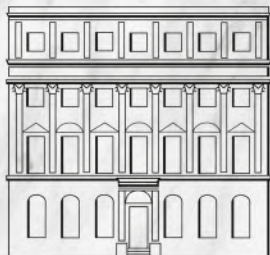




THE POLITICS OF ICONOCLASM

IN THE MIDDLE AGES

1-2 September 2022, London



German
Historical
Institute
London

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Call for Papers

The role of the visual in constructing social and political power in the Middle Ages has enjoyed much scholarly attention in recent times, and interest in the subject shows no sign of waning. Much less consideration has been given to the responses that visual representations of power elicited from those who encountered them. Given that visual images and performances often aggressively served to stake controversial and, for some, threatening claims, there can be no doubt that such responses were often hostile. But how visual constructions of power were contested, and what visual strategies were open to their opponents – such as defacement, obliteration, or the creation of counter-images or performances – has been remarkably little studied outside the religious sphere. Yet if we think we should take seriously the power of images in politics and society, then the means available to medieval people to oppose and challenge that power is clearly an important subject. To study this volatile aspect of medieval society is important not least because current discourses make use of the past to oppose as well as promote the defacement, destruction, or removal of statues, for example.

Papers are therefore invited examining all aspects of (broadly) secular iconoclasm from any period of the Middle Ages and any part of medieval Europe. Papers concentrating on religious iconoclasm are also welcome where this focus has a clear relation to contests of social and political power. The subject is manifestly a large one. Locations for iconoclastic acts and behaviours might include the court, towns and cities, or the battlefield, and events and moments where power-displays were

concentrated, such as coronations, royal and princely entries, tournaments, councils, and parliaments. Topics and media for consideration might include:

- Attacks on the powerful in effigy, through their representations in portraiture, sculpture, or manuscript illustrations, as well as the creation and dissemination of polemical, satirical, or defamatory counter-images.
- The destruction, defacement, or public dishonouring of insignia of power such as coats of arms, banners, seals, and clothing.
- The destruction of sites of power (where this has a clear symbolic dimension), such as town walls and gates, palaces and castles and their contents, including the iconographic and performative ‘re-branding’ of such sites by their conquerors.
- The human body as a site of iconoclasm, through acts and rituals of public dishonour, from symbolic inversion to physical mutilation.
- The productive dimensions of iconoclasm as a performance that creates new meanings as it left visible damage or created conspicuous absences.
- Reactions in the aftermath of iconoclasms that illuminate contemporary perceptions of such behaviour and reveal potential ambiguities resulting from displays and their destruction.
- Verbal and textual ‘iconoclasm’: the denunciation, criticism, or contestation of images or visual performances of power in texts or in textual reports of speech-acts.

Abstracts of not more than 150 words should be submitted to **Marcus Meer** (m.meer@ghil.ac.uk) or **Len Scales** (l.e.scales@durham.ac.uk) by **31 January 2022**. Please include your full name, academic title, email and postal address, telephone number, and institutional affiliation if applicable.