Illuminations
Theoretical Reflections on the Middle Ages and Modernity
Francisco Prado-Vilar, Organizer
Princeton Society of Fellows in the Liberal Arts

Please note: Due to health problems, Fernando Arrabal had to cancel his appearance at the symposium. Instead of the film originally scheduled for Friday, April 29 at 5 pm, we will be showing Carl Dreyer's "The Passion of Joan of Arc" (1928) in a magnificently restored version accompanied by Richard Einhorn's oratorio "Voices of Light," inspired by Dreyer's film and set to texts by women mystics from the Middle Ages. Instead of Fernando Arrabal's lecture, originally scheduled for Saturday, April 30 at 5 pm, we will be screening his film "Viva la Muerte" (1971).

Workshop Introduction:

This symposium considers the relevance of medieval visual culture in modern artistic and critical discourses. It explores the question of "relevance" from both historical and theoretical perspectives. On the one hand, it examines the role of medieval art and culture as inspiring forces in the work of key figures of modernity such as Picasso, Matisse, and Bataille. On the other hand, it offers new theoretical reflections based on the comparative analysis of medieval and modern cultural phenomena, as a way to showcase the significance of medieval studies in contemporary critical discourses.

An exciting moment of experimentation in the 80's and 90's, in which engagements with critical theory fostered the appearance of the so-called 'new medievalism', has been followed by a period of intellectual introspection. The idea of the symposium emerges from the perception of what we could term the 'unfulfilled promise' of the discipline, and seeks to generate a discussion that signals new paths towards its realization. The papers presented in this symposium seek to reclaim a leading position for the study of medieval visual culture, not only as a field for the fruitful application of critical paradigms conceptualized in other areas of inquiry but also as an innovative field for the generation of new ones.

Workshop Schedule:

FRIDAY, April 29, 2005
Session I: 2:30pm - 4:30pm

Francisco Prado-Vilar
Introductory remarks – "Medievalism's Inner Scar: Bataille in Madrid"

Natasha Staller (Amherst College)
"Picasso and Past Time in the Era of Art"

Michael Barry (Princeton University)
"Matisse's Seven Colours and the Revelation of Medieval Persian Art"

Discussion moderated by Alastair Wright

4:30-5:00 - Coffee Break

5:00-7:00 - Film Screening
The Passion of Joan of Arc (1928), dir. Carl Dreyer

Saturday April 30

Session II: 9:00am - 10:45am

Jeffrey J. Cohen (George Washington University)
"Aninormality"

Kathleen Biddick (University of Notre Dame)
"The Cut of the Archive: Sovereignty and Spectral Evidence"

Discussion moderated by Vance Smith

10:45-11:00 - Coffee Break

Session III: 11:00am - 1:00pm

Madeline Caviness (Tufts University)
"Revisiting Vaginal Iconography"

E. Jane Burns (University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill)
"Saracen Silk and the Virgin's Chemise: Cultural Crossings in Cloth"

Discussion moderated by Susan Stewart

1:00-2:30 - Lunch
Session IV: 2:30pm - 4:30pm

**Herbert Kessler (Johns Hopkins University)**
"Color, Field, and Unrepresentability in Medieval Art"

**Oleg Grabar (Institute for Advanced Study)**
"Influence, Model, or Accident: Are There Improper Interpretations of Forms?"

3:50-4:30 - Roundtable

4:30-5:00 - Coffee Break

**Film Screening 5:00pm - 7:00pm**

**Fernando Arrabal**
Viva la Muerte! (1970), dr. Fernando Arrabal

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