

Crux Triumphalis, Calvaries and Rood Beams (Cádiz, 13–15 Oct 22)

Universidad de Cádiz (Spain), Oct 13–15, 2022

Deadline: Mar 30, 2022

Pablo J. Pomar Rodil

1st Colloquium on Art and Liturgy

CRUX TRIUMPHALIS. Calvaries and Rood Beams between the Middle Ages and the Council of Trent

Universidad de Cádiz

Facultad de Filosofía y Letras

During the Middle Ages and even the Early Modern period, the biggest eye-catcher for those who entered into a church was an image of Christ crucified, frequently flanked by the Virgin and Saint John, supported by a beam. This beam, located on the triumphal arch's impost, became -together with the altar steps- the element that pointed out the frontier between the space for the faithful and the one intended for the clergy. Due to its prominent position at the entrance of the presbytery, the crucifix became a focus for the faithful's gaze. This image increased their spiritual involvement in liturgical celebrations, particularly during Mass, because they were persuaded through the transcendence of the mystery that occurred at the altar. That mystery, which was the miraculous and bloodless repetition of the Calvary's sacrifice, also was the very same iconographical depiction that the faithful could distinguish at the top of the beam.

Like any other church furniture, the origin of the rood beams can be traced back into the early Middle Ages or even Late Antiquity through Archaeology and documentary evidence that go back to the patristic literature or the Liber Pontificalis. The High Medieval sources that mention these wooden structures and their calvaries are even more numerous, for instance, Sicard of Cremona or Guillaume Durand treatises, which not only had a significant impact but were also strongly connected with this kind of works.

It is still possible to locate many rood beams throughout Europe, showing their past abundance. However, the Hispanic reality is much different. Scarcity of preserved examples, together with the lack of academic interest in this topic, could lead to a false image of a past where these structures would have been irrelevant. Nevertheless, documentary evidence and sculptural remains permit us to reconstruct a different reality where the visual power of these beams would have decayed only at the end of the 15th Century, in parallel with the extraordinary development of the great altarpieces. The unprecedented growth of altarpieces in the Iberian Peninsula and the consequences of certain theological developments would become catalyst that provoked both the fall into disuse of rood beams and also their academic oblivion.

The aim of the first Expert meeting on Art and Liturgy, to be held in the University of Cádiz with a commitment to continuity, is to restore the memory of these singular pieces in its architectural, sculptural and pictorial dimension within the visual and functional context for which they were conceived. In order to provide a forum for debate on these issues, the Colloquium will count with renowned experts such as Teresa Laguna, Justing Kroesen or Eduardo Carrero, among others. Papers and communications will be delivered in four sessions

Session I. The Triumphal Cross in liturgical and historical sources. Study of patristic texts and medieval liturgical books, pastoral visits, other literary sources such as periegesis and chorography, as well as contractual and accounting documentary sources. In addition, graphic evidence of beams and calvaries: drawings, engravings, descriptive painting and historical photography.

Session II. Spanish Calvaries and Rood Beams in the European Context. Origins and typological relations with similar elements: screens, retrochoirs, jubé... Spatial configuration and formal development. Iberian world. Local particularities.

Session III. The decline of a typology. The emergence of the great altarpieces and the last beams. Disuse and dismantling of beams and calvaries. Functional, liturgical and maintenance issues involved in the disappearance process. Singular examples preserved: survival and revival.

Session IV. Image, piety and devotion. Devotional implications in the cult of medieval crucifixes and calvaries after their descent. Altars, altarpieces and chapels devoted to "Beam Christs". Medieval prestige in the baroque context.

Abstract submission

We invite the academic community to submit abstracts in Spanish, English, Italian and French consisting of a 500-700 words summary highlighting the innovative nature of the paper together with the chosen session and a brief curriculum vitae before the 31st of March 2022 to the following address: crux.triumphalis@uca.es.

The organising committee shall acknowledge receipt of submissions and select those considered most closely aligned with the meeting objectives. The selection will be made public before the 15th of May. Following peer review, these papers will be published in a monograph. Texts should be sent by the 15th of November 2022.

Registration

Speakers: 40 €

Speakers members of CEHA: 20 €

In both cases, the registration includes a copy of the book with the results of the Meeting.

After the acceptance, speakers will have until the 15th of June 2022 to pay the registration fees via bank transfer to the University of Cádiz account (Banco de Santander: IBAN ES48 0049 4870 8529 1609 2739; SWIFT: BSCHESMM).

IMPORTANT: The concept of the transfer should be ENCUESTROCRUX followed by the speaker's SURNAME and NAME. Speaker should send a copy of the bank transfer receipt via email to crux.triumphalis@uca.es

Organiser

Departamento de Historia Moderna, Contemporánea, de América y del Arte
Universidad de Cádiz
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Contributor

Comité Español de Historia del Arte (CEHA).
Centre International d'Études Liturgiques (CIEL)

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Reference:

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(accessed Jun 10, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/35806>>.