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**Review of: The Locus of Meaning in Medieval Art: Iconography,
Iconology, and Interpreting the Visual Imagery of the Middle Ages.**

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LENA LIEPE, ed., *The Locus of Meaning in Medieval Art: Iconography, Iconology, and Interpreting the Visual Imagery of the Middle Ages*. (Studies in Iconography: Themes and Variations.) Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2018. Pp. xii, 240; 19 color plates and many black-and-white figures. \$129.99. ISBN: 978-1-5804-4343-2. Table of contents available online at <https://www.degruyter.com/view/product/511974> doi:10.1086/710983

This collection has its origin in a series of seminars and roundtables held between 2010 and 2013 in Oslo and Copenhagen that brought together scholars from Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. It is also the most recent volume in a series from the Medieval Institute of Western Michigan University that publishes “collections of essays on topics of interest to readers of the journal *Studies in Iconography* and to medievalists in a wide range of disciplines.” In the preface, the book’s editor, Lena Liepe, notes that the eight articles in the collection build on the legacy of iconological analysis set forth by Erwin Panofsky but also embrace “positions outside and beyond the Panofskian paradigm” (3). The volume thus takes its place with other recent collections that offer critical guides to the historiography and methods of medieval art iconology/iconography (see, for example, *The Routledge Companion to Medieval Iconography*, edited by Colum Hourihane, as well as *New Perspectives in Iconology: Visual Studies and Anthropology*, edited by Barbara Baert et al.). The present volume stands out for its commitments to historiographical and methodological reflection.

The articles are presented in two clusters, the first five under the rubric “Methodological Issues” and the final three as “Case Studies.” The first part begins with Liepe’s synthetic overview of the field, a laudably expansive view of iconological inquiry from its beginnings up to current approaches inflected by critical theory and anthropology. She also spotlights the contributions of Nordic scholars, something that will be of use to readers who are less familiar with the key thinkers from this region.

The next three authors show special concern with critiques of the legacy of Panofskian iconology in an attempt to move beyond it into new realms of inquiry. Elina Räsänen’s article begins with a critique of Panofsky’s three-stage model of iconological inquiry (pre-iconographical description/iconographical analysis in the narrower sense of the word/iconographical interpretation in a deeper sense) and a consideration of some of the authors who have offered

alternative methodologies that can still be called iconological in a broad sense. Several useful points are made here, most important is that scholars of medieval art might attend more carefully to historiographical issues when attempting to stake out new methodological territory. Søren Kaspersen also challenges scholars to ask new questions in his expansive contribution, “Iconography and Anthropology: A Reevaluation of the Panofskian Model with an Anthropological Perspective.” Ultimately, he is interested in style as a symbolic form and art history as a history of the mind. To that end, he offers some thoughts on how an “iconology of style” might consider early Gothic art as an embodiment of contemporary understandings of human cognition and subjectivity. Jan von Bonsdorff’s essay considers Panofsky’s notion of pre-iconographic description and how concepts such as metaphor and narrative might be used to understand both traditional art (for example, the Isenheim altarpiece) and contemporary advertisements and cartoons.

The remaining articles in the collection are less concerned with critiquing Panofsky and more with specific approaches to medieval and early modern iconography. Hans Henrik Lohfert Jørgensen offers provocative new ways of thinking about medieval art in his “The Image as *Contact Medium*: Mediation, Multimodality, and Haptics in Medieval Imagery.” Building on recent work by Hans Belting (especially *An Anthropology of Images: Picture, Medium, Body* [2011]), Jørgensen considers the medieval artwork as a sensorial object with performative agency. He argues that scholars need to move beyond the visual dimension of the image toward a fuller “sensography” that considers the ways in which art mediates what is absent through various contact functions. Kjartan Hauglid considers the ways in which buildings create meaning in “Understanding Islamic Features in Norwegian Romanesque Architecture.” He argues that features such as alternating voussoirs and visual motifs such as adorned beard pullers are deliberate evocations of the Holy Land and the Crusades filtered through the experiences of members of the Norwegian elite. Ragnhild M. Bø considers the intervisuality of late medieval manuscript images. Here issues of color and costume come to the fore to create a play of meaning in a devotional book for an elite woman. The collection concludes with Maria H. Oen’s contribution, in which she focuses on the emergence of a specific set of motifs in the art of the late Middle Ages, arguing that we need to move beyond accounts in which word is privileged over image, or vice-versa. Instead, she considers the text of Birgitta’s *Revelaciones* as a medium that conveys images and meditative activity as a process of image making. Works of art therefore are part of a complex process of emergence when it comes to the spread of visual motifs.

As a whole, this collection stands out for its thoughtful consideration of the current state of medieval art history with an eye toward past intellectual commitments and achievements. It also serves the useful function of presenting in English stimulating new work by scholars working in Nordic Europe.

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