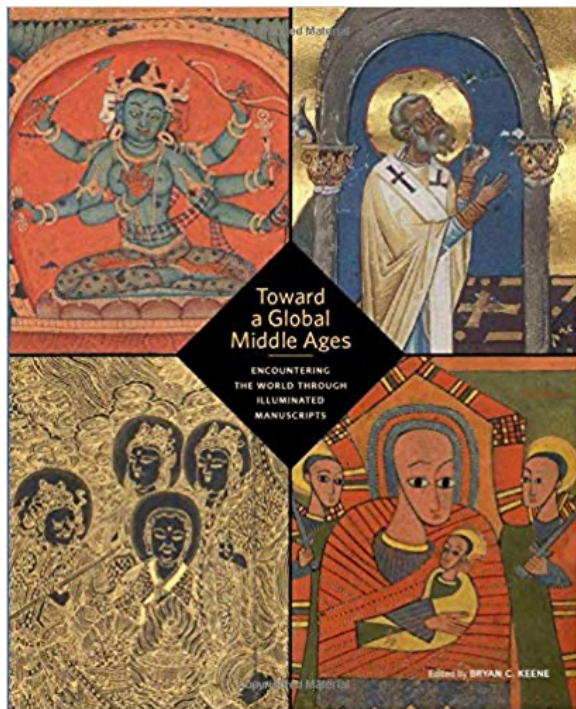


## Toward a Global Middle Ages: Encountering a World Through Illuminated Manuscripts

Edited by Bryan C. Keene. J. Paul Getty Museum, September 2019. 296 p. ill ISBN 9781606065983 (pbk.), \$60.00.

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In editing this work, Associate Curator of Manuscripts at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Bryan C. Keene applies the work of decolonization to an area of art history largely equated with European and Byzantine works, interrogating restrictive geographic boundaries as well as questioning the application of the terms “middle ages,” and “medieval.” Keene builds on work done for Getty exhibits, *Traversing the Globe through Illuminated Manuscripts* (2016), and *Pathways to Paradise: Medieval India and Europe* (2018), as well as presentations given as part of those exhibitions. Half of the contributed essays to the work are expansions of material presented at a two-day symposium held in conjunction with the *Traversing the Globe* exhibit, making this a proceedings of sorts.

The book is divided into four sections, each one introduced with an essay by Keene: “Glimpsing a Global Middle Ages; The Intermediality of ‘The Book’;” “Bound, Rolled, and Folded Textual Objects;” “Identity: Finding One’s Place in the Medieval World;” and “Itineraries from the Atlantic to the Pacific: Travel, Circulation, and Exchange.” Five or six contributed essays fill out the thematic content for each section.

A unique feature in this book is Morgan Conger’s timeline found at the conclusion of the introduction. Conger discusses the complications of addressing time in a fully global manner, acknowledging the usual way we mark time in art history by the strictly linear progression of the Gregorian calendar, and yet there are other ways of recording time. Conger provides

several examples of alternate methods, settling on the inclusion of the Islamic calendar dates as something of a compromise. The timeline created situates the works included in the book between 50 BCE-50 CE and 1800 CE (13th century AH), creating a chronological overview of the peoples and contexts addressed throughout the work. This provides a thoughtful way for the reader to enter the content of the work.

Toward a Global Middle Ages covers unique aspects of visual culture during this time period with overall thoughtfulness, while acknowledging how complicated it is to record some of these histories in a traditionally published text. Color figures and captioned images illustrating the text, together with endnotes, improve the readability of the book and make it easy for the reader to build context and access additional information. A comprehensive bibliography, image credits, and an index containing both name and topic references are included. This makes the work useful to a wide audience for expanding research and following subject content across individual essays. It is recommended for undergraduate art history collections, particularly those emphasizing interdisciplinary approaches to visual culture, art, architecture, religious studies, colonialism, travel, trade, and area studies.