

Actors of Sacred Space. Contexts, Objects, Memory (Rome, 23–24 Apr 26)

Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max-Planck-Institut für Kunstgeschichte, Rome, Apr 23–24, 2026

Deadline: Dec 30, 2025

Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max Planck Institute for Art History, Rome

This workshop aims to explore the explicit or implicit material and artistic forms of intervention by particular actors, or specialized types of actors, within sacred spaces. This emphasis draws on the link between the Latin actor and auctor, both words denoting protagonists—people who do things, produce, or bring into being. Disputed but blurred in medieval texts, including in the *Speculum* of Vincent de Beauvais (c. 1200), the term actor was broadly applied to “doers,” while auctor emphasized the original authorship and visibility of the work. As noted in Marie-Dominique Chenu’s now classic essay “Auctor, Actor, Autor” (1927), which discusses the development of the Latin words actor (actor, author), auctor (authority, author), autor (author) and authentica (authenticity), at issue in defining actor and auctor is the latter’s claim to authority, specificity, and (individualistic) originality.

The workshop will focus primarily on lay people capable of creating or modifying sacred spaces and will prioritize underrepresented categories of social actors in historical and art historical studies. The historical geographic parameter is Christian Europe in the 12th–14th centuries.

We aim to explore the following thematic areas:

Lay actors promoting and creating sacred spaces, objects, and furnishings, especially the instrumental manipulation of previous contexts and devices.

Chapels, tombs, and funerary monuments in relation to social memory, social structures, and under considered types of actors.

Actors and liminal spaces: liturgy, festive rituals, multifunctionality, and memory.

We welcome proposals for 20-minute papers on specific case studies that incorporate problems, methodological challenges, and open questions. The workshop provides ample opportunity for discussion and is open to established and early-career scholars.

Interested speakers are invited to submit an abstract of their proposed paper (max. 500 words) and a short CV (max. 300 words) at the following link by December 30th: <https://recruitment.biblhertz.it>.

The outcome of the selection of proposals will be communicated by January 15, 2026.

The organization will provide accommodation for speakers and will offer reimbursement – within reasonable bounds – for travel expenses.

This event is included in the activities promoted by the TEMPLA project Sedes Memoriae III. Commemoration of the Laity vis-à-vis the Material Presence of the Sacred: Medieval Cathedrals and Abbeys in the Kingdoms of Asturias, León, Castile, Aragon, Mallorca, and the Catalan Counties (2025–2028).

Organizers: Marc Sureda, Gerardo Boto, Tanja Michalsky, Elisabetta Scirocco

Promoting Institutions: Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max Planck Institute for Art History, Rome; Institut Amatller d'Art Hispànic, Barcelona; TEMPLA International Research Team, Universitat de Girona

Reference:

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