



CONVIVIUM

Exchanges and Interactions in the Arts of Medieval
Europe, Byzantium, and the Mediterranean
Seminarium Kondakovianum, Series Nova



UNIVERSITÉ DE LAUSANNE
• ACADEMY OF SCIENCES OF
THE CZECH REPUBLIC • MASARYK
UNIVERSITY •

CONVIVIUM X/2/2023

**Exchanges and Interactions in the Arts of Medieval
Europe, Byzantium, and the Mediterranean**

Seminarium Kondakovianum, Series Nova

Journal of the Department of Art History of the University of Lausanne,
of the Department of Art History of the Masaryk University, and of the
Institute of Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic

Editor-in-chief / Ivan Foletti

Executive editors / Jana Černocká, Zuzana Frantová,
Katarína Kravčíková, Zuzana Urbanová

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Typesetting / Helena Konečná

Layout design / Monika Kučerová

Cover design / Petr M. Vronský, Anna Kelblová

Publisher / Masarykova univerzita, Žerotínovo nám. 9,
601 77 Brno, IČO 00216224

Editorial Office / Seminář dějin umění, Filozofická fakulta
Masarykovy univerzity, Arna Nováka 1, 602 00 Brno

Print / Tiskárna Didot, spol. s r.o., Trnkova 119, 628 00 Brno

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www.earlymedievalstudies.com/convivium.html

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Published / November 2023

Reg. No. MK ČR E 21592

ISSN 2336-3452 (print)

ISSN 2336-808X (online)

Convivium is listed in the databases SCOPUS, ERIH,
"Riviste di classe A" indexed by ANVUR, and in the Emerging
Sources Citation Index (ESCI) of the Web of Science.



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Ten Years of Convivium

Michele Bacci, Ivan Foletti

This issue, released in November 2023, marks the completion of the tenth year of our journal. Ten thematic issues have ranged from the reception of the Middle Ages in the twentieth century to the artistic cultures of Southern Italy and from issues concerning the perception of the premodern landscape to conceptual approaches with subjects such as “iconic presence”. Ten free issues have also been in the image of the early twentieth century *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, which have consistently allowed us to cross the borders within European and Mediterranean space. After a decade of existence, it is clear, however, that each year *Convivium* crosses new and further geographic boundaries: in these ten years its centers of interest have expanded to increasingly diverse regions: from Svaneti in Georgia to the Trigray region of Ethiopia, or from colonized Mexico to Egyptian Fatimid production. Additionally, *Convivium* critically approached issues pertaining to the question of the circulation of visual ideas and concepts.

Supplementa began to accompany the series from 2016 onward – there are twelve of them at this time. These have certainly contributed to this expansion: symbolically, the first supplementum was devoted to the medieval cultures of Albania, Armenia, and Georgia. Other supplementa, however, have also been an opportunity to address – with very innovative perspectives – “classic” themes of the discipline: from female monasteries in Central Europe, to the cult of Veronica and from Conques to the emergence of the late antique as an historical and historiographic phenomenon. In short, over the years *Convivium* has become the most suitable place to try to explore new horizons, new issues, and new cultural spaces. Reflecting the diverse backgrounds of our contributors and almost without realizing it, our journal has increasingly mirrored an art-historical medievalism in search of diversity with an approach that willingly questions its own formation.

In this sense – and may the reader forgive us for perhaps excessive pride – *Convivium* today is a project that not only bears scholarly fruit but also represents a worldview that we, the journal’s editors, have always wanted to promote. The issue that the gentle reader holds in his or her hands is proof of this: from Central Europe to Lebanon and from Crete to the transcultural spaces of Southern Italy, many of *Convivium*’s major themes are represented here.

As we write these lines, however, it is difficult, very difficult, to express great optimism: indeed, the world in which we find ourselves operating seems increasingly distant from the ideals of the “exchanges and interactions” promoted by *Convivium*. The war in Ukraine, provoked by an attack by Russian federation troops without a declaration of war, seems to have given new luster to the concept of the “Iron Curtain”, which we hoped was dead and buried, while the conflict between Israel and Gaza has become the catalyst reviving specters of the past such as anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, or, more generally, the perception of cultures as mutually excluding. The rhetorical violence flaunted by the media and politicians, however, seems to indicate that the spiral of hatred is spreading like wildfire. One cannot shake off the impression that our world is racing toward a larger, perhaps even global, conflict. The echoing themes are those of racial intolerance and xenophobia, while we are also faced with an escalation of violent economic colonialism and increasingly unscrupulous neoliberal capitalism.

