Convivium XI/1 (2024): The Arts of Medieval Northern Africa

Deadline: Jun 5, 2023

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Call for Papers for Convivium XI/1, 2024 thematic issue: The Arts of Medieval Northern Africa. Edited by Nathan S. Dennis and Ravinder S. Binning.

Whether in museum collections or textbooks, the arts of medieval Northern Africa remain largely omitted from canons of premodern art history. Yet the region's aesthetic legacy continues to reward scholarly inquiry. Recent excavations in Sudan alone, for example, have unearthed artifacts attesting to understudied epigraphic traditions and hitherto unimagined pilgrimage routes. Various forms of artistic media, as well as liturgical objects, continue to surface. Archaeological surveys over the last twenty years in the Maghreb and Sahel have uncovered new artistic, theological, and political relationships between urban centers and rural settlements. Indeed, Northern Africa had robust cross-cultural exchanges with European, Asian, and Southern African cultures. Its pluralistic societies included Jewish, Christian, and Islamic art and architecture in dialogue, as well as remnants of polytheistic traditions extending back to Dynastic Egypt or rooted within indigenous communities. Furthermore, Northern African workshops provided artistic labor for various canonical monuments in Southern Europe and the Levant. Complex trade networks also demand further scholarly investigation: medieval commodities arrived in Europe from West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea, as well as the southeastern Nilotic lands and Horn of Africa. Locally produced metalwork, ivory and wood sculpture, textiles, and ceramics were recognized as some of the finest works of medieval craftsmanship. They were collected and traded as far north as Great Britain and as far east as China.

The prominent position that Northern Africa held historically in medieval art and architecture has been the subject of several important exhibitions. Byzantium and Islam: Age of Transition (2012) and the upcoming Africa and Byzantium (2023) exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art are helping re-center Northern Africa as a cultural driver—not a marginal outpost—in the study of Byzantine and Islamic art. Caravans of Gold, Fragments in Time: Art, Culture, and Exchange Across Medieval Saharan Africa (2019) at the Block Museum of Art provided a much-needed focus on the medieval cultures of the Sahara/Sahel and their rich artistic contributions to medieval Europe and the Middle East. And the upcoming exhibition, Ethiopia at the Crossroads (2023), at the Walters Art Museum offers opportunities to reframe Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa as a dynamic and influential space of artistic exchange between three continents. The proposed 2024 volume of Convivium seeks to expand upon these conversations and connections. Topics may include, but are certainly not limited to:

1. Late antique & medieval Jewish art & architecture in Africa

2. Early Christian & Byzantine Africa
3. Medieval Islamic Africa
4. Medieval Nubia
5. Coptic Egypt
6. Medieval Ethiopia & the Horn of Africa
7. Amazigh/Berber & other nomadic arts of the medieval Sahara/Sahel 8. Art & trade networks between Northern Africa and other areas of
the African continent
9. Western medieval or Asian art in dialogue with medieval Northern Africa
10. Historiography of medieval Northern Africa

Deadline for abstracts and CV: June 5, 2023
Deadline for manuscripts: November 30, 2023
Deadline for complete articles: January 31, 2024

Contacts:
Please submit an abstract of approximately 300 words and a CV to Nathan Dennis at ndennis@usfca.edu or Ravinder Binning at ravi.binning@gmail.com by June 5, 2023. Articles selected for the volume will be due by November 30, 2023. All submissions will undergo double-blind peer review.

Reference:
CFP: Convivium XI/1 (2024): The Arts of Medieval Northern Africa. In: ArtHist.net, Apr 10, 2023 (accessed Nov 15, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/39021>.