12th Annual Ards Conference: Colour in the Choir (Leuven, 21-23 May 25)

Leuven, M Leuven (Be), May 21–23, 2025
Deadline: Dec 2, 2024

Hannah De Moor, M Leuven

12th ARDS Annual Conference on Current Research in Medieval and Renaissance Sculpture and Conference Iconostalla Misericordia International Leuven (BE), M Leuven.

Colour in the Choir. Polychromy on Late-Medieval and Renaissance Church Furniture.

For this conference ARDS and Iconostalla Misericordia International are joining forces to put the focus on choir stalls and church furniture. Choir stalls were integral components of medieval churches, often commissioned by the administration of cathedrals, monasteries, parishes or even city councils or guilds. Choir stalls were part of the fixed and permanent church furniture often adorned with intricate carvings. While the bench ends predominantly depicted religious scenes, the carvings on the misericords and knobs often feature profane themes, such as fantasy creatures, human figures, animals, proverbs, and fables. Positioned at the religious heart of the church, these carvings served as expressions of the medieval worldview and represented significant and intricate artistic endeavors.
Research on choir stalls has primarily delved into their iconographic aspects, formal and stylistic analyses, and the interplay of religious and profane themes. In recent years, there has been a greater interest in the technical and production aspects of choir stalls. For instance, the 2016 Iconostalla Misericorida International conference in Greifswald explored the workshops that produced choir stalls. In Rijeka in 2018, the relationship between patron and maker was the subject of a colloquium.

An underexplored topic regarding choir stalls is the use of colour. This is partly because evidence of polychromy is scarce and often ambiguous, with many stalls having lost their original colours due to restoration practices in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Nonetheless, there are instances of choir stalls that exhibit traces of their original polychromy. With regard to colour on choir stalls, as well as on other church furniture such as pulpits and rood screens, several questions arise. Where are examples of painted choir stalls (and/or other church furniture) known and what archival data are available? What materials and techniques were used? Who were the artist and craftsmen for applying the colours, what does recent research learn us about collaborations between craftsmen of different guilds, such as the joiners guilds, the sculptor or masons guilds and the painters guild? How did or does the complicated relationship between colour and form, manifest itself in the commissioning, production, perception and use of choir stalls? Did the colours have purely aesthetic purpose, or did the paintings have also a functional one? How should the remaining traces of colours on choir stalls be restored/preserved?

This call for papers welcomes specific case studies that touch upon one or more of the topics outlined above, as well as papers providing a broader view on the subject. Your proposal can be (art-)historical, anthropological, historiographical, archaeological, or technical in nature. Multidisciplinary approaches are encouraged.

How to submit your proposal?
- Write an abstract in word or pdf; max. 500 words (excl. authors name(s) and contact details).
- Include a short bio of 150 words max.
- Include a short CV.
E-mail abstract, short bio, and short CV to info@ards.be

Practical information.
- The call for papers deadline is 2 December 2024.
- In the selection of papers, priority will be given to speakers presenting new research and new contributions relevant to the specific conference theme. Successful applicants will receive a notification by 20 December 2024.
- The lectures, illustrated by a PowerPoint slideshow, should be no longer than 20 minutes.
- Each conference session will be followed by a Q&A with the speakers.
- Conference papers will be published in the Ards acta colloquia post print series in collaboration with Brepols Publishers.
- Your proposal (abstract, short bio, short cv) and lecture should be in English. The conference communication and the post prints publication will also be in English.
- The organizers cannot contribute towards transport and/or accommodation costs of speakers or attendees.

Programme:
The conference will combine selected paper presentations with keynotes, visits or excursions. The final programme will be communicated in February.

Partners and Organising Committee:
M Leuven and Ards – the platform for medieval sculpture.
Marjan Debaene, Hannah De Moor, Anne Liefsoens.
Iconostalla.
Frédéric Billiet, Willy Piron, Christel Theunissen, Jos Koldeweij.

Reference:
CFP: 12th Annual Ards Conference: Colour in the Choir (Leuven, 21-23 May 25). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 8, 2024 (accessed Nov 23, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/42843>.