

The Space Between Non-Arts and Fine Arts: Confronting gender and the decorative arts, 1500–1800

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The decorative arts are not easily defined and have long occupied the shifting space between the non-arts and the fine arts. During the early-modern period, prominent women, such as Catherine de' Medici and Amalia van Solms-Braunfels, were at the forefront of amassing impressive collections of decorative objects. Limoges enamel pieces created by Susanne de Court and embroideries fabricated by Katharina Rozee were highly sought after by collectors throughout Europe. Recent exhibitions and publications highlight early-modern women as participants in the creating, cultivating and collecting of decorative objects; however, the examination of women's agency and visibility is still limited.

In this session, we seek papers that confront the impact of early-modern women instigators as conscious creators or collectors of everyday and luxury objects. What role does gender play in the creation of decorative works and the cultivation of a collection? To what extent can a collection reflect its individual users, and what agencies do the objects retain? We invite proposals that address issues including, but not limited to: women as cultural agents; interrelationships among gender and collecting; issues of class and accessibility to resources; and strategies of display. We welcome proposals from a wide variety of disciplines, including art history, material culture, global studies, cultural studies, history, literature and race studies, as well as papers that take a global or transcultural approach and focus on under-researched media.