

CONVIVIUM

Exchanges and Interactions in the Arts of Medieval
Europe, Byzantium, and the Mediterranean
Seminarium Kondakovianum, Series Nova



UNIVERSITÉ DE LAUSANNE
• ACADEMY OF SCIENCES OF
THE CZECH REPUBLIC • MASARYK
UNIVERSITY •

CONVIVIUM VII/2/2020

**Exchanges and Interactions in the Arts of Medieval
Europe, Byzantium, and the Mediterranean**

Seminarium Kondakovianum, Series Nova

Journal of the Department of Art History of the University of Lausanne,
of the Department of Art History of the Masaryk University, and of the
Institute of Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic

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Typesetting / Kristýna Smrčková

Layout design / Monika Kučerová

Cover design / Petr M. Vronský, Anna Kelbllová

Publisher / Masarykova univerzita, Žerotínovo nám. 9,
601 77 Brno, IČO 00216224

Editorial Office / Seminář dějin umění, Filozofická fakulta
Masarykovy univerzity, Arna Nováka 1, 602 00 Brno

Print / Tiskárna Didot, spol s r.o., Trnkova 119, 628 00 Brno

E-mail / convivium@earlymedievalstudies.com
www.earlymedievalstudies.com/convivium.html

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Published / November 2020

Reg. No. MK ČR E 21592

ISSN 2336-3452 (print)

ISSN 2336-808X (online)

Convivium is listed in the databases SCOPUS, ERIH,
"Riviste di classe A" indexed by ANVUR, and in the Emerging
Sources Citation Index (ESCI) of the Web of Science.



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Exchanges and Interactions in a Time of Pandemic

Ivan Foletti & Zuzana Frantová

We hope our readers will indulge us in a moment of self-congratulation. The punctual appearance of *Convivium* VII/2 has been no small accomplishment at a time when so much activity has been arrested by the COVID-19 pandemic. Many journals, books, and other scholarly endeavors have been delayed or even cancelled. *Convivium* was able to resist the same defeat, however, thanks not only to the determination of contributing authors, designers, and editors, but also to technology. The Internet enabled us all, no matter how socially and geographically distanced we were, to collaborate, uninterrupted, in showing the importance of exchanges and interactions for past and present cultures.

Although the word Mediterranean has been part of *Convivium's* identity since the very beginning, this new issue demonstrates how a truly global perspective is coming to define our journal. Particularly striking is the unforeseen coherence of the studies presented in this volume, which began not long ago as an assemblage of miscellany. Scholars from

Croatia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Italy, and Switzerland are presenting a dense network of interactions around the Mediterranean and beyond; it is the *beyond* that has gained importance. African production, here mediated by the Mamluk culture in objects, textiles, and ideas, has entered *Convivium's* purview; at the same time, the Holy Land stands as the real crossroads. This coherence amid diversity reveals the inclination of medieval scholars around the world to understand the past over truly “global horizons”, to refer to Beate Fricke’s current project, *Global Horizons in Pre-Modern Art*, funded since 2018 by the European Research Council.

This raises the historiographical questions of the close interaction of past and present and of the relevance of this past in the construction of societies’ common identities. *Convivium* is here mirroring what scholarship itself is becoming. In past editorials, we challenged the trap of nationalism, which should be seen as a real danger not only for our present, but also for our understanding of the past. It is thus interesting to observe that, while in certain countries (e.g., Hungary and Slovakia) the pandemic has provoked nationalism and xenophobia, this issue of *Convivium* reveals a diametrically opposite response. This, we believe, should be read as a sign of hope: intellectuals and scholars are fully, if often painfully, aware of the necessity of standing strong while confronting the chimeras of closing borders and of manipulation.

Beyond this trend, another development deserves mention. The record of a roundtable discussion, edited by Ivan Foletti and Adrien Palladino, appears at the end of this volume. This text grew out of an event, organized in autumn 2019 – i.e., shortly before the pandemic’s outbreak – and was titled “Medieval Art Today, Why?”. The gathering’s goal was to convene eminent scholars in the field to consider the relevance and importance today of our research. What emerged was a display of the importance of a critical look at society and its visual culture, which relies on studies in the history of art. The medieval world appears, in this discussion, as the place onto which not only to project any sort of imagined problems, but also to understand the roots of the present both on their cultural and intellectual manifestations. Art history, in particular medieval, needs a forum for exploring such important questions, and we believe that *Convivium* should remain a place for these broad considerations.

Finally, we would like to mention two changes in our editorial direction. First, we have created a new group of collaborators – Associate Editors – comprising young scholars who will join the journal’s committees for five-year terms. Therefore, we happily welcome Nathan Dennis (University of San Francisco), Stefanie Lenk (University of Bern), and Adrien Palladino (Masaryk University, Brno) as *Convivium's* first Associate Editors. The second change reflects Professor Hans Belting’s desire to make permanent his association with *Convivium* in a new position. In fact, the roundtable referred to above, “Medieval Art Today, Why?” originated as a celebration of the *Doctor Honoris Causa* awarded by the Masaryk University to Professor Belting. Now, as *Emeritus*, Professor Belting will remain part of the multi-generational *Convivium* family for life, and he will continue with us as we proceed on our always-expanding exploration of exchanges and interactions.

