

COURTAULD INSTITUTE

Postgraduate colloquium

**Memory and Medieval
Material Culture**

Friday 6 Mar 2026, 10.00–18.00



In our digital age, memory is both permanent and fleeting: forever enshrined on the internet, and yet easily forgotten amid the endless scroll of new information. In the Middle Ages, however, memory was more consciously articulated by medieval makers, patrons and viewers, and was appropriated to serve carefully crafted political, devotional and cultural agendas. Far from being passive repositories of remembrance, medieval artworks, buildings and objects played active roles in constructing, shaping and transmitting memory, whether personal, collective or institutional.

This colloquium will explore the complex and dynamic relationship between memory and the material culture of the Middle Ages. It will consider how images from medieval Europe, Byzantium and the Islamic world engaged with the processes of remembering and forgetting, and how they mediated the relationship between the past and the present.

Organised by Courtauld PhD students Sophia Dumoulin, Leylim Erenel, Ricardo Mandelbaum Balla. This colloquium is generously supported by Sam Fogg.

Programme

- 10.00–10.10 **Welcome and introduction to the day**
- 10.10–11.30 **Panel One – Layers of Memory**
Marina Forte Cutillas, PhD, Complutense University Madrid
Building Memory on Sacred Ground in San Pelayo of Gavín (Aragón, Spain): Cemetery Continuity and Monastic Space in Medieval Iberian Peninsula
- Giulia di Pierro**, PhD, Universitat Rovira I Virgili,
Traces of Destruction: Erasure, Visual Response and the Paradox of Forgetting in Medieval Manuscripts
- Catherine McNally**, PhD, Massachusetts Institute of Technology,
The Merits of a Sanctity Contested: Fada'il al-Quds and the Commemoration of the Temple Mount in Late Antique Jerusalem
- 11.30–12.00 **Refreshment Break**
- 12.30–13.20 **Panel Two – Illustrating Memory**
Emma Bruckner, PhD, Courtauld Institute,
“Return to the courts of the ancients”: Memorialising the Anachronistic Image in Jean Colombe’s Romuléon
- Helena Gracià**, PhD, University of Barcelona,
Tracing Memory: Moral Diagrams and the Visual Logic of Pastoral Education
- Mathilde Mioche**, PhD, Courtauld Institute,
What’s in a Game? Memento Mori Imagery in Renaissance Tarot
- 13.20–14.20 **Lunch**
Lunch is provided for speakers only.
- 14.20–15.40 **Panel Three – Urban Memory**
Gabriel Christys, PhD, Courtauld Institute,
Staging the Past, Shaping the Future: Triumphs, Memory and Power in Middle Byzantine Constantinople, 950-1050
- Bruna Bianco**, PhD, Scuola Normale Superiore Pisa,
Reshaping Collective Memory in Perugia: The Political Use of Images by the Comune di Popolo between the 13th and 14th Centuries
- Nina Uelpenich**, PhD, Ghent University,
Visualizing the Past, Negotiating the Present. The Maiden of Ghent as an Urban Symbol during the Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Medieval Revival and Nationalism
- 15.40–16.10 **Refreshment break**

16.10–17.50 **Panel Four – Medieval Afterlives**

Emma Iadanza, PhD, Courtauld Institute,
Memory of the Crusades in the Pazzi Chapel

Abigail Glickman, MPhil, University of Cambridge,
Clothing a Cairene Synagogue: Origins and Afterlives

Anja Katharina Frisch, PhD, Germanisches Nationalmuseum Nuremberg,
Reinterpreting English Alabasters across Continental Europe

17.50–18.00 **Closing remarks**

18.00 **Drinks Reception**
Open to all

Abstracts & Biographies

Panel One—Layers of Memory (Chaired by Ricardo Mandelbaum Balla)

Marina Forte Cutillas, PhD, Complutense University Madrid

Building Memory on Sacred Ground in San Pelay of Gavín (Aragón, Spain): Cemetery Continuity and Monastic Space in Medieval Iberian Peninsula

