

The Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC)  
announces a public lecture by

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**The codex as layered object. The case of Northern Spanish book illumination.**

The paper will focus on those illuminations framing different types of texts within medieval manuscripts. Mostly denominated as 'Titelbild', 'Frontispiz' or 'Finispiz', terms adopted from early modern book-printing, and furthermore characterized as opening and closing devices these illuminations can hardly be seen as an own entity and are therefore barely being recognized as a theoretical problem. Hence, I intend to discuss this visual frame-work as an interspace, which establishes relations between text, codex and context. Above that it creates moments of transition and deferral within the perception process.

In the case of Northern Spanish manuscripts the visual framework consists of figurative or non-figurative illuminations, of textual structures comprising what we consider to be 'text' and 'inscription' as well as of various combinations of letters and visual elements. Especially at the beginning of a codex they can appear as a densely, almost impenetrable set of layers to the beholder, which can be exemplified on the miscellaneous *Codex Albeldense* from the late 10<sup>th</sup> century containing mostly legal texts. As medieval manuscripts underwent material changes at any time beyond the moment of their initial fabrication the term 'layered' can also be understood in a diachronic way. Using the example of a Beatus' commentary on the revelation from around 1100, I will therefore discuss several material and visual additions at the beginning of the codex. These interventions pinpoint not only to the role ascribed to the visual framework at a certain date, but also in a more general way to the handling and understanding of manuscripts in the Early Middle Ages.

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