

Call for Papers: Deadline September 15

Sites of Tension I: Islands and Isolation
Sites of Tension II: Islands and Interconnectivity

59th International Congress on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, MI (9-11 May 2024)

Sponsored by the International Center of Medieval Art Student Committee



Woodcut map of the Aegean Sea, from Benedetto Bordone's *Isolario* (Venice, 1534).

Image courtesy of Stanford University.

In the premodern world, the *Isolario* (“*Book of Islands*”) was a popular genre for providing geographical, historical, and cultural descriptions of the islands of the *oikumene*. In Benedetto Bordone's *Isolario* (Venice: Nicolò Zappino, 1528), for example, the Paduan cartographer famously describes all islands of the known world, detailing their folklore, myths, cultures, climates, and histories. Intended as an illustrated and practical guide for sailors, Bordone's *Isolario* is replete with woodcut maps and explanatory texts that visualize and describe the major known islands and ports throughout the Mediterranean, the Americas, and the Indian Ocean. Several of the woodcut illustrations are among the earliest printed maps of the depicted sites—including the first separate printed map of Cuba—all of which are represented as isolated islands devoid of contact with other geographies, cultures, and histories. This two-part session questions the tenets laid out in such island books: how did medieval peoples navigate the tension between isolation and interconnectivity in island communities and geographies?



Sites of Tension I: Islands and Isolation (Session ID 5329), the first of this two-part session, explores the practical and cognitive effects of building and experiencing lives on islands in the medieval world. It considers the multifaceted ways in which such geographies affected the built environment and visual culture in the Middle Ages. Bearing in mind issues such as isolation and untranslatability, this session seeks papers that address how art and architecture on islands—conceived physically and literally—operated according to their unique, localized geographies and contributed to the formation of island identities.

Sites of Tension II: Islands and Interconnectivity (Session ID 5340), the second of this two-part session, looks beyond issues of physical, geographic isolation. This session examines the imagined or metaphorical island as a locus of inquiry in the medieval world. Bearing in mind the complex political, economic, and cultural significance of overseas exchange and maritime exploration in the formation of islands, this session seeks papers that explore the vital roles played by cross-cultural exchange and colonization in the formation of islands—conceived conceptually.

The ICMA Student Committee seeks papers that challenge the traditional geographic, temporal, and theoretical “edges” of our discipline. We especially welcome papers that reach beyond Europe, thus reflecting the mission of the ICMA to study and understand visual and material culture in every corner of the medieval world.

Potential thematic topics for individual contributions may include, but are not limited to:

- Separation—conceived in intellectual, cartographic, and geographic terms
- Miscommunication and mistranslation
- Diasporic communities and the relationship between colonizer and colony
- Memory, identity, and the (mis)appropriation of cultural heritage, civic, and religious ceremonies

Proposals for both **in-person** panels must be submitted through the [Confex proposal portal](#).

Organizers:

Gabriela Chitwood (Ph.D. Candidate, Univ. of Oregon)
Brittany Forniotis (Ph.D. Candidate, Duke Univ.)
Nina Gonzalbez (Ph.D. Candidate, Florida State Univ.)
Shannah Rose (Ph.D. Candidate, Institute of Fine Arts, New York Univ.)

Presiders:

Gilbert Jones (Chair, ICMA Student Committee, Cleveland State University)
Shannah Rose (Ph.D. Candidate, Institute of Fine Arts, New York Univ.)