This paper explores the construction of collective memory through sacred space by presenting an archaeological case study of San Pelay of Gavín (Aragón, Spain), an early medieval monastery in the Pyrenees. Stratigraphic evidence shows that the monastic complex was constructed on top of a cemetery the which, nevertheless, was not obliterated during its erection. Instead, it was incorporated in its spatial and ideological significance. This deliberate continuity suggests a conscious engagement with memory in the shaping of the site. From an archaeological perspective, the adaptation of a cemetery into a monastic enclosure unveils how medieval communities negotiated the relationship between the dead and the living by means of architectural endeavours. This is the case as religious constructions embodied a way of preserving the sacred significance that a place held hitherto. The identification of a possible space dedicated to eremitic practice within the monastery strengthens the interpretation of the site as one perceived to possess intrinsic sanctity maintained through both material continuity and devotional use.

Art-historical analysis of the monastic layout and its visual articulation complements this archaeological reading. It highlights how spatial organisation backed the performing of both memory and sanctity. Together, these approaches explain how this monastery can be seen as a material and visual expression of collective memory.

Overall, the archaeological reading of architectural and visual features provides methodological depth to the paper. Its contribution to the broader discussions relies therefore on the role of material culture in shaping sacred landscapes in the high medieval Iberian world.

Marina Forte Cutillas completed her BA in History of Art and MA in Medieval Studies at the Complutense University of Madrid. She is currently a PhD candidate funded by a national scholarship (UCM-FPI-Community of Madrid). Her research examines frontier societies in the early medieval Iberian Peninsula through material culture, particularly architectural evidence. She acquired expertise in methodological archaeology at the EEHAR-CSIC in Rome and is presently a member of the I+D research project “*El monasterio altomedieval de Santa María de Melque (Toledo). Configuración arquitectónica y usos*” (EEA, CSIC) participating in fieldworks campaigns (2023-2025). She also belongs to the UCM research group “Arte y cultura científica: imágenes, objetos y espacios del conocimiento”. Previously, she partook in other research projects, such as “Análisis de arqueología de la arquitectura del pabellón de novicios del Monasterio de Santa María de Moreruela (Zamora)” (2025, Urbe proOrbe) and “Architectural Stratigraphy of Santa María and Santiago in Carrión de los Condes” (2023, University of Hong Kong, Vassar College, CSIC).

Giulia di Pierro, PhD, Universitat Rovira i Virgili

Traces of Destruction: Erasure, Visual Response and the Paradox of Forgetting in Medieval Manuscripts

Medieval manuscripts are often approached as stable repositories of textual and visual memory, yet many codices preserve targeted acts of erasure, abrasion and cancellation that reveal a more dynamic relationship between viewers and images. Rather than accidental damage, these interventions

frequently represent deliberate visual responses to figures, gestures or iconographic details perceived as troubling, dangerous or morally problematic. Scholarship on devotional practices has convincingly shown how acts such as touching, rubbing or kissing manuscript images could lead to localized erosion, particularly in prayer books. Building on this body of work, this paper examines selective image erasure not as a form of loss but as a material strategy for managing memory within a culture deeply invested in ethical evaluation and spiritual well-being.

Focusing on manuscripts that display localised image destruction within otherwise intact pictorial cycles, the paper argues that erasure activates a paradoxical process of “remembering through forgetting”. The void left by the removed face or body compels viewers to mentally reconstruct the missing image, ultimately shaping memory through both reinforcement and suppression. In doing so, erased manuscripts emerge as dynamic sites where meaning was materially controlled and where memory, rather than being simply preserved, was continually negotiated through acts of destruction.

Giulia Di Pierro is a PhD student in the Department of History and Art History at the Universitat Rovira i Virgili in Tarragona (2023–present), working on a research project about the dance of Lust in the manuscripts of Prudentius' *Psychomachia*. She is a member of the research groups *Iconodanza* and *Mudanza*, both directed by Dr. Licia Buttà (URV). She holds a degree in Art History from the Università di Roma La Sapienza (2021–2022) (winner of the “Ilaria Caccia” Prize, 5th edition, 2024). She has presented her research and results at international conferences, including the EADH – European Association for Dance History Conference (2024) and the 60th International Congress on Medieval Studies in Kalamazoo (2025). Her latest publications address the theme of dance in the *Divine Comedy*: “La música de la danza y la danza de la música: iconografía coréutica en el Paraíso del Dante Estense [Modena, Biblioteca Estense Universitaria, it. 474=α.R.4.8]” - *Arte y Danza - Anales de Historia del Arte*, Vol. 35, 2025 (Complutense de Madrid); “Coreografie dantesche: il Dante Estense” - *MUSE Art Music Dance Drama*, Issue 1/2025.

