

**M16**                    **'ECONOMIES OF QUALITY' AND THE 'MATERIAL RENAISSANCE'. COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON MATERIAL CULTURE CHANGES IN LATE MEDIEVAL AND SIXTEENTH-CENTURY EUROPE.**

**Organisers:**        Bruno Blondé (University of Antwerp)  
                         Katherine Wilson (University of York)

**Period:**              Medieval/Early modern

**Date:**                Thursday, 30 August 2012

**Time:**                14:00-17:30

**Room:**                201

**Description**

For obvious reasons, research on the rise of contemporary consumer society has been high on the agenda for several decades. One of the most important insights arising from historical consumer research was that crucial transformations to 'material modernity' pre-date the industrial revolution and contemporary affluent societies. Although most studies address the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Berg 2007), Richard Goldthwaite in the 1990s strongly advocated exploring material innovations in Renaissance Italy (Goldthwaite 1993). However, the illustrious Italian historiography that developed in the wake of this previous research, has focused too exclusively on production for the (often aristocratic) elite and has boldly assumed that the material renaissance was a unique Italian phenomenon (Blondé 2007). Compared with this literature, there has been a deplorable lack of interest in the material culture of urbanised societies in North-western Europe before the seventeenth century. Recently, Jan de Vries contrasted the seventeenth-century economy in Holland (in his view the cradle of the 'new luxuries') with that in Flanders and Brabant, which he argued was focused more on 'old luxuries' (De Vries 2008). Although his work is bound to impact on future research, the knowledge presently available, (for example on the rise of a 'confection' art market in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries) clearly challenges some basic assumptions underlying this historical model, whereby the potential of the late medieval urban economy for material culture innovation is 'minimised' by fitting it into an 'old luxury' consumer pattern (Dewilde 2007; Martens and Peeters 2002, 2006). Though it would be incorrect to judge the late medieval 'consumer changes' as a pre-configuration of 'modern consumer behaviour' let alone a 'consumer revolution', the material changes of the late Middle Ages and the sixteenth century were nevertheless tremendously important in social, cultural and economic respects.

In this major session, scholars from disciplines as diverse as art history, history and archaeology will be invited to investigate in closer detail the significant shifts in consumer practices and in the luxury industries that took place in the late Middle Ages and the 'long sixteenth century'. By looking beyond Italy and its elites, the session organisers intend to describe and develop our understanding of how divergent and similar consumer changes manifested themselves among the entire European urban society.

## Scientific Programme

- 1019 A CENTRE OF CONSUMPTION? LATER MEDIEVAL DIJON: THE INVENTORY OF JEHAN AUBERT**  
*Katherine Wilson* (University of York, Department of History, York, U.K.)
- 977 THE UPHOLDER IN THE CONSUMER CULTURE OF FIFTEENTH- AND SIXTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND**  
*Kate Staples* (West Virginia University, Department of History, Morgantown, USA)
- 816 DINNER IS SERVED. THE MATERIAL CULTURE OF THE KITCHEN IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY OUDENAARDE**  
*Inneke Baatsen* (University of Antwerp, Department of History, Antwerp, Belgium)
- 736 FUR IN DRESS IN THE LOW COUNTRIES BETWEEN 1450-1650**  
*Isis Sturtewagen* (Antwerp University, Department of History, Antwerp, Belgium)
- 709 PUTTING FURNITURE TOGETHER. THE CHANGING MATERIAL CULTURE OF THE DOMESTIC INTERIOR IN BRUGES AND OUDENAARDE DURING THE 'LONG' SIXTEENTH CENTURY**  
*Julie De Groot* (University of Antwerp, Department of History, Antwerp, Belgium)
- 641 SMALL-SCALE PORTRAITS IN 16TH-CENTURY LYONS: FINE ART, LUXURY OBJECTS OR COMMERCIAL BAUBLES?**  
*Philippe Bordes* (Université Lyon 2, Histoire de l'art et archeologie, Lyon, France)
- 617 THE 'MATERIAL RENAISSANCE' AND THE MIDDLING SORT: DOMESTIC GOODS AND THE PRACTICES OF EVERYDAY LIFE IN PROVINCIAL ENGLISH URBAN HOUSES**  
*Catherine Richardson* (University of Kent, Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies, Kent, U.K.)
- 515 NEW LUXURIES IN 16TH-CENTURY YORK**  
*Lisa Liddy* (University of York, Department of History, Durham, U.K.)
- 474 BETWEEN CHANGE AND PERSISTENCE. MATERIAL CULTURE AND CONSUMERISM IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY FRANKFURT ON THE MAIN**  
*Julia A. Schmidt-Funke* (Friedrich-Schiller-Universität, Historisches Institut, Jena, Germany)