

The Gigantic in Medieval and Early Modern Art (Vienna, 18–20 Jun 26)

University of Vienna, Department of Art History, Garnisongasse 13, Campus
courtyard 9, Seminarraum 1, Jun 18–20, 2026

Esther Pitoun

Giants captivated medieval and Early Modern cultures – not merely as myth, but as imagined realities grounded in bones, ruins, and landscapes. This conference explores their visual forms, cultural functions, and the broader concept of the “Gigantic.”

PROGRAMME

Thursday, June 18

10:00-10:30: Greetings

Assaf Pinkus, University of Vienna

Raphael Rosenberg, Head of the Department, University of Vienna

Morning Sessions:

10:30-12:00 Manipulating Scale

Moderator: Manuela Studer-Karlen, University of Vienna

Miniature Giants: Paradoxical Scale in Medieval and Early Modern England

Alixé Bovey, The Courtauld Institute

The 'Gigantic' against the 'Miniature' in Italian Art: Bodily Construction, Pictorial Relationships, and Audience Perception

Robin O'Bryan, Independent Scholar

12:30-14:00 Biblical Giants I: Scaling Up

Moderator: Giosuè Fabiano, University of Vienna

Michelangelo's David: Colossus in Foro Florentino

Michael Viktor Schwarz, University of Vienna

The Giant in Eden: Adam and the Language of Scale in Medieval Art

Alfons Puigarnau, Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca

Afternoon Session:

15:30-17:30 The Marvelous

Moderator: Lucia Simonato, University of Vienna

The Dragon, the Whale, and the Questing Beast: Giant Animals and Narratives of Extinction and Fantasy in Medieval Europe

Sophie Page, University College London

Facing the Giant: Knightly Identity between Adventure and the Marvelous

Jutta Eming, Freie Universität, Berlin

"Von aim Rysen". Gigantic Collector's Items in the Princely Ambras Collection

Thomas Kuster, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Schloss Ambras Innsbruck

Friday, June 19

Morning Sessions:

10:00-11:30 Overscaling: Mediating Human and Divine

Chair: Aleuna Macarenko, Pächt Archive, University of Vienna

Visual Contexts of Monumental Images of Saint Christopher in the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary and Beyond

Anna Kónya, Hungarian Museum of Architecture and Monument, Budapest

The Gigantic in Byzantine Cosmology: Visualizing Cosmic Scale in Sacred Space

Manuela Studer Karlen, University of Vienna

12:00-13:30 Biblical Giants II: Rhetoric of the Gigantic

Moderator: Esther Pitoun, University of Vienna

Giant Creature and Gigantic Construction: Figurations of the Giant of Babel in the Romance-Speaking West

Naïs Virenque, École des Hautes Études en Science Sociales, Paris

'Whom the Lord Knew Face to Face:' Moses and the Gigantic Transgression

Michal Ozeri, Tel Aviv University

Afternoon Sessions:

14:30-16:00 Into the Wilderness

Chair: Andreas Nierhaus, University of Vienna and Wien Museum

Into the Wilderness: St. Christopher the Giant and the Four Ways of Knowing God

Assaf Pinkus, University of Vienna

"Great lyke a giant": Eremitism, Wildness and the Politics of Scale in Late Medieval England

Robert Mills, University College London

16:30-18:00 Keynote

Moderator: Assaf Pinkus

Greeting: Sebastian Schütze, Rector of the University of Vienna

Keynote: Giants, Bigger Giants.

Emanuele Lugli, Stanford University

Saturday, June 20

09:30-11:00 Gigantomachia: The Politic of Aesthetics

Moderator: Silvia Tamaro, University of Vienna

In the Eye of Polyphemus: Cyclopean Gazes at Palazzo Te

David Zagoury, Université de Fribourg

“Giganti stolti.” Muslim 'Infidels' as Giants in Renaissance Rhetorical Imagery and Political Iconography

Claudio Castelletti, Tor Vergata University of Rome

11:30-13:30 The Giant of Kenaan

Moderator: Markus Ritter, University of Vienna

Forces at Play: Strength and Strain in Northern Saint Christopher Paintings of the 15th and Early 16th Centuries

Sandra Hindriks, University of Vienna

A Saintly Giant, Merchants, Converts and Plague Victims: Saint Christopher in the Art of Medieval & Early Modern Venice

Thomas Dale, University of Wisconsin–Madison

Reference:

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