Catherine McNally, PhD, Massachusetts Institute of Technology,

The Merits of a Sanctity Contested: Fada'il al-Quds and the Commemoration of the Temple Mount in Late Antique Jerusalem

This paper approaches the Temple Mount in Late Antique Jerusalem through an excavation of relevant *hadith* in extant Fada'il al-Quds literature to reveal that its seventh-century reconceptualization as the *Haram al-Sharif* relied on a shared perception of the site's sacred nature in contemporary Jewish and Christian traditions. Previously spurned by the Byzantine empire from the moment of their fourth-century occupation of the Holy Land, the raised platform upon which the Jewish Temple once stood provided the ideal location from which Islam could stake its claim as the final iteration of Abrahamic monotheism. The Umayyad caliphate's subsequent construction of the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount as well as their placement therein denotes a careful negotiation of tensions concerning the manipulation of Jerusalem's Judeo-Christian terrain.

Rather than reading this genre as a promotional *ijtihad*, here this paper reframes texts engaging with *Isra'iliyat* traditions as an archive of collective memory. These narratives preserve the dialectic between Jerusalem's layered pasts and conflictual presents to render the Temple Mount a palimpsestic site whose sanctity becomes continuously revived with each contestation encountered.

Catherine McNally is a third-year PhD student in the History, Theory, Criticism of Art and Architecture program and the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at MIT. With a primary focus on Late Antique Jerusalem, her research explores the spatial production of sacred geography and the interchange between Christianity and Islam through material culture. Prior to MIT, she received an MPhil (distinction) in Islamic Art and Architecture at the University of Oxford and a BA (Hons) cum laude in Classics from the University of Pennsylvania with minors in Art History and Legal Studies in addition

to a certificate in Arabic. Her interests lie in the realm of cross-confessionalism and its manifestation through architectural forms in the regions of Mesopotamia, the Caucasus, and Palestine.

Panel Two—Illustrating Memory (Chaired by Leylim Erenel)

Emma Bruckner, PhD, Courtauld Institute,

“Return to the courts of the ancients”: Memorialising the Anachronistic Image in Jean Colombe’s Romuléon

The *Romuléon*, translated into French by Sébastien Mamerot in 1466 from Benvenuto da Imola’s late fourteenth-century Latin work, offers insight into humanist conceptions of classical antiquity. Jean Colombe’s illuminations for its most sumptuous surviving version, Français 364, preserve the memory of an original and now lost illuminated manuscript commissioned by his loyal patron, Louis de Laval. Français 364, however, was a copy for the admiral of France, Louis Malet de Gravelle, who took great care to preserve the legacy of the original commissioner. The prestigious circle of Colombe’s patrons is thus memorialised in a manuscript whose very purpose is to recount and reinvent history.

This paper examines how national and personal memory are constructed and transmitted through the manuscript’s iconography, in which the architecture of shared memory is carefully reconstructed and chronological boundaries intentionally collapsed. Given the scope of Français 364, which includes 126 full-page illuminations, the paper focuses on fol. 328v, concerned with the life and humanistic interests of Augustus, and, most importantly, on the presentation page, fol. 13r. The latter juxtaposes a portrait of Laval, Gravelle’s coat of arms, a representation of Mamerot, and a reimagined University of Bologna, where Benvenuto da Imola taught a century earlier. In this illumination, the university is transformed into a Roman temple in which ancient heroes and fourteenth-century humanists coexist.

