

Online Workshop  
Nov. 26–27, 2020

# Licht aus dem Osten? Natural Light in Medieval Churches Between Byzantium and the West

Throughout the medieval period, Christian churches were designed in such a way that natural light was deployed to underscore theological statements. The solutions usually found in Latin and Byzantine churches have been analyzed in recent decades. However, the cultures that developed at the crossroads of the Latin, Greek, and Slavic cultural spheres, particularly in regions of the Balkan Peninsula and the Carpathian Mountains, advanced their own formulas for how to use natural light in ecclesiastical buildings, and these have been less studied. These solutions depended on know-how inherited from Antiquity and preserved in local hubs or filtered through the experience of Byzantine or Latin contexts, and were further shaped by local climatic, economic, and theological parameters. The present workshop explores the economy of natural light in churches constructed across Eastern Europe, from the Balkans to the Baltic Sea, and at the crossroads of Byzantium and the West throughout the medieval period. Whether adopted or inspired from the more established traditions on the margins of the Mediterranean, local customs are examined in order to understand how natural light phenomena unfolded in ecclesiastical spaces, and how they related to the design, architecture, decorations, liturgical objects, and rituals performed inside the buildings. The multilayered light *Inszenierungen* that this workshop addresses cast light on the structuring of sacred spaces in the Eastern Orthodox cultural sphere. Moreover, the expertise behind the deployment of these natural light effects reveals patterns of knowledge transfer and cultural interaction between Byzantium, the West, and the Slavic world that extended especially in regions of Eastern Europe during the Middle Ages.

To register for this event, please rsvp [here](#). Contact: Alice Sullivan at [aisulli@umich.edu](mailto:aisulli@umich.edu).



# Program

**Nov. 26**

13:00–13:15

Welcome and Introduction  
**Alice Isabella Sullivan**

13:15–14:45

## **I: Structuring Sacred Space**

**Travis Yeager**, PhD, Lawrence Livermore National Lab (presenter)

**Dusan Danilovic**, PhD, Iowa State University

**Charles Kerton**, PhD, Iowa State University

**Jelena Bogdanović**, PhD, Iowa State University

**Magdalena Dragović**, PhD, University of Belgrade

*Modeling the Interior Sunlight Effects of Studenica Monastery*

**Ljiljana Čavić**, PhD, University of Lisbon

*Architectural Emptiness and Natural Lighting of the Church of the Virgin at Studenica Monastery*

**Anna Adashinskaya**, PhD, New Europe College, Bucharest

*Illuminated by Divine Presence: Arrangement of Lightened and Lightless Spaces in the Ascension Church of Dečani Monastery*

14:45–15:00

(make your own) Snack | Coffee Break

15:00–16:00

## **II: Light(less) Spaces**

**Elisa Galardi**, PhD Student, University of Pennsylvania

*Beyond Light: Image and Semi-Darkness in Byzantine Churches*

**Olga Yunak**, PhD Candidate, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley

*Natural Darkness: The Case of the Transfiguration Church on Illina Street in Novgorod (1378)*

16:00–16:15

(make your own) Snack | Tea Break

16:15–17:15

## **III: Windows and Divine Light**

**Vera Henkelmann**, PhD, Max-Weber-Kolleg | University of Erfurt

*The Blessed Sacrament Shining in Light: The Case of Oculi in Medieval Livonian Churches*

**Maria Lidova**, PhD, Associazione La Scuola iconografica di Seriate

*The Descent of Light: On the Use of Windows in Annunciation Imagery in Byzantium and the West*



# Program

**Nov. 27**

13:00–14:00

## **IV: East-West Negotiations**

**Maria Paschali**, PhD, RISE Centre of Excellence, Nicosia  
**Dimitris Minasidis**, PhD Candidate, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki  
*Light, Sight, and Images of Theophany across Medieval Christian Culture in Cyprus*

**Maria Shevelkina**, MA, Hunter College, CUNY  
*Light and Color as Reverberating Transparency in Ferapontovo's Nativity of the Mother of God sobor*

14:00–14:15

(make your own) Snack | Coffee Break

14:15–15:45

## **V: Aesthetics**

**Alexei Lidov**, PhD, Moscow State University  
*The Luminous Cloud in the Cupolas of Byzantine Churches and its Symbolic Meaning*

**Iakovos Potamianos**, PhD, University of Thessaloniki  
*Space and Light: An Exploration of the Foundations of the Aesthetics of Light in the Byzantine Church*

**Sergei Sidorenko**, PhD, Independent Scholar  
*Surprising Mutual Reflections through Centuries: Metaphysics of Light of Nicolaus Cusanus and the Evolution of a Chandelier (πολυκάνδηλον) in the East*

15:45–16:00

(make your own) Snack | Tea Break

16:00–17:00

## **VI: Earlier Light Phenomena**

**Jorge López Quiroga**, PhD, Autonomous University of Madrid  
**Natalia Figueiras Pimentel**, PhD, Popular University of Ourense  
*Light of the East in the West: Natural Light and Lighting in the Monastic Rupestrian Complex of St. Pedro of Rocas (Spain)*

**Andrea Mattiello**, PhD, Christie's Education, London  
*Sun, Stones, and Saints: On the Orientation of the Church of Sant' Ambrogio alla Rienna, Montecorvino Rovella, SA, Italy*

17:00–17:15

Concluding Remarks

**Vladimir Ivanovici**