Superficies. Surfaces, Skins and Textures (Zurich/online, 18-20 Jan 24)

Online / University of Zurich, Institute of Art History, Jan 18–20, 2024

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SUPERFICIES. Surfaces, Skins and Textures. Sensory Encounters with Books and Related Multi-layered Objects.

University of Zurich
Textures of Sacred Scripture. Materials and Semantics of Sacred Book Ornament
https://textures-of-scripture.ch

A link for online participation will be published on the website.

The research group “Textures of Sacred Scripture. Materials and Semantics of Sacred Book Ornament” and the Chair of Medieval Art History at the University of Zurich are organizing an international conference on “Superficies – Surfaces, Skins, and Textures. Sensory encounters with books and related multi-layered objects”. The conference, funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation, is scheduled to take place at the Institute of Art History of the University of Zurich on 18-20 January 2024.

Surfaces are boundaries that mediate our sensory interactions with objects. Surfaces reveal, but they also conceal. In traditional aesthetic discourse, their multiple tactile and visual qualities are often contrasted with depth, and in a pejorative sense, superficiality is opposed to inner virtue and an intellectual understanding of things. This stark opposition between outer surface and inner core is put to the test by multi-layered objects such as books. Here, surfaces abound. Once opened, books in codex format display a multitude of layered skins and textures that are essential for the visual and haptic experience of the object in space and time. Perhaps more than other objects, books tangibly embody the complex relationship between surface and depth, through their composition and spatial structure as multi-layered objects. While the surfaces of sculpture and architecture have recently come to the attention of art historians, the surfacescapes – to use an expression coined by the art historian Jonathan Hay – of books and other multi-layered objects have been far less examined.

The conference aims to take a fresh look at the diversity of surface landscapes in books and other multi-layered objects. From the highly valuable vestments that clothe the exteriors of precious books to the parchment skins of their interiors, all layers are the product of diverse surface treatments. Techniques such as coating, polishing, tooling, and engraving determine the visual and haptic qualities of bindings and pages, and are reflected in their textures and sensory qualities.

Program
18.01. Room KOL-F-101

18:15–19:30 Keynote Lecture
Kathryn Rudy (University of St. Andrews)

19:45 Speakers' dinner

19.01. Room KOL-G-201

09:00 - 09:30 Introduction
Simon Breitenmoser, David Ganz, Thomas Rainer (University of Zurich)

Imitation and Intermediality

09:30–10:15 Display Script and Surfaces
Hanna Vorholt (University of York)

10:15–11:00 "Shredding it": Genealogy of Purple Glow
Nicholas Herman (University of Pennsylvania)

11:00–11:30 Coffee break

11:30–12:15 Matters of the Flesh and Polymateriality in the Manuscripts of Antonio da Monza
Elizabeth Doulkaridou (Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne)

12:15–13:00 Speaking Surfaces. Framing Pictorial Narrative in Twelfth-century England
Saskia C. Quené (Utrecht University)

13:00–14:00 Lunch break

Multi-layered Surfaces Beyond the Book

14:00–14:45 Gold, Silver, and Copper: The Layers and Textures of the Multimaterial Surface of a 15th Century Triptych
Simon Breitenmoser (University of Zurich)

14:15–15:30 Neglected Surface: The Great Cameo of France, Ornament and Perception
Maximilian Geiger (Bergische Universität Wuppertal)

15:30–16:00 Coffee break

Playing with Surfaces

16:00–16:45 Liber mirabiliter compaginatus: Surfaces of play in puzzle books
Magdalena Herman (University of Warsaw)

16:45–17:30 Altering Surfaces in Islamic Manuscripts
Alya Karame (Collège de France)

19:30 Speakers' dinner

20.01. Room RAI-F-041

Transparency

09:00–09:45 “Pergamenum diaphanum est”: Parchment as a Transparent Medium
Megan McNamee (University of Edinburgh)

09:45–10:30 Material Metamorphoses – The Black Surfaces of Ms 493 between Transparency and Opacity
Marie Hartmann (Freie Universität Berlin)

10:30–11:00 Coffee break

The Body of the Book

11:00–11:45 Contingent touch and the pleasures of the surface. Sensual encounters in a medieval health manuscript
Tina Bawden (University of Michigan) and Susanne Huber (University of Bremen)

11:45–12:30 Book as Body, Tear as Trauma
Georgios Boudalis (Museum of Byzantine Culture of Thessaloniki)

12:30–13:00 Final Discussion

Reference:
CONF: Superficies. Surfaces, Skins and Textures (Zurich/online, 18-20 Jan 24). In: ArtHist.net, Jan 9, 2024 (accessed Nov 23, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/40882>.