Emma Bruckner is a second-year PhD student at the Courtauld Institute of Art, researching late fifteenth-century manuscript illumination under the supervision of Professor Susie Nash. Her work focuses on secular manuscripts illuminated by Jean Colombe for Louis de Laval. She completed an undergraduate degree at Columbia University, where she wrote her art history thesis under the supervision of Diane Bodart, and subsequently earned an MA with distinction at the Courtauld. Her recent conference attendances include the Cambridge Material-Culture Workshop, where she spoke on the notion of *techne* in Colombe’s *Passages d’outremer*. This May, she will participate in the University of Padua’s 4th International Multidisciplinary Conference of the Series “Experiencing the Sacred.” She served as the 2024–2025 book review editor for the *Church Monuments Journal* and this year, was an assistant teacher on the Courtauld’s BA Foundations course.

Helena Gracià, PhD, University of Barcelona

Tracing Memory: Moral Diagrams and the Visual Logic of Pastoral Education

Medieval moral and theological diagrams played a crucial role in structuring Christian knowledge, yet their significance for pastoral instruction and lay collective memory has received limited scholarly attention. Initially developed within monastic contexts as tools for contemplation and intellectual organisation, certain diagrammatic models were later adapted for pastoral use in response to the renewed emphasis on moral theology and clerical formation following the Fourth Lateran Council.

Drawing on manuscript evidence, this paper examines how these visual structures were subsequently monumentalised in the wall paintings of parish churches. Their migration across media and contexts demonstrates the increasing recognition, from the later Middle Ages onwards, of diagrams as effective instruments for communicating essential doctrinal truths to both clergy and laity. A comparative analysis of manuscripts and monumental art reveals that these visual schemes were neither fixed nor

uniform: their forms, meanings, and functions evolved in accordance with changing pedagogical and pastoral priorities.

The paper also argues that moral doctrine was transmitted not only through pastoral literature but also through visual culture, particularly the diagrammatic mode, which was valued for its mnemonic power and capacity to organise knowledge. Fourteenth-century parish art in England thus functioned as a key pastoral tool, as evidenced by diocesan statutes requiring priests to teach and examine the moral concepts encoded in such images. Through case studies including Trotton, Cranborne, Hissett, and Llancarfan, the paper shows how diagrams shaped collective memory by defining what was to be remembered within late medieval pastoral culture.

Helena Gracià Castejón holds a degree in Art History and Archaeology from the Universitat Rovira i Virgili (2022), where her undergraduate thesis examined the iconographic motif of the *Lignum Vitae* in wall paintings of the Crown of Aragon. She earned a Master's degree in Medieval Cultures from the Universitat de Barcelona (2025) and is currently involved in the MUDANZA project with the Iconodansa research group. She published her first scholarly article on religious and devotional practices in healthcare spaces during the late Middle Ages. Her PhD dissertation aims to investigate the uses and contexts in which Bonaventure's *Lignum Vitae* was disseminated.

Mathilde Mioche, PhD, Courtauld Institute

What's in a Game? Memento Mori Imagery in Renaissance Tarot

This paper will examine the *memento mori* imagery of the Death card in illuminated tarot decks from Renaissance Italy. I will focus on the earliest surviving Death card, which is part of the Visconti di Modrone deck designed by the Brescian workshop of Andrea Bembo for Filippo Maria Visconti, duke of Milan, in the early 1440s. The skeletal personification of Death sits astride a rearing horse and, wielding a massive scythe, cuts down the ranks of society who crouch on the ground in dread.

How did viewers understand *memento mori* imagery when macabre art and courtly entertainment overlapped? This paper will foreground the importance of memory for interpreting the Visconti di Modrone deck's Death card. First, I will argue that it served as an eschatological reminder, prompting tarot players to think of the symbolism of the Apocalypse and to link it with the Last Judgement depicted in the same deck. Then, I will contend that the Death card incorporated several forms of cultural memory, from the Italian tradition of triumphs to the family history of the Visconti. Finally, I will suggest that the Death card inspired childhood reminiscence, as its courtly viewers could associate both its equestrian imagery and its ludic function with toys, like hobby horses, which they played with as children.

This paper will reframe traditional understandings of *memento mori* imagery that emphasise the morbidity of macabre art over the liveliness of its viewers. I will demonstrate that, in fifteenth-century Italian courts, fear was confronted by fun.

