The Medieval Diagram as Subject (London/online, Apr 22)

School of Advanced Study, London, Apr 1–30, 2022
Deadline: Oct 15, 2021

Dr Jenny Shurville, on behalf of the organisers

The Medieval Diagram as Subject

Conference | School of Advanced Study, University of London | April 2022 (date to be confirmed)

This conference will examine medieval diagrams as autonomous objects, and the visual and material features that allow them to function as independent entities. We understand diagrams as schematic representations designed to communicate ideas. In the Middle Ages, various words were used to define what we now call a 'diagram', including imago, figura, pictura, descriptio and tabula. The meaning of these terms could encompass a variety of forms and content and suggest different emphases for these complex works that often combined images and text. The conference will consider diagrams across different media in medieval visual culture, to address their design, function and reception.

An abundance of recent scholarship focuses on diagrams that accompany or illustrate text, and that often work as part of a larger object. Some diagrams, however, appear as self-sufficient images. While some of these images were deployed with, or may contain or be accompanied by text or multiple texts, the function of that text is to elucidate the diagram and it does not serve as the object's primary content. These types of diagrams include maps, genealogies, apotropaic or magic images, drawings of instruments, and works designed to communicate complex ideas about theology or function as prompts for religious devotion. They are found as wall paintings, pavements, mosaics, sculpture, manuscript rolls, sets of diagrams on single leaves or bound into codices, and architecture. In the twenty-first century, as in the Middle Ages, they pose particular challenges for those seeking to edit or reproduce their content.

The conference organisers (Laura Cleaver, Sarah Griffin, and Jenny Shurville) invite proposals for 20-minute papers on diagrams in the Middle Ages, in any relevant discipline. Papers from graduate students and Early Career Researchers are particularly welcome. Potential topics might include, but are not limited to:

- How the forms of autonomous diagrams shape their function(s)
- How autonomous diagrams use (or do not use) text
- Relationships between content and context
- Evidence for the circulation and reception of autonomous diagrams
- Approaches to publishing medieval diagrams

Abstracts of 250 words and questions should be sent to medievaldiagrams2022@gmail.com by Friday 15 October. We hope to hold this conference in hybrid format at Senate House, London. When submitting your abstract, please tell us if you would like to attend in person or online.

Reference:

CFP: The Medieval Diagram as Subject (London/online, Apr 22). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 23, 2021 (accessed Nov 23, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/34876>.