

Announcing a New Creative Initiative: “Fuse: Museum to Studio Connections” (fuse.msc@gmail.com)



CMA Curator Dr. Gerhard Lutz speaks with CIA Craft + Design students about a piece of medieval enamel.
Credit: Cleveland Institute of Art

In the Fall of 2023, I co-founded the creative initiative “Fuse: Museum to Studio Connections” with Ariella Har-Even. I am a Ph.D. candidate in the joint art history program between Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) and the Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA), and I work on medieval Jewish illuminated manuscripts with Elina Gertsman. Har-Even, a metalsmith and jeweler based in Cleveland, Ohio, and I shared a goal of developing this group to bring artists and art historians like us together.

Our focus with Fuse is on building and fostering stronger connections between art historians and artists in the Cleveland area through collaboration and exchange. In January 2024, we put together three separate events geared toward this goal.

We first held a hands-on medieval architectural drawing workshop in collaboration with the musical ensemble *Trobár* as a part of their community-building “Muck About” series. At the workshop, I gave a brief lecture on sacred geometry and the development of Gothic design before leading participants through an exercise in creating a cathedral ground plan *ad quadratum*. This exercise was first developed by Jennifer M. Feltman at the University of Alabama, where I completed my undergraduate coursework.

We also coordinated two related events between the CMA, the Cleveland Institute of Art (CIA), and CWRU. The first was a close-looking session at the CMA for CIA Craft + Design students and faculty to examine historic works of enamel, glass, and

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metalwork from the museum's collection while also listening to information about these objects from CMA curators and conservators. Gerhard Lutz, the Robert P. Bergman Curator of Medieval Art at the CMA, opened the session with an overview of these medieval crafts, with a particular focus on the locations where such works would have originally been displayed and viewed. Students then had the opportunity to inspect and handle objects, such as a twelfth-century enamel plaque with the Crucifixion (1952.117), a fourteenth-century altar cross (1942.1091), and a fifteenth-century miniature sculpture of a wild man (1965.21), using conservation equipment, including a microscope and a thermal conductivity tester. Speaking with Dr. Lutz and the conservators was extremely beneficial for students, who not only learned about the historical contexts and conservation of materials they frequently use, but also about career paths in museums.



CMA Conservator Beth Edelstein and a CIA Metals student take a closer look at an altar cross with a light.
Credit: Cleveland Institute of Art



Ariella Har-Even demonstrates the wet-packing technique.
Credit: Reed O'Mara

The second event that week was geared toward art historians and conservators, and took place in the Metals Department at CIA. Har-Even led a workshop on the champlevé enameling technique for CWRU faculty and graduate students as well as CMA curators and conservators. Har-Even opened with a discussion of medieval versus contemporary enameling techniques and technology, incorporating the writings of Theophilus Presbyter to show how enameling, at its core, has remained the same throughout the ages. Har-Even then demonstrated the enameling wet packing technique and firing process. Assisted by Har-Even and CIA enamels professor Gretchen Goss, participants then selected colors and wet-packed their own etched pieces to go through the entire enameling process, from packing to firing to grinding the enamels using an alundum stone, and finally to cleaning off the firescale using nitric acid. Designs were chosen from medieval manuscripts, including the Notebook of Villard de Honnecourt (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms. fr. 19093), the Tripartite Mahzor (London, British Library, Add. 22413), and the Aberdeen Bestiary (Aberdeen, University of Aberdeen, Ms. 24). Hands-on workshops like these create opportunities for art historians to learn about the historic crafting processes they often research and gain deeper appreciation for the time and skill necessary to the creation of these objects.

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All these events centered around the medieval period, and this focus grows out of not only Har-Even's and my own research interests, but also the ever-growing medieval studies community at CWRU. The Department of Art History and Art has been crucial to developing this interdisciplinary medieval studies community. The department hosted the Vagantes Conference on Medieval Studies in 2022, and graduate students in the Department of Music and I founded the CWRU Graduate Association of Medieval Studies (GAMS) around the same time. GAMS hosts professional and social events, from manuscript and facsimile close-looking sessions to medieval book clubs and trivia nights.

In the future, Fuse hopes to host more events with local artists and create even deeper connections between institutions in Northeast Ohio. You can learn more about Fuse from our Instagram page, [@fuse.msc](#), and can contact us at fuse.msc@gmail.com. We are so grateful for the support we have had with these initial events, and would especially like to thank Elina Gertsman, Gerhard Lutz, Gretchen Goss, Colleen Snyder, and Beth Edelstein.

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Art History Ph.D. student Rebekkah Hart works on her piece, which features a maze design from the Notebook of Villard de Honnecourt. Credit: Reed O'Mara



A participant in the enameling workshop shows off her final piece, a small plaque featuring a multi-colored snail from the Notebook of Villard de Honnecourt. Credit: Reed O'Mara