

13TH COMPLUTENSE CONFERENCE ON MEDIAEVAL ART



MODELS, CATEGORIES
AND PRESTIGE IN
SPANISH MEDIAEVAL ART

RETHINKING
THE CANON



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Main Hall, Faculty of Geography and History (UCM)

<https://www.ucm.es/historiadelarte/13jornadasmedieval>

Image: Beato de las Huelgas, The Morgan Library & Museum, New York/ M.429

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Consideration of which Spanish works of mediaeval art merit greater appreciation and what determines their quality and historical significance leads us to question what we really know about works of art from the past and to rethink the work of historians.

What criteria should guide the selection? What are the best categories to use when making value judgements? Are the evaluations that shaped the history of mediaeval art in the 19th and 20th centuries still valid? Has the canon been revised in accordance with the interests, methods and perspectives of 21st century art history? Last but not least, **how can we ascertain the regard and prestige these works enjoyed when they were created?**

Some of the ways to determine the value works of art were accorded when new are evident, such as cost, the materials used, the remuneration, the social position and success of their makers, the standing of their patrons, the importance of their destinations as well as beliefs in their spiritual effectiveness. Also, we can examine works considered exemplary, which generated copies, references and offshoots whose very existence makes evident the regard in which they were held. Artistic lineages encompass a varied range of model-copy associations and proclaim the recognition enjoyed by works of art such as the cathedrals of Jaca or Toledo, the mosque of Cordoba, the Alhambra in Granada, the Pórtico de la Gloria, the cloister of Silos, manuscripts that were copied repeatedly and devotional images untiringly imitated. On a smaller scale, parallel phenomena can be observed at the local and regional levels in architecture and the figurative and decorative arts. Both an analysis of the contracts that specified the models to copy and **the study of the different ways the *varietas* were applied on each model reveal mechanisms whereby works of art were generated and disseminated.** Social uses such as gifts given to family, friends or in the pursuit of diplomacy, trophies in the form of loot and spolia and trade all testify to the recognition of the qualities that distinguished the most valuable works, such as

richness, rarity, beauty and semantic importance. Written testimonies of all kinds, including epigraphs, contracts, wills, chronicles and travelers' tales, shed light on how works were viewed in their day, sometimes directly but more often only after a laborious comparison of formulaic and singular works or an analysis of vocabulary.

This reflection extends as well to the efforts of historians. An evaluation of the quality and historical significance of a work may be affected by random factors such as the mere fact of its conservation, the transformations to which it has been subjected over the years, its accessibility, the particular museum to which it belongs or the ease of obtaining photographic reproductions. However, most weight is given to expert opinion, inclusion in works of reference and the extent to which a work displays the merits established by historiographical trends. One must also recognise the influence of knowledge structures that automatically tend, for example, **to prefer novelty** and defining works (within a territory, a style or a genre) **over works classified as pre- (because they seem incomplete) or late- (because they appear in decline),** or what is understandable over what is impenetrable. The repercussions of trends among historians, the impact of reputable publications, wariness of areas perceived as problematic (could Mozarabic or Mudéjar art be thus classified?) or simply the opportunity for a centenary are also factors influential as to where research attention is directed and what enters the canon.

The 13th Complutense Conference on Mediaeval Art, to be held in Madrid on the 23rd, 24th and 25th of October 2019, is intended to provide a forum for debate on these issues with renowned experts such as Begoña Alonso Ruiz, Susana Calvo Capilla, Jerrilynn Dodds, Bart Fransen, María Dolores Jiménez-Blanco, Javier Martínez de Aguirre, Alicia Miguélez Caverio, Matilde Miquel Juan, Olga Pérez Monzón, Juan Carlos Ruiz Souza, Alexandra Uscatescu Barrón and Rose Walker.

We invite the academic community to submit abstracts consisting of a 300-word summary highlighting the innovative nature of the paper together with a brief curriculum vitae (maximum 300 words) before the 9th of June 2019, to the following address: 13jornadasmedieval@ucm.es

The organising committee shall acknowledge receipt of submissions and will select those considered most closely aligned with the conference objectives, responding before the 20th of June. Papers and communications will be delivered over the course of the conference in four sessions:

1. The canon: formulation and crisis.
2. On price and value.
3. The centenary of *Iglesias Mozárabes* by Gómez-Moreno.
4. On decadence and ignorance.

Following peer review, these will be published in a monograph. More information at <https://www.ucm.es/historiadelarte/13jornadasmedieval>

Organising committee: Javier Martínez de Aguirre, Pilar Martínez Taboada, Marta Poza Yagüe and Ángel Fuentes Ortiz.