

Gothic Design (Basel, 26–28 Jun 26)

eikones Forum, Rheinsprung 11, CH-4051 Basel, Jun 26–28, 2026

Daniel Tischler

Workshop of Invention: Constructive Geometry and Architectural Form in Gothic Design.

The symposium, coordinated by Martin Schwarz (University of Basel) and Daniel Tischler (ETH Zurich), is organized in conjunction with the exhibition Gothic by Design: The Dawn of Architectural Draftsmanship at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

The MET exhibition's title, Gothic by Design, playfully alludes to a fundamental premise of architectural history: the reciprocity between design practice and architectural form. In light of renewed attention to late medieval design processes and their media, the symposium takes this premise as a point of departure for a critical reevaluation:

- To what extent is architectural form conditioned by the procedural logic of the practices through which it is conceived and produced?
- What role do geometrical techniques, representational media, workshop instruments, and working materials play in the articulation of what may be described as a "style"?
- Under what conditions do such formal articulations transcend material specificity and scale to circulate across crafts and artistic media, as encapsulated in the notion of "microarchitecture"?
- If architectural design had become, by the end of the fifteenth century, a shared and increasingly cross-disciplinary endeavor, how did design paradigms such as the "Auszug" negotiate between the preservation of craft-specific traditions and the promotion of artistic invention and license?
- And finally, how do differing cultures and contexts of artistic production complicate or rewrite the canonical narrative of the Gothic style and its association with constructive geometry?

While the symposium encompasses discussions of a wide range of materials, the Basler Goldschmiedrisse, many of which are currently on display in New York, provide a particularly rich point of reference for the questions under consideration. On the one hand, the Basel drawings constitute material testimony to architectural design practices circulating across late medieval workshops by means of their portable support medium; on the other, precisely through their participation in cross-disciplinary exchange, they detach design practice from its material embeddedness in architectural production. What may ultimately be at stake, therefore, is the mediality of Gothic design practice itself.

Although the surviving corpus of Gothic drawings – from the monumental parchment sheets of cathedral workshops to the delicate paper drawings of the Basel drawings – testifies to the central role of parchment and paper drawing in the late medieval period, many of the geometrical procedures underlying these designs appear to derive from practices rooted in other media and materials: the plaster surfaces of tracing floors, the chalked planes of drawing boards, wooden tem-

plates, and not least the very surfaces of the stone blocks. It was these materialities that conditioned the design and production of architectural structures “in the manner of the stonemasons” (Mathes Roriczer). The Basler Goldschmiedrisse appear to exploit the capacity for formal invention inherent in geometrical methods of the kind described by Roriczer, yet toward a distinct culture of design that was itself about formal invention. To what extent, therefore, must the Basel corpus be understood as recording a transition from medieval design practice to early modern principles of artistic production? Precisely through such tensions, the Basel drawings offer an especially productive point of entry for assessing the broad medial spectrum, operative complexity, and historical trajectories of late medieval design practices.

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PROGRAM

FRIDAY, 26 JUNE

18:00 Femke Speelberg (Metropolitan Museum of Art)

What's in a Name? The "Basler Goldschmiedrisse" and the Quest for their Artistic Origins

19:00 Apéro riche

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SATURDAY, 27 JUNE

9:30–11:30 Visit to the Kunstmuseum's Prints and Drawings Department (for speakers only)

SESSION I

Chair: Cara Rachele (ETH Zurich)

13:30 Daniel Tischler (ETH Zurich)

Auszug and the Figuration of Gothic Architecture

14:15 Robert Bork (University of Iowa)

The Auszug Process: Extrusion, Extrapolation, and Projection

Coffee Break

15:30 Zoltán Bereczki (University of Debrecen)

The Basel Goldschmiedrisse as a Premodern Repository for Procedurality

16:15 Martin Schwarz (University of Basel)

GoMAD: A Virtual Design Space Based on the Basel Goldschmiedrisse

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SUNDAY, 28 JUNE

SESSION II

Chair: Irina Dudar (University of Bern)

10:00 Peter Völkle (Münsterbauhütte Bern)

Die Herstellung eines spätgotischen Baldachins: Von der Zeichnung zum Werkstück

10:45 Merlijn Hurx (KU Leuven)

Geometry by the Last Gothic Generation in the Low Countries

11:30 Katja Schröck (Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte)

The Reconstructed Lodge: Gothic Design Knowledge in the Nineteenth Century

Lunch Break

14:00 Site Visit: Basel Minster (for speakers only)

Reference:

CONF: Gothic Design (Basel, 26-28 Jun 26). In: ArtHist.net, Jun 17, 2026 (accessed Jun 17, 2026),
<<https://arthist.net/archive/52752>>.