



Palaces and Pleasures: Visual Art and Culture in the Courtly Sphere

In this lecture series, participants explore a diverse body of case studies of visual material from courtly societies across time and space. Painting remains an essential visual tool with which to interrogate notions of ritual and performance. However, we will also look closely at architecture, sculpture, ceramics, garden design, textiles, dance, and social ceremonies. In these mediums we will explore how disparate concepts of race, ethnicity, sexuality and the body problematize our contemporary understanding of both “the court” and the notion of visual art.

Lecture Series Outline:

Lecture 1: Amarna

- Akhenaten, Heretic Pharaoh of Egypt

Lecture 2: Heian-kyo

- Fujiwara no Michinaga, Sesshō of Japan

Lecture 3: London

- Elizabeth I, Queen of England

Lecture 4: Agra

- Akbar the Great, Mughal Emperor of India

Lecture 5: Isfahan

- Abbas II, Shah of Persia

Lecture 6: Versailles

- Louis XIV, King of France

Categories Under Discussion:

Kings – major biographical details for the ruler in question.

Queens – royal women, powerful women, their attendants, their relations.

Palaces – elite residences: where did the court live, visit?

Religion and Spirituality – thematic overview of dominant religious practices in the area, especially as related to the court.

Symbols – re-occurring visual symbols.

Military – Armies, Battles, Raids, Soldiers: literary, artistic or archaeological evidence.

Fashion: court clothing in general: specific references to the King, Queen, or other senior courtiers appreciated.

High Art: what kind of visual culture seems most valued in this era?

Craft and Textiles: Archaeological, Literary and Traditional Evidence.

Scandals and Taboos: Dissidence and Subversion: (im)possibilities.

