

Call for Papers

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International Conference  
Prague, 2–4 July 2020

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Deadline for submissions  
29 February 2020

# royal nunneries

at the center  
of medieval europe



art  
architecture  
aesthetics

11<sup>th</sup> — 14<sup>th</sup> centuries

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Scientific Organization  
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Within the late-medieval monastic universe, royal foundations share characteristics identifiable across their specific political contexts and beyond the space-time mapping of artistic and architectural phenomena. Endowed with special privileges and enriched by royal and aristocratic donations, monasteries connected to the ruling houses often worked as *instrumenta regni*; they were active cultural hubs, stages for royal and courtly promotion, and places of personal and dynastic self-representation. In this context, female monasteries offer the additional possibility to investigate the agency of female élites in medieval society and their role as patrons and addressees of architecture and artistic products. While female monasteries and convents have benefitted over the past decades from unprecedented attention, fostering the reconsideration of the categories of medieval ‘art’ and ‘aesthetics’, a specific focus on royal foundations across Europe is still a desideratum.

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This conference is dedicated to the art, architecture and material culture of female monasteries patronized by the ruling dynasties in medieval Europe between the 11<sup>th</sup> and the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. This subset has been studied mostly within national academic schools resulting in separate parallel narratives of phenomena which in most cases were, in fact, related on a trans-regional scale thanks to dynastic and diplomatic connections, and also to female networks based on ties of faith and blood. The ambition of the meeting is to gather scholars interested in both testing and transcending these historiographic borders and in challenging the interpretative scheme of a top-down oriented feudal structure in favour of a network perspective. The final aim is to detect and discuss artistic, architectural, and aesthetic discourses acting on a synchronic and diachronic scale across late medieval Europe.

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The conference will take place in Prague’s Na Františku double convent founded by the Přemyslid princess St. Agnes with her brother, king Wenceslas I—the location itself an exemplary case study for on-site analysis and discussion. The intention is to start from the Bohemian and Moravian nunneries connected to the Přemyslid royal family and to extend out from Central Europe to a series of other European case studies.

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We welcome papers from art and architectural historians, as well as from scholars in adjacent fields, focusing on a case study, a region, or royal/courtly entourage, and posing theoretical and methodological questions which could offer a bridge for comparative discussions. Case studies that do not directly deal but can be fruitfully compared with royal female monasteries are also encouraged.

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#### Key topics might include, but are not limited to

- issues of gender related to patronage and life in the royal nunnery;
- the political and dynastic values of female foundations and their reflections in art;
- the design, decoration, and furnishing of spaces, between clausura and public areas;
- the construction of models of female *memoria* and feminine holiness;
- visual material and spiritual visualization in the royal nunnery between aesthetics, theology, and politics;
- royal nunneries as stage of self-representation, inside and outside the royal entourage;
- genealogies and memory within the nunnery;
- religious orders and royal foundations: special rules, transgressions, reforms;
- beyond clausura: patterns and networks of people, objects, relics, iconographies;
- national historiographies: trends, conflating and converging views

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Submissions for 20-minute presentations in English, including an abstract of max. 300 words and a short CV (max. 1 page), can be sent to [scirocco@biblhertz.it](mailto:scirocco@biblhertz.it) and [benesovska@udu.cas.cz](mailto:benesovska@udu.cas.cz) by **29 February 2020**.

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The organizing institutions will provide accommodation for speakers and offer a contribution for travel expenses.

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A selection of papers from the conference will be published—after a process of double-blind peer review evaluation—in the journal *Convivium* (Brno-Prague-Lausanne/Brepols Publishers).

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