



## Introduction: Relaunching Different Visions

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Welcome to issue six of *Different Visions*!

We would like to start this issue by recognizing the incredible work of *Different Visions* founder Rachel Dressler. She originally conceived the journal as one that would feature articles employing postmodern and poststructuralist theoretical frameworks to examine medieval visual culture. Rachel single-handedly led the journal for nearly a decade, anticipating the potential of online publishing while promoting cutting-edge research by both emerging and established scholars. The Material Collective is honored to have the opportunity to carry on Rachel's work, fostering new scholarship while also ensuring that past issues are always available and accessible. *Different Visions* aims for inclusive publishing, welcomes a variety of approaches and topics reflecting the diversity of medieval visual and material culture, and continues to be open to theoretically-informed work on medieval art. The journal is eager to publish projects at the intersection of medieval art history and the digital humanities, work that engages with the global Middle Ages, projects that explore medievalism, and socially-engaged projects that examine the role of medieval visual culture in our contemporary world.

This new issue features four essays that engage with the relevance of theory to medieval art history—and to art history in general—today. The essays were inspired by Gerry Guest's session at the 2019 International Congress on Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo entitled "Medieval Art History: Are We

Post-Theoretical?" In his call for papers, Guest asked the following broad and profound questions: "If a generation ago scholars were concerned with defining something called 'the new art history,' where do we stand now? Are we now working in a post-theoretical age or can a renewed engagement with theoretical issues enliven the field?"

These questions are also at the heart of what the Material Collective has advocated in the field of art history: platforms and venues for considering new ways to understand visual and materials culture and for creating opportunities for collaboration. In his essay in this issue, Gerry Guest highlights the ethical power of intellectual communities, and we see this issue of *Different Visions* linking directly to the work of scholars who seek to expand and improve the discipline of medieval art history and of art history as a whole.

The four contributions and the additional conversation published in this issue reflect a diversity of interpretations and approaches to Guest's compelling questions. In his essay "Embodiment and Devotion in the *Très Riches Heures* (or, the Possibilities of a Post-Theoretical Art History)," Guest concisely and cogently articulates what is at stake with these provocative questions about theory. His essay presents a grounded definition of "post-theoretical" followed by how such a concept informs his reading of the Adam and Eve scene from the *Très Riches Heures*.

In "Other Spaces: Medieval Architectural History between Theory and Practice," Zachary Stewart engages with the concept of a heterotopia to reconsider traditional approaches to medieval architecture. He considers the changing role of architecture within the history of art and what connection, if any, that may have to the prominent methodological and theoretical trends within the discipline. Taking as his case study the former parish church of St. Gregory Pottergate in Norwich, Stewart demonstrates the ethical potential of expanded interpretive perspectives.

Marian Bleeke's essay "Ivory and Whiteness," explores the intersections between the use of ivory in the Middle Ages and theoretical conceptions of whiteness. Her wide-ranging discussion connects the material qualities of ivory, the decisions of artists, the treatment of such objects since they were made, and the interpretation of such objects in the Middle Ages, in the nineteenth century, and today.

The issue concludes with Jessamine Batario's essay "Theory, History, and the Risks of Being Wrong," in which she argues for the importance of taking risks, asserting a moral responsibility for art historians to allow theory to undergird such enterprises. As a modernist who engages with the medieval, Batario articulates the opportunities

inherent in cross-temporal comparative writing to bring attention to the disciplinary histories that impact our work. Grounded in historiography while simultaneously advocating for the potential of atemporality, her essay negotiates the complicated ethical terrain between the past and the present.

This issue also includes a more informal engagement with these issues: a summary of a conversation that followed the writing of these essays. The contributors read each other's work and discussed their different responses to the questions and to each other's approaches. It is our intention that by including the conversation in the publication, the interconnections between the essays become more apparent, while demonstrating the potential of such dialogue beyond the context of a journal issue.

We would like to acknowledge a number of people who helped us get this new phase of *Different Visions* off the ground. *DV*'s new iteration is a collaboration between Oklahoma State University and St. Olaf College, and we are especially grateful to the St. Olaf for hosting the journal. Thanks to St. Olaf's DiSCO (Digital Scholarship Center) gurus Ben Gottfried and Ezra Plemons for all of their hard work helping us figure out a new vision, and to students Adele Gordon (St. Olaf) and Micol Martinelli (OSU) for their help as well. Many thanks also to Peter Becker Nelson who designed our new logo. For this new issue, we are grateful to Gerry Guest, who graciously allowed us to transform his conference session into a publication and welcomed the work of additional scholars into the issue. We are also thankful to those who read drafts and gave us valuable feedback: Beth Williamson, Asa Mittman, Ben Tilghman, and Karl Whittington. Thank you so much for your generosity and collegiality! Thanks to the Material Collective for their support of the new chapter of *DV*, and finally, to the fantastic authors of this issue.