Objects of Law in the Medieval and Early Modern Worlds (Bern, 29-30 Aug 24)

Universität Bern, Institut für Kunstgeschichte, Aug 29–30, 2024
Deadline: Nov 1, 2023

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Objects of Law in the Medieval and Early Modern Worlds.

Materials and texts function in a variety of ways in legal contexts, they forge diplomatic ties, grant gifts of land, levy taxes, regulate markets, etc. In the medieval and early modern worlds, these objects took on many different guises. Some were highly ornate objects, such as Fatimid marriage contracts where text was embroidered on woven silk, or tablets of authority produced in gold, silver or wood which allowed travelers to cross the Mongol Empire without difficulty, or wax seals imprinted with imperial images protected in textile bags. Other objects facilitated the execution of law in everyday life; glass weights, stamps for marking loaves of bread, length standards embedded in architecture, volume standards. The connection between the materiality of these artefacts and the law are multiple, their very nature conveyed information, performed authority, and communicated authenticity.

Although legal objects fall between disciplinary categories, their texts have been the main subject of scholarship. The conference, Objects of Law, proposes thinking more deeply about the artistic practices that shaped the materiality, iconography, and texts of legal objects in the medieval and early modern period. What forms did these objects take? How did their form confer authenticity and legal authority? What training or knowledge are evident in the objects? Objects of Law seeks dialogue between scholars working in art history, history, archaeology, legal history, and related disciplines that deal with legal objects. We welcome contributions from all geographical regions that relate to the medieval and early modern period. We invite contributions that address, but are not limited to, the following topics:

- The role of objects in legal practices
- The aesthetics of objects of law
- The artistic practices of crafting legal objects

Proposals should consist of an abstract in English for 30-minute papers (max 2000 characters incl. spaces) and a brief biography (max 1500 characters incl. spaces) in a single document (pdf or word). They should be submitted to: Corinne Mühlemann (corinne.muehlemann@unibe.ch) and Fatima Quraishi (fatimaq@ucr.edu) by November 1, 2023. Graduate students are highly encouraged to apply. Conference participants will be provided with accommodation in Bern for 3 nights and some travel expenses will be covered.

Reference:

CFP: Objects of Law in the Medieval and Early Modern Worlds (Bern, 29-30 Aug 24). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 6, 2023 (accessed Nov 10, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/39961>.