surviving sources – whether written or visual – affirm that the reciprocal relationships between objects and their sites were integral to medieval viewers' experience of art and architecture. At a time when access to artworks and cultural sites has been largely disrupted by the current pandemic, addressing the question of how medieval art was uprooted and its display reconfigured is especially pertinent. The Courtauld Institute of Art's 26th Annual Medieval Postgraduate Colloquium invites speakers from various academic fields (including, but not limited to, art history, archaeology, material culture and conservation studies) to consider various forms of displacement and their visual and experiential implications for medieval art and architecture. Speakers are encouraged to address the following and related questions, understood in the broadest geographical and chronological terms:

Considering original contexts

- What happens when the link between objects, their original sites and geographies is disrupted, and objects are re-imagined and re-configured in new contexts?
- How can primary sources help us to understand the relationships between medieval objects, their settings and viewers?
- How did medieval and later audiences and patrons recontextualise objects, within new sites, that had travelled thousands of miles?

Displaced communities and beholders

- How do medieval artworks testify to the displacement of religious communities and their

beliefs?

- What challenges faced displaced craftspeople and how were they forced to innovate? How did displaced craftspeople act as engines of change?
- How did artworks and spatial settings produce a sense of displacement in the beholder?

Visualising Displacement

- How did artists visually articulate stories of travel, migration and displacement?
- How was displacement used to mitigate distance? How was this conceptualised (vis-à-vis creation of mental pilgrimage itineraries, architectural recreations of the Holy Sepulcher, etc.)?
- How did public or private rituals such as processions and religious ceremonies recontextualise objects or concepts of displacement?

Reconstruction and Preservation

- How can digital technologies aid us in the study of displaced art and architecture?
- How do, or could, treasuries, museums and other art repositories draw on the localism of the sites with which their objects are intimately associated in order to reconcile the displacement that is inherent in their collections?
- Is the displacement of objects, wall paintings and whole architectural structures a form of preservation and conservation?

The Medieval Postgraduate Colloquium encourages participation from postgraduate students and independent researchers from across the globe. To apply, please send a proposal of up to 250 words for a twenty-minute paper, together with a CV, to medievalcolloquium@courtauld.ac.uk no later than 27 November 2020.

Organised by Giosuè Fabiano, Chloe Kellow, Susannah Kingwill, Laura Melin and Bella Radenović.

Reference:

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