

From Baltic Sea Region to Iberian Peninsula (Tallinn, 10–12 Dec 25)

Estonian Academy of Fine Arts, Tallinn (Estonia), Dec 10–12, 2025

Deadline: May 15, 2025

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Art at the time of Michel Sittow (c. 1469-1525).

Studying Michel Sittow's life 500 years after his death makes it possible to trace a range of cultural and political connections revealing the overarching dynamics that shaped the history of contemporary states such as Estonia, Spain, Belgium and Denmark, as well as others, including the Netherlands, England, France, Switzerland and today's Germany. All of these were involved in European dynastic politics and those connections between territories set up the career of a Reval-born painter at different courts within the Habsburg networks. Michel Sittow's story demonstrates how, in the Late Medieval or Early Modern world, mobility was no less important as a professional experience than today.

This seminar aims to analyse Michel Sittow's international visual and political contexts to understand his experiences within the artistic production and visual culture of late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Europe. Previous studies of Sittow have primarily focused on archival material, formal and iconographic analysis, or technical research, but have paid less attention to his interactions with the places the painter visited or events he witnessed, despite their importance in European history. For instance, Sittow was able to see Bruges as an international trade centre during the final decades before its decline due to geopolitical changes in the Low Countries and the Holy Roman Empire. In 1492, while employed at the court of Isabella of Castille, he could observe the consequences of the end of the Spanish Reconquista and the arrival of Europeans in the New World. Later, as a courtier in Castile, he observed negotiations for the Spanish Wedding (1496), which led to the rise of the Habsburg Empire. At Margaret of Austria's court, a hub of Northern Renaissance culture, he contributed to the spread of portraiture. Upon returning to his hometown, he led workshops creating altarpieces and, as guild alderman, witnessed the fall of the Teutonic Order and the Reformation in the Baltic countries.

The seminar brings together early-career and established scholars from various fields, including history, art history, visual culture studies, history of artistic techniques, artwork restoration and conservation. It provides an academic space for discussing the background of the life and works of Michel Sittow and their potential impact on the painter. The seminar also seeks proposals related to the restoration, conservation, and digital management of Late Medieval and Early Modern art, exploring how society deals with its material culture 500 years later.

Authors are encouraged to submit their research proposals (max. 300 words) with a short CV

(max. 200 words) aligned with the conference theme and topics:

- Baltic and Scandinavian Territories and their artistic interactions with the Holy Roman Empire
- The visual culture and artistic migration in the Low Countries at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries
- The Iberian Peninsula political and artistic landscape before, during and after Michel Sittow's stay (1492-1502)
- All roads lead to... Mechelen. Habsburg dynasticism and visual strategies
- Approaches to restoration, conservation, and management of Late Medieval and Early Modern European Art

Please submit your proposal via: <https://forms.gle/NteQMUBJkzdiBeYA>

Deadline for submission: 15th May 2025

Notification of acceptance: 30th June 2025

The seminar takes place at the Estonian Academy of Fine Arts from 10th to 12th December 2025. There are no registration fees. The organisers will provide the accepted participants lunch, coffee breaks, and two-night accommodation.

Organisers: Anneli Randla, Anu Mänd, Oskar J. Rojewski

Scientific committee:

Till-Holger Borchert (Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum)

Ana Diéguez-Rodríguez (Instituto Moll - University of Burgos)

Bart Fransen (KIK-IRPA-Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage)

Catherine Périer D'Ieteren (Université Libre de Bruxelles – Fondation Périer D'Ieteren)

Andrew Sears (National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.)

Matthias Weniger (Bayerisches Nationalmuseum in Munich)

Reference:

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