

The Art Bulletin, Volume 105, Issue 1 (2023)

Christy Anderson, Toronto

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Art History In and Outside of the Academy

Christy Anderson, Editor-in-Chief

ARTICLES

1. "Arabesques": The Making and Breaking of a Concept in Renaissance Italy"

Robert Brennan

Themes: material culture, ornament, reception of forms

Abstract:

This paper investigates the "arabesque" (arabeschi) as a term and concept that took shape in sixteenth-century Italy to describe motifs deriving from Islamic art. Examining discussions of the arabesque in two principal media – metalwork and needlework – it shows how the concept developed in tandem with conscious projects of imperialist appropriation, but also inadvertently furnished a theoretical basis for a highly conflicted affirmation of female artists. In conclusion, it considers the extent to which the Italian Renaissance laid the groundwork for later, increasingly racialized identifications between the "arabesque" and the "grotesque."

2. "A New Look for the Jewish Past: Historicism, Authenticity, and Fantasy in EM Lilien's Bible Art"

Eva Miller

Themes: Jewish art, European imperialism, book illustration

Abstract:

In the multi-volume *Bücher der Bibel* (1908–1912), Jewish artist Ephraim Mose Lilien imagined a glorious Jewish past that resonated with Zionist discourses of spiritual and artistic revival. He visualised this past in part through appropriating iconography from ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia. The significance of Lilien's historicism must be understood in the context of a culture conflicted about the relationship between the Bible and the Oriental past, at a time when an association between German imperial power and the ancient Middle East was ubiquitous in popular media and promoted at the highest levels of the state.

3. "Art on the Edge: the Church of the Holy Cross, Jvari, Georgia"

Antony Eastmond

Themes: identity creation, liminality, religious architecture

Abstract:

Jvari, the Church of the Holy Cross, overlooking the old capital of Georgia, Mtskheta, is a building that is literally and metaphorically on the edge. It is a liminal monument that crosses borders but also creates them. The church lies at the heart of Georgia's Christian history, but in the seventh century it lay on the frontier between the Byzantine and Sasanian empires. Architecturally it belongs to a group of churches found across the Caucasus, but it has often been promoted as an exclusively Georgian monument. Jvari is a single monument that illuminates issues in transnational history, and the changing roles of a building in the creation of identities in the early middle ages.

4. "Botanical Illustration and Byzantine Visual Inquiry in the Morgan Dioscorides"

Andrew Griebeler

Themes: copying and exempla, botanical illustration, book culture

Abstract:

Standard art historical narratives portray early medieval and Byzantine botanical illustration as a stagnate tradition resulting from the uncritical copying of ancient models. The Morgan Dioscorides, however, testifies to robust critical practices in Byzantine botanical illustration as early as the ninth or tenth century CE. The article argues that the makers of the Morgan Dioscorides critically compared variant pictures from the same manuscript tradition. They drew upon nature observation and close readings of text to create illustrations absent from the existing tradition. The article further explores the theoretical and empirical underpinnings for these practices.

5. "Visualizing Peasant and Bovine Self-Sustenance in the Famine Tracts of Colonial India"

Liza Oliver

Themes: animal husbandry, colonial policy, photographic records

Abstract:

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the British Raj sponsored cattle competitions across India to educate peasants in responsible bovine husbandry practices to mitigate famine. Photographs of these competitions, which demonstrate the fraught convergence of economic liberalism and colonial humanitarianism, aimed to constitute model peasants and cattle of measurable self-improvement. Simultaneously, the photographs reveal traces of bovine-peasant relationships that unsettle these newly-conceived colonial subjects, and that speak to the manner in which cattle's bodies were sites of competing political and affective inscription.

Reference:

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