

NEGOTIATING IDENTITIES

EXPRESSION AND REPRESENTATION IN THE CHRISTIAN - JEWISH - MUSLIM MEDITERRANEAN

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Marcus Milwright (Faculty)

Biography:

Marcus Milwright completed his D.Phil at the Oriental Institute of the University of Oxford in 1999. He joined the Department of History in Art in 2002. His research focuses upon the archaeology of the Islamic period, the art and architecture of the Islamic Middle East, cross-cultural interaction in the Medieval and early Modern Mediterranean, the history of medicine, craft practices in Late Ottoman Syria, and the architecture and civil engineering of southern Greece during the Ottoman sultanate. He is the author of two books: *An Introduction to Islamic Archaeology*, The New Edinburgh Islamic Surveys (Edinburgh University Press, 2010); and *The Fortress of the Raven: Karak in the Middle Islamic Period (1100-1600)*, Islamic History and Civilization, Studies and Texts 72 (Brill, 2008). His articles have appeared in peer-reviewed journals including *Muqarnas*, *Turcica*, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, *Levant*, *Medieval Ceramics*, *al-Rafidan*, and the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, and he has contributed chapters to *The New Cambridge History of Islam* (volumes 1 and 4), the *Encyclopaedia of Islam Third Edition*, and several other edited volumes. He has curated an exhibition, *Steel: A Mirror of Life in Pre-Modern Iran*, at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (2001). He is currently working on a history of balsam in the Medieval period and a study of portraits of Muslim rulers in European printed books of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.



Paper Abstract:

Propaganda and Audience: Visual Culture and the Communication of Ideology in the Medieval Period

The Medieval period provides numerous examples of what might be defined in modern parlance as propaganda. These include the manufacture of ideologically-charged objects or paintings, the display and reuse of captured artefacts, and the organizing of victory parades following successful military campaigns. Clearly, such activities were meant to convey messages to the inhabitants of a given polity and to potential enemies or allies. This paper will concentrate upon key periods of conflict in the Medieval eastern Mediterranean, and question the extent to which visual culture was an effective tool for the communication of political and religious ideology. Central to this examination is the question of audience: how was that audience defined and how did this affect the production of physical artefacts designed to communicate ideology. The paper will also question the extent to which we can employ anachronistic terminology (such as the term, propaganda) and concepts in our evaluation of forms of Medieval communication.

Seminar Abstract:

Archaeology and the Expression of Personal and Group Identity in the Medieval Mediterranean

The Mediterranean region was home to an immensely diverse population through the Medieval period. One need only look at the ways in which individuals and groups sought to differentiate themselves – according to categories we might define today as confessional allegiance, ethnicity, tribal or familial affiliation, socio-economic level, education, or occupation – to understand the potential complexities involved in reconstructing past identities. As we might do today, Medieval men and women maintained overlapping identities, positioning themselves simultaneously in more than one social, cultural, or religious grouping. Identities might also change gradually over time or suddenly in reaction to external events, while death provided an opportunity for a given community to circumscribe the ways in which the deceased was to be remembered. Primary textual sources provide an avenue for tracking the shifting terrain of Medieval Mediterranean identities, and other valuable data can be drawn from art and architecture. This seminar session will evaluate the contribution made to this area of study by archaeology. Through a series of case studies we will examine different ways in which archaeology has illuminated the processes of identity creation and development around the Mediterranean. We will also look at the extent to which it is possible to correlate physical and textual data and the constraints that exist upon the interpretation of the archaeological record.

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