Mathilde Mioche is a second-year PhD student at The Courtauld Institute of Art, supervised by Dr Jessica Barker. Her thesis, entitled *Markets for the Macabre: Uncovering New Contexts for the Art of Death in Europe, 1450–1550*, investigates the extraordinary demand for macabre art in late medieval and Renaissance Europe. Her research on Death cards in illuminated tarot decks will constitute the first chapter of her thesis. Outside of her PhD, she works as a Prints and Drawings Study Room Assistant at The Courtauld Gallery. She is also part of the organising committee of the Oxford Medieval Manuscripts Group. She holds a BA in History of Art from University College London and a MSt in History of Art and Visual Culture from the University of Oxford.

Panel Three –Urban Memory (Chaired by Leylim Erenel)

Gabriel Christys, PhD, Courtauld Institute

Staging the Past, Shaping the Future: Triumphs, Memory and Power in Middle Byzantine Constantinople, 950-1050

The tenth and eleventh centuries marked a period of dynamic geopolitical transformation for Byzantium and its rivals. Rapid military advancements brought a series of Byzantine victories that expanded imperial borders across the Eastern Mediterranean and the Danubian frontier. These conquests were celebrated with spectacular triumphal processions. Between 950 and 1050 AD, Constantinople hosted 17 triumphs, the highest number of such celebrations in the city's history. Primary sources of the period record the routes of these processions and reveal that those attending encountered the ancient statues that adorned them, accumulated over centuries through the conquests of past emperors. Triumphs ultimately culminated at two of the city's most important spaces: the Forum of Constantine, which had direct links to the foundation of Constantinople and the Hippodrome, which displayed a monumental assemblage of spolia from past imperial expeditions.

These ceremonies captivated the populace, setting the achievements of the reigning emperor against the legacy of the empire's recorded past. This paper will consider how triumphs relied on and actively reshaped Constantinople's urban memory, using monuments, routinised ritual practices, and the performative language of conquest to craft and manipulate historical narratives. It will consider how the Byzantine court used the architectural framework of the processional routes and their stations to structure the triumphs' choreography, how their performance encouraged engagement with historical monuments and assimilated them into new narratives of imperial expansion, and how emperors displayed newly acquired spoils and sacred artefacts from foreign campaigns, to reinforce the legitimacy of the current regime and inscribe its victories into the city's secular and religious cultural memory.

Gabriel Christys is a second-year PhD History of Art student at the Courtauld Institute of Art (2024-present), specialising in Byzantine art. His research focuses on triumphal processions in Middle Byzantine Constantinople between 950 and 1050 AD, and specifically on how material culture and Constantinople's topographical environment formed the performance of these ceremonies and were used for the projection of imperial power. He previously graduated from the Glasgow School of Art (2019-2023) with a BA degree in Fine Art Painting and Printmaking and completed his MA in History of Art, focusing on the Art of *Byzantium and its Rivals* course at the Courtauld Institute of Art (2023-2024) under the supervision of Professor Antony Eastmond. Gabriel has also served as a Teaching Assistant for the Courtauld's BA1 Foundations 1 course (2025-2026) and is currently an editor for the Courtauld's post-graduate journal, *Immediations*.

Bruna Bianco, PhD, Scuola Normale Superiore Pisa

Reshaping Collective Memory in Perugia: The Political Use of Images by the Comune di Popolo between the 13th and 14th Centuries

The city of Perugia constitutes a privileged case study for medieval political iconography due to the remarkable continuity and preservation of its civic monuments. Between the 13th and 14th centuries, the Commune commissioned four major public monuments that have profoundly shaped the political memory of the main civic square: the two historiated fountains erected by Arnolfo di Cambio (1277) and by Nicola and Giovanni Pisano (1278), the frescoes in the new hall of the Consiglio del Popolo (prior 1298), and the sculpted portal of the new residence of the Priori delle Arti (1326-1331). Each monument has been studied individually, and scholarship has consistently converged on reading their overall message as a celebration of good government and communal power. A comparative analysis of these

monuments reveals, however, significant differences in subject matter, tone, and arguments, which reflect the changing historical circumstances. The paper focuses in particular on the Pisano Fountain and the frescoes of the Sala dei Notari, examining their engagement with the myth of Perugia's foundation by Euliste.

