Final Report

1. **Title**
   D3: Images of Alterity in East and West (1 May 2008 to 30 June 2011)

1.1. **Research focus**
   Historicity and Heritage; Art History; Visuality; Manuscript Illumination

1.2. **Speaker and Principal Investigators**
   Lieselotte E. Saurma (Speaker & Principal Investigator)
   Anja Eisenbeiß (Speaker)
   Annette Hoffmann (Researcher)

2. **Summary and central question**
   Sub-project D3 studies the visual representation of the Other. Instead of searching for the authenticity of other cultures depicted in images, the project is focused on the hegemonic, dialogic, or even “polyphonic” constructions conveyed in images of the Other. These representations are inherently asymmetrical; indeed, asymmetry is inextricably intertwined with the representation of the Other. By examining stereotypes used in this process, their contextualisation, and the focus on singularity as a “vicarious sign of the self,” not only can we glimpse the different histories in this asymmetry, but we can also facilitate recognition of their authority in intercultural dialogue. The sub-project thus investigates nothing less than the question of whether there was an Orientalism before Orientalism, or whether other models of transcultural understanding existed prior to Orientalism. The experience of the Other as foreign or in relation to the self, perhaps even as the self, can be understood therefore as one of the central research areas of transcultural processes. When, in what context, and for what purposes does the foreigner become the Other? How is the Other defined? And how is it related or delimited from the self? These are some of the central questions addressed by sub-project D3.

3. **Report**
   While research on the Other (alter) has long been a familiar topic in literature and language, corresponding work on visual images of the Other has largely been neglected. The project group fills this gap. It works with examples of medieval painting and examines how the Other is described visually, paying close attention to which ideas of Otherness are disclosed by the visual means of characterising alterity. In particular, the stereotypes of medieval representations – which do not inquire into individual Others, but rather engage in a categorisation of “the Other” within the entire spectrum of humanity – are a fully unexplored
area of research. Contemporary theory understands racism and Orientalism as inventions of the modern age, yet which attributes describe the Other if skin colour, race and individual characteristics of human nature are actually not differentiated? How is the mirror image of the Other delimited from foreignness, especially in those examples – such as scholarly literature, crusader propaganda or biblical illustrations – in which the long successful integration of the foreign into the self is meant to be legitimated? How is the foreign represented when representation should serve to ennoble the self in references to a particularly important opponent or to a highly appreciated yet simultaneously foreign text? How can visual representation underline a typological relationship to the Other? The project group uses these questions to approach three different complexes:

1. representations of exodus in Christian, Jewish and Persian tradition;
2. models of alterity in crusader propaganda; and
3. models of alterity in the area of knowledge transfer.

Development of the sub-project

In the first funding year, the project group sharpened and focussed the individual thematic complexes, examined the primary material – mostly illuminated manuscripts dating from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries – purchased unpublished illustrations required for art historical analysis, and stored them in an internal project database (approximately 7,000 miniatures with brief information on iconography, relation to text, and key information about the manuscripts; access restricted for copyright reasons). In the second funding year, initial results and research questions were examined in a seminar with advanced students and presented at international conferences. In winter term 2009/10 the sub-project assumed an additional task with the conceptualisation and organisation of the cluster’s lecture series “The Power of Things”, a theme emanating from the project’s central research issues. Publishing the lecture series is one of the main efforts achieved in 2010/11. The third year of funding also saw the sub-project’s international concluding conferences taking place. The conference proceedings have been published in 2012. Throughout the project’s entire time span, there have been seminars and panel discussions (Cutler, Contadini, Monnas, Roxburgh, Silver) on the meaning of “foreign” objects and the visual strategies used to depict “foreign” persons, unknown customs or “strange” behaviour.

4.1. Results

The results of the workshops, conferences and seminars organised by the sub-project are published in two books and several articles (see 4.4). Inspired by the project group’s course
offerings, several master theses have been completed successfully under the supervision of Lieselotte E. Saurma at the Department for European Art History:

- Hui Luan Tran. „Das Ich und der Wolf in mir. Identität und Hybridität in Mensch-Tier-Darstellungen der Renaissance.“ Masterthesis Heidelberg 2012.

In addition, the sub-project has enjoyed consistent exchanges with the department for Islamic Art History at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London (Anna Contadini) and the Warburg Institute (Charles Burnett).

