

OrnaSacra

Ornamenta sacra. Iconological study of the liturgical heritage from the Southern Netherlands (1400-1700)

DURATION
 01/01/2017 - 15/04/2020

BUDGET
 590.470 €

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This collective project, gathering scholars from different institutions (KIK-IRPA, UCL, KU Leuven), aims at conducting an **iconological and anthropological research** devoted to the late medieval and early modern liturgical heritage (called *ornamenta sacra* during this period) from the Southern Netherlands (1400-1700). It is concerned with different kinds of objects – made of a wide variety of materials and techniques (such as chalices, monstrances, censers, altar vases, candlesticks, chasubles...) – fundamental to the ceremonial and occupying a central place in the religious art of the past. We will investigate **the provenance, the nature** (material, technical, stylistic, iconographic...) **and the evolution** of this production in order to better understand its **religious, social and artistic importance** in a timeframe characterized by profound liturgical transformations and by religious conflicts and reforms.



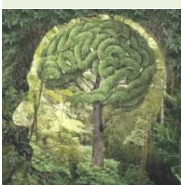
In this respect, the focus on the Southern Netherlands is particularly relevant. Indeed, due to its location at confessional and cultural borders this region appears to be an interesting vantage point to observe all the reconfigurations of the relationships between art and liturgy. This spatiotemporal framework will allow us to determine to what extent the evolving norms (especially after the Council of Trent and the consecutive Romanisation of the liturgy) but also the politico-religious turmoil (e.g. the Iconoclastic Fury of 1566) had an impact on liturgical practices.

The **historical anthropology of the visual, the sensible and the ritual** will offer us a methodological framework within which we will consider the **material and symbolic nature** as well as the **spatial and ritual context** of these objects, so as to provide a renewed analysis of their forms and functions. We will also build up an original methodology in order to trace the links (in terms of provenance, typology or chronology) between objects that are part of liturgical sets, which today are often dismantled and spread over different collections (museums, private collections, church treasures...).

Research area: Art history

Web resources for research, sourcing and valorisation strategies

The principal aim of this project is to highlight this threatened or neglected cultural heritage by developing **new online resources** on the website of the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA) in order to sustain a **team research** but also to offer an **efficient tool** to a broader national and international community concerned with the **understanding, preservation and valorisation** of what is usually relegated to the field of the decorative arts. It will contribute to the promotion and to a better knowledge of a rich heritage, improve digital data management and help to valorize our federal photographic heritage.



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Ornamenta and decorum

In line with some new trends in art historical research devoted to the study of the relationships between art and religion, we would like to investigate the **complex and evolving status, functions and uses of these objects**. Intimately related to a ritual context, they are intended to serve the liturgy. We need, thus, to study their **performative power**, which is closely related to their aesthetic dimension. These liturgical objects are indeed efficient not only because of their intended function but also because of their **material, symbolic and artistic values**. Even though these two main dimensions – aesthetic and functional – have been traditionally conceived as antithetic, their intrinsic interactions need to be reassessed, especially with regard to the issue of *decorum*, that is the **appropriateness of form to function**.

Senses and experience

This issue of the role of ornaments in their relation to the aesthetic value and liturgical functions of the objects under scrutiny leads to a reflection on the interactions between motions and emotions. We will take advantage of recent studies on the history of the senses and the sensible to shed new light on the **synesthetic experience** triggered by the *ornamenta sacra*. One part of the study will thus focus on their different functions in the experience of the sensorium: seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting. We will show how through these senses, the different media are efficiently interwoven with the audience and the ritual.



CONTACT INFORMATION

Coordinator

Ralph Dekoninck
Université catholique de Louvain (UCL)
Centre for Early-Modern Cultural Analysis (GEMCA)
ralph.dekoninck@uclouvain.be

Partners

Barbara Baert
Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KU Leuven)
Iconology Research Group (IRG) / Illuminare
barbara.baert@kuleuven.be

Marie-Christine Claes
Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA)
marie-christine.claes@kikirpa.be

LINKS

<https://uclouvain.be/fr/instituts-recherche/incal/gemca/ornamenta-sacra.html>

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