Bruna Bianco is a Ph.D. candidate at the Scuola Normale Superiore, where she is conducting a research project on the late medieval sculptors and architects Jacobello and Pierpaolo dalle Masegne, directed by Professor Francesco Caglioti. Her project examines sculptural production in Northern Italy, particularly in the centres of Bologna, Venice, and Mantua (1380-1415 ca.). She holds a B.A. and M.A. in Art History from the University of Siena. Her research interests and publications focus on medieval sculpture. Her interests also include museum and curatorial practices, and she completed an internship at the Louvre Museum.

Nina Uelpenich, PhD, Ghent University

Visualizing the Past, Negotiating the Present. The Maiden of Ghent as an Urban Symbol during the Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Medieval Revival and Nationalism

In 1814, the rediscovery in Ghent of a medieval banner showing the city maiden (Maagd van Gent) ignited a renewed fascination with the city's medieval past. This rediscovery was not an isolated antiquarian curiosity but part of a broader nineteenth-century movement in which artists and antiquarians actively participated in preserving, appropriating, and shaping these medieval civic traditions and in so doing reshaped the memory of the city's local past.

Since her first appearance in the fourteenth century, the maiden had embodied the moral and political virtues of the city. Yet, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these virtues were adapted and appropriated by individuals and groups with divergent political allegiances. Through iconographic revivals in artwork, banners, and public celebrations, the maiden became a vehicle for visualizing continuity amid industrial transformation and political change, connecting a living urban community to its glorified medieval origins.

This paper examines how the allegorical maiden of Ghent was historicized and reinterpreted as a key symbol in the negotiation of memory, identity, and civic authority during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Combining iconographic analysis with archival and textual research, the study investigates how visual and material culture translated the city's history into tangible forms of collective memory.

By situating this case within broader debates on memory, the paper argues that the maiden of Ghent exemplifies how urban symbols operate as dynamic, layered sites of memory, simultaneously sustaining historical continuity and generating new meanings in response to shifting cultural and political contexts.

Nina Uelpenich is a doctoral researcher in Early Modern History and Visual Studies at the History Department, Ghent University. She obtained her Master's degree in History in 2022 with a thesis examining representations of sexual violence in Frans Hogenberg's prints of the Spanish Fury in Antwerp (1576). Her PhD project, *Retracing Ghent. City Views as Visual Discourses on the Local Past, c. 1500–1913*, investigates how depictions of Ghent from the early sixteenth century to the early twentieth century reflect, reinterpret, and construct the city's historical identity. Combining visual analysis with cultural and memory studies, her research explores how urban imagery functions as a dynamic site of remembrance, negotiating between local traditions and broader historical narratives.

Panel Four—Medieval Afterlives (Chaired by Sophia Dumoulin)

Emma Iadanza, PhD, Courtauld Institute

Memory of the Crusades in the Pazzi Chapel

The Pazzi Chapel at the Basilica of Santa Croce in Florence is commonly identified as a paragon of early Italian Renaissance architecture. However, scholarly focus on its formal elements has sidelined discussions of the context of its construction and its intended function. This paper reconsiders the Pazzi Chapel from the perspective of its patrons, stressing its significance as a beacon of family memory. While the chapel's funerary function prioritised the Pazzi's immediate past, its formal elements evoked their more distant heritage—their antiquity and their nobility, stemming from their mythical participation in the First Crusade. I demonstrate that the chapel's architectural conception and decoration (namely the celestial hemisphere in the chancel) directly reference both the physical space and liturgy of the Holy Sepulchre as Florentines thought it existed under the Latin Kings of Jerusalem (1099-1187). This conception ultimately contributed to a broader programme of Pazzi commissions in the 1460s and 70s that stressed this noble heritage alongside the family's continued associations with the Angevins and the Guelph Party—political claims that sought to distinguish the family from local rivals. Such a study of this familiar exemplar of architectural patronage sheds light on the Pazzi's activity before the Conspiracy, as well as fifteenth-century Florentines' conception of their place in history beyond the 'revival of antiquity' that has long been considered central to the Renaissance.