4.2. Activities

**Workshops, conferences & public lectures organized by the sub-project and its members**


Conference participations and invited talks by members of the sub-project

2011, 12 December, Cologne University, Paper by Lieselotte E. Saurma “Das Bild zwischen Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit in der volkssprachlichen Handschrift des Spätmittelalters”


2009, 11 – 12 September, St Andrews, School of Art History: Conference “East & West: Cross-Cultural Encounters,” panel on early examples of cross-cultural endeavours chaired by Anja Eisenbeiß & contribution to the round-table discussion on “Art and Cultural Identity in the Age of Globalisation”

Other activities

2009, 9 – 13 September, Tbilisi, Summer School for Georgian students “New Approaches to Medieval Art between East and West”, organized by the Kunsthistorische Institut in Florence, Max-Planck-Institute, and the University of Basel with the assistance of Annette Hoffmann

2009, Summer term, IEK: Advanced seminar “Visualizing Alterity in Western Medieval Art.” Instructor: Lieselotte E. Saumra with members of the D3 work group

2009, 3 June, KJC: Guest seminar on the iconography of disasters as part of the Junior Research Group Colloquium “New Research on ‘Cultures of Disaster’” (Gerrit Jasper Schenk), instructor: Anja Eisenbeiß
2008, 20 – 27 September: Session of meetings and round-table at the Warburg Institute and the SOAS, both University of London, to intensify collaboration with the project partners on site. Participants: Lieselotte E. Saurma, Anja Eisenbeiβ, Charles Burnett (Warburg Institute), Anna Contadini (SOAS).

2008 / 2009, Winter term: Administrative and organisational support, teaching assistance for the seminar “Holy Land and Europe”, held by Prof. Dr. Bianca Kühlne, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Cluster’s visiting professor for Global Art History: Annette Hoffmann


4.3 Role within the cluster and cooperations
During the whole funding period the members of the sub-project have helped to shape the Cluster’s notion of visuality by sharing and discussing the results of their individual research in workshops and talks (see 4.2). Upon invitation by the sub-project, several cooperation partners – Larry Silver, David J. Roxburgh, Anna Contadini, Lisa Monnas and Anthony Cutler – have been engaged in the supervision of theses and doctoral candidates within the Cluster’s graduate programme. In addition, the project members have taken responsibility within Research Area D and the Cluster as a whole on various levels, including administration, teaching, and research.

Main cooperations / responsibilities within the Cluster
• Member of the Cluster’s Steering Committee, 2007–2008 (Lieselotte E. Saurma)
• Deputy Speaker Research Area D, 2007–2008 (Lieselotte E. Saurma)
• Conception, organisation and publication of the Cluster’s lecture series “The Power of Things” (project group)
• Sub-project D1 (Historizing Violence): Conference participation and shared research activities (mainly Annette Hoffmann)
• Junior Research Group A6 (Cultures of Disaster): Conference participation, teaching, participation in the first draft of the exhibition project with the Reiss-Engelhorn Museen (mainly Anja Eisenbeiβ)
• Heidelberg Research Architecture: Workshop participation and continued exchange on image tagging; access provided to major art historical databases “ArtStor” and “Princeton Index of Medieval Art” (mainly Anja Eisenbeiβ)
Networking and external cooperations

- Co-Coordinator “Transcultural Studies,” Excellence Initiative, funding line: Institutional strategy to promote top-level research, and coordinator of the Computer Vision Group, 2008–2011 (Lieselotte E. Saurma)
- Member of the Joined Committee for Transcultural Studies, Heidelberg University, 2008–2011 (Lieselotte E. Saurma)
- School of Oriental and African Studies, London: scholarly exchange (Anna Contadini)
- Harvard University, Department for History of Art and Architecture, Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Professor of Islamic Art History: scholarly exchange (David J. Roxburgh)
- Pennsylvania State University, Department for Art History: scholarly exchange (Larry Silver)
- Kunsthistorisches Institut Florenz – Max Planck Institut, research focus “Art, Space and Mobility in the Early Ages of Globalisation:” scholarly exchange (Annette Hoffmann, Avinoam Shalem, Gerhard Wolf)

4.4. Project-related publications of the principal investigators

Books


Articles


Future Plans or Options

As Senior Professor, Lieselotte E. Saurma continues supervising master theses that have been motivated by the sub-project’s analysis of visual otherness. Thus the Cluster’s focus on transcultural studies is effectively established within research and teaching at the Department for European Art History. Professor Saurma’s next major individual research project (“Monster – Tiere – Menschen: Transgressionen zur Identitätsversicherung”) will discuss questions of shifting identities on a broader level, which enhances the source material as well as methods established within the sub-project. Directly connected to this endeavour are a number of public lectures scheduled for 2012 (University of Hamburg etc.) and corresponding publications.