Put simply, our world bears so little resemblance to the values embodied by *Convivium*. The question that arises, then, is how to trace the reasons for such a departure in values and beliefs. How is it possible that the world of the humanities is so detached from the reality around it? Indeed, we have moved from a model in which the humanities participated in the most important social decisions to a situation in which – willingly or unwillingly – we have the impression that we are completely alien to the mainstream of the world in which we live. We do not have the space and time here to understand all the reasons for the current situation. However, we firmly believe that now more than ever is the time for the humanities and art history. Not only is it necessary to continue to reaffirm the essential values that inhabit us – tolerance, openness to the other, and dialogue between cultures and religions – but we must in our opinion also work to ensure that these values reach more people than our small circle of specialists. From next year, therefore, the ideals and output of *Convivium* will expand: we will begin to publish a journal with a very similar intellectual orientation but intended for a much wider audience. It will be launched in Czech – the language of the place where *Convivium* continues to have, after ten years of existence, its actual home. Our hope, however, is that this initiative may have the strength to reach an international audience. In short, if we want to continue to advocate for the values that *Convivium* promotes, we have an obligation to come out, with increasing regularity, from the proverbial ivory tower.

Convivium faces other challenges: increasing pressure from open-access publications, for example. Despite this pressure, it will continue into its second decade as a print journal – although more and more articles or even issues are and will appear freely as digital content on the Web. A critical divergent point in our new design, however, will be that these volumes will be conceived to facilitate digital reading, with the possibility of switching entirely to open-access in the future (though without abandoning our beloved material, paper).

The end of the first cycle is also signaled by major changes in the editorial staff. After ten years of work among the editors Klára Benešová and Herbert L. Kessler are stepping back to become the two new emeriti of the journal. Their places will be taken by Jan Klípa, one of the leading Czech medievalists and a member of the Academy of Sciences in Prague, and Jaś Elsner, professor at Oxford University and one of the foremost specialists in historiography and visual culture of the late antique world. With these lines we would like to express, on behalf of our entire editorial staff, our deep gratitude to Klára and Herbert

for these years of direction at the journal. Without their enthusiasm and tireless work Convivium could never have been born and grown, we thank you very much!

Taking over from Klára and Herbert will not be easy, but we are very confident that with Jan and Jaś our project will not lose its characteristic dynamism.

It is also our duty to thank all those who made this adventure possible over the last decade: these are first of all the deans of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Lausanne who, following François Rosset, have always supported this venture. Likewise, we must thank the directors of the art history department of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic Vojtěch Lahoda and Tomáš Winter. Finally, deserving of special mention are the heads of the department of art history at Masaryk University in Brno, Ondřej Jakubec and Radka Nokkala Miltová, who were instrumental in the formation of our journal.

We would also like to express our gratitude to the magazine's graphic designers who, in the words of many, made it (and continue to make it) one of the most beautiful journals in the world, especially amongst academic productions. Thanks to Monika Kučerová, author of the first design, and Petr Vronský, author of the first cover. Thanks also to Anna Kelblová, Helena Konečná, Berta K. Skalíková and Kristýna Smrčková who over the years have continued to work with passion and dedication on our periodical.

Thanks also to all those who participated as editors in the work of the journal – without their tireless work, the journal could never have reached the level it has today. Thanks, therefore, to Gajane Achverdjanová, Cynthia Bailón Abad, Ruben Campini, Francesca Carota, Francesco Cozzolino, Jana Černocká, Klára Doležalová, Alžběta Filipová, Natália Gachallová, Veronika Hermanová, Ester Horáková, Sára A. Hudcovicová, Cristina Ivanovici, Karla Jedličková, Margharita Khakhanova, Katarína Kravčíková, Giada Lattanzio, Cassandre Lejosne, Martin F. Lešák, Francesco Lovino, Leoš Mátl, Sarah Melker, Annalisa Moraschi, Marie Okáčová, Julia Oswald, Adrien Palladino, Kristen Racaniello, Sabina Rosenbergová, Lada Řezáčová, Beatrice Sacco, Sara Salvadori, Nicolas Samaretz, Vedran Sulovsky, Katarína Šimová, Pavla Tichá, Veronika Tvrzníková, Zuzana Urbanová, and Lenka Vrlíková. Among the executive editors of the journal, however, three deserve special thanks. These are, first and foremost, Joanna Zacharias who, with patience and creativity, has been correcting all of the journal's abstracts for ten years. Mention must also be made of Karolina Foletti who held the executive reins of Convivium between 2017 and 2021. Karolina has created a system that has enabled the journal to overcome its adolescent phase (with often stressful moments at the issue's conclusion) to become a professional enterprise. Finally, we would like to mention the steady work of Zuzana Frantová, Convivium's first executive editor who, after a break, took up the torch from Karolina in 2021.

We wish Convivium many more years of production and intellectual exchange, as well as many more outstanding authors and many, many curious readers. At the same time, we truly hope that in ten years we can celebrate a journal that has remained true to both its scientific standards and its ethical values.

Thank you, readers, for your contribution to the future of our journal.