Emma Iadanza is a third-year PhD student at the Courtauld Institute of Art, supervised by Prof. Guido Rebecchini. Her dissertation is a study of the Florentine Pazzi family in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, expanding on traditional considerations of patronage and kinship to broader conceptions of the construction and destruction of memory through material culture.

Her work is supported by the American Friends of the Courtauld Institute of Art, Vassar College, and the Beinecke Scholarship. She is also a Junior Research Fellow at the Medici Archive Project, where she runs the social media and teaches regularly palaeography courses.

Abigail Glickman, MPhil, University of Cambridge

Clothing a Cairene Synagogue: Origins and Afterlives

In the late seventeenth century, Karaite travelers seeking hidden scrolls visited the Ben Ezra synagogue in Fustat and commented on the graffiti covering its walls. To the historian Joseph Hacker, these inscriptions were a "barbaric practice of defacing the structure," an indication that the synagogue had become "more a tourist site" and "less a sacred place." Challenging Hacker's distinction between the secular and the sacred, and how we see and remember across histories and narratives, my paper examines an eleventh-century transfer of textile to a woman via her dowry and its subsequent reuse as covering for a synagogue's walls, reading the seventeenth-century graffiti as an afterlife of the eleventh-century textile.

T-S 20.47, a manuscript of the Taylor-Schechter Cairo Genizah Collection at Cambridge University Library, contains an inventory of items from the Babylonian synagogue in Fustat that had been stored in the Ben Ezra synagogue. The first item of textiles donated to the synagogue in 1080 was "a siglaton robe...with yellow, new, from the house [wife] of Saniy al-Dawla, on which is written [embroidered]: To the Synagogue of the Iraqians." Bequeathed to a woman in her trousseau for her wear, the dress became wallcovering for a synagogue, turning a personal garment into a social and religious marking. My paper maps the movement of textile from a woman's body to the body of the synagogue, analyzing it, alongside the later graffiti text, as a social fabric(ation) that provides a critical point of entry into

collective memory and cultural identity.

Abigail Glickman is an MPhil student in the Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Cambridge. Building on her background in comparative literature, translation, and Near Eastern studies, she is currently researching the relationship between text and textile in Cairo genizah manuscripts.

Anja Katharina Frisch, PhD, Germanisches Nationalmuseum Nuremberg

Reinterpreting English Alabasters across Continental Europe

From around the mid-14th to the mid-16th century numerous English alabaster carvings were produced in the Midlands. These objects of devotion were not only sold to English patrons, but also to customers on the Continent. While they became the target of iconoclasm in England, on the Continent a great number of English alabasters have been preserved in both Lutheran and Catholic regions. Their movement triggered a variety of reactions, involving both individuals and communities.

The aim of the proposed paper is to examine different types of adaptations on medieval English alabasters during the post-Reformation Era as well as several reinterpretations of these objects during the 19th century. While the focus in the post-Reformation period lies on an altarpiece in Germany, the reuse during the 19th century is illustrated by striking examples from France. Aspects that shall be discussed include reframing and reinforcing memory as well as the overwriting of memory. One case study will be an altarpiece in the Basilica of St Anne d'Auray (Brittany), which was donated by a Parisian merchant in the 19th century. In the newly created ensemble, English alabasters serve as a means of demonstrating the long tradition of the Catholic Church, which had been weakened in France as a result of the French Revolution. Another telling example can be found in the pilgrimage chapel Notre-Dame-sur-Vire (Normandy). There, an English alabaster retable was incorporated into an altarpiece, which serves to showcase the history of the parish.

Anja Katharina Frisch is a research assistant at the Germanisches Nationalmuseum Nuremberg in the project 'Interdisciplinary examination of wood sculpture up to 1600'. Her research is focused on late medieval sculpture, especially in Germany and England. She is currently completing her PhD at the Chair of Medieval Art History at the Martin Luther University Halle, where she was a research assistant until 2024. In her PhD thesis she explores the function and adaptation of English medieval alabaster sculpture across Europe. Her research has been funded by the Böckler-Mare-Balticum-Foundation, Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte Paris and NAWA PROM.

Notes: