Unruly Iconographies / Iconografie Indisciplinate (Naples, 12–13 Jun 25)

Naples, Jun 12–13, 2025
Deadline: Oct 1, 2024

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Unruly Iconographies / Iconografie Indisciplinate: Exceptions or New Patterns?

Field Seminar. Center for the Art and Architectural History of Port Cities “La Capraia”.
Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte, Naples.

Art history’s recent turn toward what the field has long considered Europe’s peripheries and border zones has brought to the fore countless examples of seemingly strange, unusual, and unique iconographic motifs, which complicate the relationship between an artwork’s iconography and its place in space and time. Until now, the dominant model has presupposed standard iconographies and their adaptations, exceptions, and deviations, which are often understood within historiographic paradigms such as tradition and invention, center and periphery, urban and rural, elite and non-elite. This approach falls short, however, especially in places like southern Italy, where the abundance of exceptions brings into question the rule itself. Merely extending these historiographic paradigms to encompass “unruly iconographies” or "iconografie indisciplinate" only reperforms their marginalization. This state of play challenges us to explore the nexus between place and iconographic rules and exceptions, not by modifying the traditional framework to include peripheries and border zones, but by examining how case studies invite us to trace new art historical patterns and build new methodological models.

In November 2024, the Index of Medieval Art at Princeton University will convene "Unruly Iconographies?", a one-day conference dedicated to rethinking historiographic paradigms that have shaped how we understand iconographic motifs that don’t follow the rules. (Please find the Call for Papers for the Index conference at https://ima.princeton.edu/2024/02/15/call-for-papers-unruly-iconographies-examining-the-unexpected-in-medieval-art/ and a preliminary program at https://ima.princeton.edu/2024/05/16/save-the-date-for-the-fall-index-conference-unruly-iconography-examining-the-unexpected-in-medieval-art-on-november-9-2024/.) In a linked event hosted by the Center for the Art and Architectural History of Port Cities “La Capraia” in June 2025, "Unruly Iconographies / Iconografie Indisciplinate: Exceptions or New Patterns?" will take medieval Naples and southern Italy as a laboratory for exploring relationships between iconography and place within a geographically expanded Middle Ages.

We invite proposals that take individual case studies from medieval Naples and southern Italy as points of departure for investigating questions including so-called exceptions, hapaxes, mistakes,

and lost originals; dynamics between “center” and “periphery”; challenges of chronology and dating in so-called peripheries and border zones; circulations of iconographies through polycentric cultural networks; translations of motifs across mediums, formats, functional contexts, and audiences; the legibility and illegibility of iconographies across cultures; mechanisms of transfer including mobile artworks, artists, and patrons; interplays between royal, non-royal elite, and non-elite patronage; and the limitations of previous models of iconography when confronted with cases in medieval Naples and southern Italy. We welcome in particular proposals that locate southern Italy within broader Mediterranean worlds, at the convergence of multiple cultural and religious currents including Latin and Orthodox Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

"Unruly Iconographies / Iconografie Indisciplinate" is designed as a field seminar. Contributions may take the form of a seminar-style presentation with slides, or an on-site presentation with an artwork in Naples. (For presentations on site, we will print hand-outs with comparative images.) Presentations may be made in English or Italian, and should run no longer than 20 minutes, followed by 15-20 minutes of discussion.

La Capraia will cover the cost of lodging in Naples for three nights, lunch and dinner on the two days of the conference, admission to collections and sites, and transport to site visits as necessary. The organizing committee will award one graduate student among selected participants to receive an honorarium (disbursed immediately after the field seminar) to cover costs of travel up to $750.

Proposals should include a curriculum vitae, a brief narrative biography (max. 150 words), and an abstract (max. 350 words), and may be in Italian or English. The abstract should also indicate whether the proposed contribution would take the form of a seminar-style presentation or an on-site presentation. Please combine these materials in a single PDF document with Lastname_Firstname as the title, and send to La Capraia’s Center Coordinator Francesca Santamaria (lacapraia@gmail.com) by 1 October 2024. Selected participants will be notified in early November 2024.

"Unruly Iconographies / Iconografie Indisciplinate" is organized by Maria Harvey (James Madison University), Sarah K. Kozlowski (The Edith O’Donnell Institute of Art History / Center for the Art and Architectural History of Port Cities “La Capraia”), Ali Alibhai (The Edith O’Donnell Institute of Art History), Francesca Santamaria (Center for the Art and Architectural History of Port Cities “La Capraia”), with the collaboration of the Index of Medieval Art, Princeton University.

The Center for the Art and Architectural History of Port Cities “La Capraia” is a partnership between the Edith O’Donnell Institute of Art History at the University of Texas at Dallas, the Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte, Franklin University Switzerland, and the Amici di Capodimonte.

Learn more about La Capraia at https://arthistory.utdallas.edu/port-cities/ and follow us on Instagram at https://www.instagram.com/lacapraia/.

Reference:

CFP: Unruly Iconographies / Iconografie Indisciplinate (Naples, 12-13 Jun 25). In: ArtHist.net, Jul 23, 2024 (accessed Nov 22, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/42380>.