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Edited by Elina Gertsman

Abstraction in Medieval Art

Beyond the Ornament

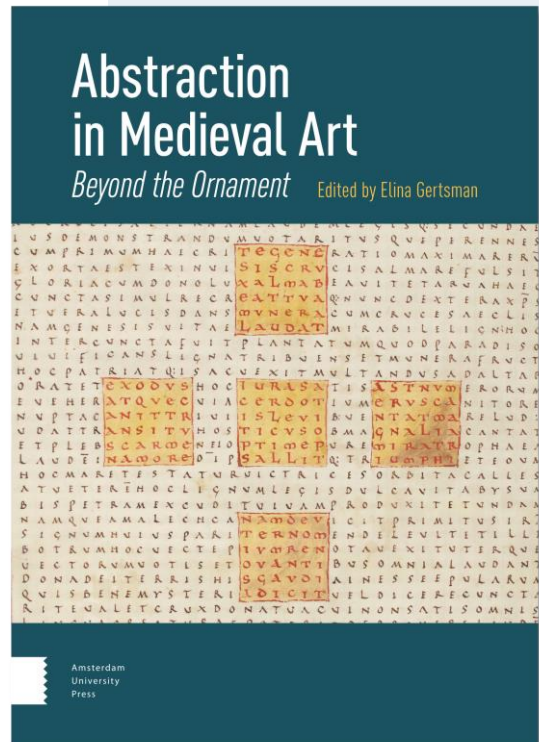
Abstraction haunts medieval art, both withdrawing figuration and suggesting elusive presence. How does it make or destroy meaning in the process? Does it suggest the failure of figuration, the faltering of iconography? Does medieval abstraction function because it is imperfect, incomplete, and uncorrected—and therefore cognitively, visually demanding? Is it, conversely, precisely about perfection? To what extent is the abstract predicated on theorization of the unrepresentable and imperceptible? Does medieval abstraction pit aesthetics against metaphysics, or does it enrich it, or frame it, or both? Essays in this collection explore these and other questions that coalesce around three broad themes: medieval abstraction as the untethering of the image from what it purports to represent; abstraction as a vehicle for signification; and abstraction as a form of figuration. Contributors approach the concept of medieval abstraction from a multitude of perspectives—formal, semiotic, iconographic, material, phenomenological, epistemological.

BIOGRAPHY

Elina Gertsman is Professor of Medieval Art and Archbishop Paul J. Hallinan Professor in Catholic Studies II at Case Western Reserve University.

"An excellent collection of thoughtfully selected, intelligently argued, and well-researched essays on an important topic."

- Richard K. Emmerson, Florida State University



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