

Between

Figure

and

Ground

The terms “figure” and “ground” became fundamental to art critique, art historical scholarship, and academic writing over the course of the twentieth century. However, to what extent this dichotomy is suited to describe *premodern* art remains largely unquestioned. To bridge this gap, the international conference “Between Figure and Ground: Seeing in Premodernity” brings together art history, image theory, *Bildwissenschaft*, historiography, and methodological reflections. It aims to critique and expand vocabularies used to describe, analyze, and interpret medieval and early modern artifacts. Eight sessions over the course of three days offer the opportunity to productively revise anachronistic attachments to modernist paradigms. What can be seen and described between picture planes and pictorial spaces and thus between figure and ground?

Thursday
June 9, 2022

09:30 *Welcome*
Aden Kumler, Governing Committee
eikones – Center for the
Theory and History of the Image

Introduction
Saskia C. Quené, University of
California, Berkeley

I Beneath the Surface

Chair: Saskia Quené
10:00 *Faces and Vases: A Medieval Romance*
Ittai Weinryb, Bard Graduate Center,
New York

10:45 *Break*
11:15 *The Pictorial Space of Sgraffito:
Figure and Gold Ground*
Christopher Lakey, Johns Hopkins
University, Baltimore
12:00 *Figuring Space in Fifteenth-Century
Painting*
Noa Turel, University of Alabama at
Birmingham
12:45 *Lunch Break*

II Moving Spectators

Chair: Theresa Holler
14:30 *Figure and Ground in Ceiling Paintings*
Matteo Burioni, Ludwig-Maximilians-
Universität München

15:15 *Depicted Space or Surface
Composition – What Guides the
Beholder’s Eye?*
Raphael Rosenberg, Universität Wien

16:00 *Break*
16:30 *The Desert in the Lagoon*
A film essay by David Young Kim
(University of Pennsylvania) and
Amelia Saul (New York), with an
introduction by the authors
18:00 *Dinner (on invitation)*

Friday
June 10, 2022

III Physics and Metaphysics

Chair: Matteo Burioni
09:30 *Zwei Meta-Physiken des Bildes?
Zur Figur-Grund-Relation in der
Vormoderne aus der Perspektive drei-
stelliger Bildbegriffe*
Christoph Poetsch, Ruprecht-Karls-
Universität Heidelberg
10:15 *Conflicting Layers. Pictorial Irony in North
Italian Material Culture around 1500*
Nicolai Kölmel, Universität Basel
11:00 *Break*

IV Describing and Translating

Chair: Aden Kumler
11:30 *Die Figur/Grund Dichotomie in bild-
historiographischen Quellen (1780–1890)*
Veronica Peselmann, Universität
Bielefeld

12:15 *Zwischen Gestaltpsychologie und
Kunstwissenschaft. Zur Ideen- und
Begriffsgeschichte von «Figur/Grund»*
Tom Steinert, Bauhaus-Universität
Weimar
13:00 *Lunch Break*

14:30 *Bildkörper und Feldmuster.
Zu Theorie und Praxis in der Malerei
des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts*
Bruno Haas, Université Paris 1
Panthéon-Sorbonne, Paris

15:15 *Der tanzende Galgen. Pieter Bruegels
d. Ä. Tafel «Die Elster auf dem Galgen»
in neuer Deutung*
Jürgen Müller, Technische Universität
Dresden
16:00 *Break*

V Out of the Depths

Chair: Sophie Schweinfurth
16:30 *Deep Surfaces in Renaissance Painting*
Péter Bokody, University of Plymouth
17:15 *Horizons. Grounding and Figuring (out)
Pictures.*
Beate Fricke, Universität Bern
18:00 *Apéro riche on the Rhine terrace*

Saturday,
June 11, 2022

VI Ephemeral Images

Chair: Fabian Felder
10:00 *Between Figure and Ground: Painting
Shadows in the Middle Ages*
Aden Kumler, Universität Basel
10:45 *Schall und Rauch? Die (un)sichtbaren
Welten des David Bailly*
Karin Leonhard, Universität Konstanz
11:30 *Break*

VII Between the Lines

Chair: Matteo Burioni
12:00 *Ein Streifzug durch die Glasmalerei:
Farbe, Schwarzlot, Transparenz*
Marion Gartenmeister,
Vitrecentre Romont
12:45 *Lunch Break*
14:30 *Framing Figuration in Arabic
Manuscripts*
Meekyung MacMurdie,
University of Utah
15:15 *Break*

VIII Weight and Weightlessness

Chair: Saskia Quené
15:45 *Textil als Grund. Entfaltete Ehrentücher
in der frühneuzeitlichen Malerei*
Claudia Blümle, Humboldt-
Universität zu Berlin
15:30 *Imaginäre Schwerkraft:
Zum Figur/Grund Verhältnis in der
Barocken Skulptur*
Nicola Suthor, Yale University
17:15 *Concluding remarks*
18:00 *Dinner (on invitation)*



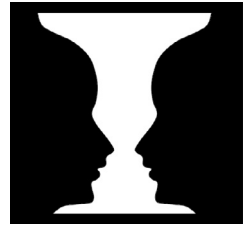
Fra Angelico, *Madonna dell'Umiltà*, ca. 1415–1419. Gold and tempera on panel, 81x51 cm. Eremitage Museum, St. Petersburg (4115).



Folio from the Book of Songs, Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani, Iraq, Mosul, 9th c. Pigments and gold on paper, 265 x 215 mm. Cod. Arab. 168, fol. 10r, Royal Danish Library, Copenhagen.



Giovanni Bellini, *St. Francis in the Desert*, ca. 1476–1478. Oil and tempera on wood, 124.6x142 cm. The Frick Collection, New York.



Bowl with Medallion of St. Demetrius, 14th century. Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, BZ.1955.16.



Folio from the Commentary on the Apocalypse by Beato de Liébana, 1047. Pigments on parchment, ca. 360x280 mm. Ms. Vit. 14.2, Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid.



Lukas Zeiner, *Wappenscheibe der Vogtei Kyburg*, um 1500/1515. Glasmalerei, 35x271 cm (im Licht), Vitromusée Romont, VMR 277. © Vitrecentre Romont (Foto: Philippe Blanc).



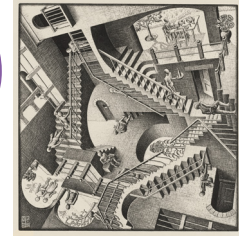
Folio from the Irish Gospel book of St. Gallen, ca. 750. Pigments on parchment, ca. 294x225 mm. Cod. Sang. 51, Stiftsbibliothek St. Gallen.



Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Magpie on the Gallows*, 1568. Oil on wood, 45,9x50,8 cm. Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt.



Giovanni Girolamo Savoldo, *Saint Mary Magdalene at the Sepulchre*, ca. 1530. Oil on Canvas, 92,7x79,4 cm. The Getty Museum, Los Angeles.



M.C. Escher, *Relativity*, 1953. Lithograph, 27,7 x 29,2 cm. Escher in het Paleis, Den Haag.



Episode from the life of St. Edmund, ca. 1130. Pigments and gold on parchment, 274x187 mm. MS M.736, fol. 18r, The Morgan Library, New York.