

Skeuomorphs

Transmaterial Design in the Ancient and Medieval Mediterranean

Online Conference
17–19 November 2021

Skeuomorphs transfer shapes and surface textures from one material or technique onto another, thus endowing them with ornamental properties.

The material cultures of the ancient and medieval Mediterranean generated a diverse spectrum of such transmaterial designs. While older research described faux materials and techniques (e.g. painted marbles or mosaics) primarily in economic terms, i.e. as cheaper substitutes, recent research has drawn attention to the own aesthetics of transmaterial design – especially when the skeuomorph reveals itself as a visual fiction. The ambition of the conference is to investigate the modes of transmaterial design beyond established material hierarchies. We want to ask how skeuomorph artifacts can be understood as components of complex design systems, allowing for a better understanding of the (culture-specific) mechanics of making and perceiving objects.

This perspective on the objects' design principles opens up the possibility of a comparative view within larger geographical and temporal dimensions.

Albert-Ludwigs-Universität
Institut für Archäologische Wissenschaften (IAW)

Register here: www.byzanz.uni-freiburg.de

organized by
Benjamin Engels
Jesko Fildhuth
Fabian Stroth



WEDNESDAY
17.11.2021

SESSION 1

Chair: Christoph Huth (Freiburg)

- 14:00 Benjamin Engels (Freiburg)
Skeuomorphs. Concepts and taxonomies
- 14:40 Carl Knappett (Toronto)
Semiotic affordances of skeuomorphism: perspectives from the Bronze Age Aegean
- 15:20 Fabian Stroth (Freiburg)
The imitation game. Skeuomorph design in Byzantine material culture
- 16:00 coffee break

SESSION 2

Chair: Sabine Schrenk (Bonn)

- 16:30 Elisabeth Williams (Washington)
Sculptural threads: Surface and dimensionality in tapestry weaves from Late Antique Egypt
- 17:10 Michael Kiefer (Heidelberg)
Genuinely fake? Allusions to islamicate textiles in Byzantine dress
- 17:50 Vera-Simone Schulz (Florence)
Tex-Tiles: Transmaterial trajectories across the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean
- 19:00 Keynote by Gerhard Wolf (Florence)

THURSDAY
18.11.2021

SESSION 3

Chair: Ivana Puljiz (Freiburg)

- 14:00 Adrian Hielscher (Munich)
Lead glaze pottery and skeuomorph object design - Evidences and questions from the Vesuvian area
- 14:40 Michael Vickers (Oxford)
Spina, chariot horses and Athenian pottery
- 15:20 Joanita Vroom (Leiden)
The embarrassment of Byzantine pottery: faking precious materials and techniques
- 16:00 coffee break

SESSION 4

Chair: Manuel Flecker (Kiel)

- 16:30 David Gill (Kent)
Evoking Athenian gold-figured silver plate
- 17:10 Benjamin Fourlas (Mainz)
Designed for the feasts? Remarks on transmateriality, iconography and function of some Late Antique ARS vessels with relief decoration
- 17:50 Jesko Fildhuth (Freiburg)
Change through colour in Byzantine material culture
- 18:30 Brigitte Pitarakis (Paris)
Precious or faux? The magic of Byzantine goldsmithing

FRIDAY
19.11.2021

SESSION 5

Chair: Ralf von den Hoff (Freiburg)

- 14:00 Flavia Vanni (Birmingham)
The patrons, the artisans, and the congregation. Some reflections of transmateriality and the use of stucco in Byzantine churches
- 14:40 Jessica Plant (Ithaca)
Seeing through the relief: Opaque and translucent designs in Roman stucco
- 15:20 Ivan Drpić (Philadelphia)
Mosaic by other means: A Late Medieval experiment in remediation
- 16:00 coffee break

SESSION 6

Chair: Elisabeth Wagner Durand (Freiburg)

- 16:30 Shannon Steiner (New York)
The stone that is not a stone: The ambiguous and artificial materiality of Byzantine enamel
- 17:10 Wolfgang Filser (Berlin)
Latent surfaces in Hellenistic and Roman art & architecture
- 17:50 Annetta Alexandridis (Ithaca)
Zoomorph skeuomorphs