

The Material Life of Things: Symposium

Objects Making History: New Approaches to Material Evidence in Medieval Studies

Friday 9 July 2010

14.30 - 18.30, Research Forum South Room

The Courtauld Institute of Art, Somerset House, Strand, London WC2R 0RN



Reliquary from Shrine of St Oda, The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, ac. no. 57.519. Photo: © Image Courtesy of the Walters Art Museum

Throughout the Middle Ages, manuscripts, buildings, and many portable objects, serving both secular and liturgical functions, were made to be used, and to be used for a long time. As these works continued to be used, and valued, through the centuries, they were necessarily subjected to wear, changes and adaptations – repaired as they were damaged, updated for new owners and new uses, and sometimes intentionally modified to aggrandise, or obscure, their own histories.

Approaching medieval works of art and other documents with this in mind leads us to a more nuanced appreciation of the roles objects can play in shaping our perceptions of the past, and the degree to which our understanding of history is shaped by the physical structures of objects.

As the papers in this symposium will show, production techniques and later physical manipulation could influence the network of practices, actions and beliefs occurring in the vicinity of objects in complex and sometimes unpredictable ways. A thorough awareness of the material histories of objects – the lives they have led since their creation – can offer a better understanding of the role played by medieval objects in producing knowledge and shaping historical narrative.

All welcome but numbers are limited. **Advance booking** by 12 noon Tuesday 6 July is essential for catering purposes. Please contact: ResearchForumEvents@courtauld.ac.uk

Organised by Dr. Francesco Lucchini (The Courtauld Institute of Art) and Dr. Kate Gerry (The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore)

PROGRAMME

- 14.30 – 16.00 **SESSION 1** – Chair: Joanna Cannon (The Courtauld Institute of Art)
- Kate Gerry (The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore), *Bound to Last: a Closer Look at a Medieval Treasure Binding*
- Nikolas Drosos (The Graduate Center, City University of New York), *Restoration of Image / Image of Restoration: Reconsidering the Zoe and Constantine IX Monomachos Mosaic from Hagia Sophia*
- Kathryn Rudy (The Courtauld Institute of Art), *Touched, Rubbed, Handled, Glued, Sewn and Kissed: the Life of Medieval Manuscript Prayer Books*
- 16.00 – 16.30 TEA BREAK
- 16.30 – 18.00 **SESSION 2** – Chair: Rebecca Farbstein (The Courtauld Institute of Art)
- Martina Bagnoli (Walters Art Museum, Baltimore), *Between Connoisseurship and Material Culture. What is the Art of Medieval Art?*
- Francesco Lucchini (The Courtauld Institute of Art), *Objects, Materiality and the History of a Place*
- Theo Riches (Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster), *Reading Material: Changing Manuscripts and the Interpretation of the Middle Ages*
- 18.00 – 18.30 Final discussion
- 18.30 Reception