

## Ornament and Devotion in Early Modern Church Architecture (RSA 2010 Venice)

Maarten Delbeke

Call for papers

Renaissance Society of America Conference  
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Panel title:

Ornament and Devotion in Early Modern Church Architecture

Discussions on the appropriate degree of ornamentation of churches and the role of ornaments in the stimulation of piety and devotion are as old as Christianity. The religious struggles of the 16th and 17th centuries seem to have reinvigorated these debates, not in the least because the building of new Saint Peter's emerged as a crucial case in point for the reformers. This and many other examples seem to suggest that reformed churches or religious groups (within or without the Catholic Church) repressed the use of ornaments and splendour out of fear of vanity, idolatry and superstition, while the art and architecture of the Catholic counter-reformation excelled in magnificence. Recent historiography has shown that the picture is much more complex, and that many views on ornament and religiosity often existed side by side.

This session would like to examine this issue further by inviting papers that deal with the continuities, ruptures and changes in the practices and debates concerning ornament in religious architecture. We are particularly interested in the following questions: to what extent were Early Modern discussions on ornament in religious architecture indebted to Early Christian or Medieval ideas? Do the religious struggles of the 16th and 17th centuries introduce new concepts and uses of ornament? Are views on ornament in religious architecture consistently related to devotion, piety and religiosity, or do they become dissociated from religion? Which functions, meanings or agencies are ascribed to architectural ornament and splendour in a religious context? Are religious views of ornament conceptualized, and if so, in which discourses? Or are they shaped by devotional and other practices?

Please send abstracts (150 words) and a short C.V. to both Maarten

Delbeke (maarten.delbeke@ugent.be) and Anne-Françoise Morel  
(annefrancoise.morel@ugent.be) by 1st of May.

Reference:

CFP: Ornament and Devotion in Early Modern Church Architecture (RSA 2010 Venice). In: ArtHist.net, Apr 9, 2009 (accessed Jan 11, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/31494>>.