



Utrecht Centre for Medieval Studies

Lecture & Book Launch

11 September | 16.00-17.30 | Drift 13, 0.03

Rubrics, Images and Indulgences in Late Medieval Netherlandish Manuscripts

Dr. Kate Rudy (*University of St Andrews*)

Middle Dutch manuscript prayerbooks hold valuable information about how laypeople performed prayer and what they hoped to gain by doing so. The quantity and variety of this Middle Dutch material illuminates the extraordinary richness of individualized devotional practice. Prayerbooks lay out rules for enactment, largely written as rubrics, which implicate devotional images in myriad ways. The prescriptions in prayerbooks reveal aspects of the function and reception of devotional images in the fifteenth century.

This lecture will show how certain images and prayers brokered deals between penitents and their afterlives. The indulgence-earning culture of the pre-Reformation Netherlands engendered a new class of images that took purgatorial remission as their subjects. Rubrics, images, and indulgences formed a system that increased in magnitude, complexity, and importance in the fifteenth century. This system inflected habits of mind and public and private behaviour, and exerted considerable force on the contents of books, on the images at altars (and on their status), and on the course of history itself.

Kathryn Rudy (Kate) is a senior lecturer at the University of St Andrews. She earned her Ph.D. from Columbia University in Art History and also holds a Licentiate in Mediaeval Studies from the University of Toronto. From 2002-2005 she was a post-doctoral fellow at Utrecht University and then Curator of Illuminated Manuscripts at the KB The Hague. Her research focuses on the reception and original function of manuscripts. She has pioneered the use of the densitometer to measure the grime that original readers deposited in their books. On this topic she gave a TED talk.

Opening from a Book of Hours, c. 1500. Huis Bergh Castle in 's-Heerenberg, Ms. 18 (inv. no. 290), fol. 153v-154r.

