# Materializing the Spirit (London, 5-7 Sep 13)

Institute of Historical Research, Senate House, London, Sep 5–07, 2013
Deadline: Feb 1, 2013

Ayla Lepine

MATERIALIZING THE SPIRIT: SPACES, OBJECTS AND ART IN THE CULTURES OF WOMEN RELIGIOUS
CALL FOR PAPERS

The History of Women Religious of Britain and Ireland Annual Conference will be hosted by the Institute of Historical Research, University of London, on 5-7 September 2013.

Paper proposals are now invited. Presentations should be 20 minutes in duration, and should address some element of the conference theme, with reference to British and/or Irish contexts.
The devotional and vocational activities of women religious sculpted the physical space of religious houses in unique ways. Patterns of use were etched into the fabric of buildings, guiding structural design and interior decoration. But buildings also shaped practice: whether the formal monastic sites of early or revived enclosed orders or the reused secular buildings of active congregations, women both adapted and adapted to their material surroundings.

A growing body of literature has addressed itself to convent art, exploring nuns as patrons, consumers and manufacturers of material and visual culture. These practices span the history of women's religious life – from the early Middle Ages to the present day - and suggest a hidden but dynamic tradition of artistic enterprise. This conference explores the creative output of women religious including but not limited to textiles and the decorative arts, illuminated manuscripts and printed books, women's patronage of painting and architecture, the commercial production of ecclesiastical textiles in the nineteenth-century, production of liturgical and devotional art in recent periods, and the development of unique convent and institutional spaces by and for women religious.

Key aims of the conference will be to highlight the scholarly value of these under-researched and little known spaces and collections and also to raise awareness and discuss the threats that they face as

communities decline, buildings close, artefacts and archives are dispersed.

This conference will take a broad and diverse view on what constitutes ‘material culture’, emphasizing the conception, production, and meanings of the many material outputs of convents and monasteries. Papers are welcomed from a diverse range of disciplines: scholars from social and religious history, art and architecture, theology, anthropology, psychology and beyond are invited to offer fresh and innovative perspectives in order to illuminate ways in which women religious in Britain and Ireland created and were formed by material histories for over a thousand years.

Please send 200-word proposals for 20-minute papers to conference conveners Kate Jordan (kate.jordan.09@ucl.ac.uk) and Ayla Lepine ( ayla.lepine@gmail.com) by no later than 1 February 2013.

Reference:

CFP: Materializing the Spirit (London, 5-7 Sep 13). In: ArtHist.net, Dec 14, 2012 (accessed Nov 18, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/4377>.