



Mitchell Merback

The Johns Hopkins University

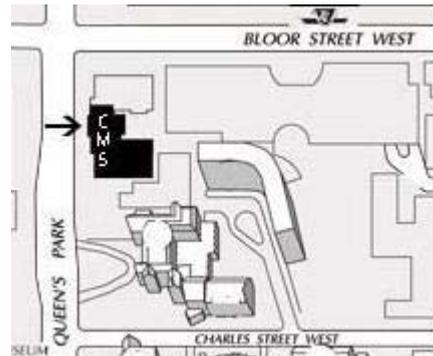
Thursday, 19 January 2012

4:00pm

Room 301

Centre for Medieval Studies

125 Queen's Park



This lecture series is free and open to the public. If you have an accessibility or accommodation need for this event, please contact the Centre for Medieval Studies medieval.studies@utoronto.ca or 416 978 4884

From Icon to Mirror of the Soul: Therapeutic Exchanges with the Man of Sorrows in Medieval and Renaissance Art

Known from its earliest appearance in the Latin west as the *imago pietatis*, the “image of loving pity,” the European Man of Sorrows captures in a single figure the paradox of the living God who died on the Cross. Its origins as an eastern icon-type; its transformation into a western image styled for mystical contemplation; and its reformulation for an array of novel contexts have all become well-worn subjects for art historians, but the abundance of scholarship has resulted in a fragmented view, one that also reflects a contemporary profusion of competing and contradictory conceptions of what images are, and how they function. Offering one way out of the current cul-de-sac, this lecture maps and explores the major functional contexts into which the Man of Sorrows was enlisted across its long history prior to the Reformation. The purpose is to present a new interpretation, one that conceives the image’s changing functional forms in terms of ritual metaphors of exchange, gift-giving and reciprocal offering. Without denying that other devotional and cultic image-types could likewise structure ritual reciprocities, this lecture proposes to see the Man of Sorrows image, in its many variants, as uniquely fitted for the task by virtue of its unique range of visual metaphors. Ritual interactions with the Man of Sorrows may have been idealized in terms of mystical aspiration, but they were structured by concrete expectations of therapeutic benefit -- therapies for the heart, the soul, the body, the religious conscience, indeed, the entire human personality.

Mitchell Merback is Associate Professor of the History of Art at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. Specializing in northern European art of the later Middle Ages and Renaissance, he is the author of *The Thief, the Cross and the Wheel: Pain and the Spectacle of Punishment in Medieval and Renaissance Europe* (1999); and editor of *Beyond the Yellow Badge: Anti-Judaism and Antisemitism in Medieval and Early Modern Visual Culture* (2008). His new book, *Pilgrimage and Pogrom: From Violence to Memory at the Host-Miracle Shrines of Germany and Austria*, is forthcoming from the University of Chicago Press in Winter 2013.

Prof. Merback will also offer a seminar “Radical in the Making: Sources and Strategies of Sebald Beham’s Devotional Graphics, 1518-21” 10am-12pm Friday, 20 January 2012. Graduate students or faculty interested in attending should contact medieval.studies@utoronto.ca for location and reading materials.