

Workshop “Nicholas of Verdun’s Pulpit for Klosterneuburg”

Vienna and Klosterneuburg (Austria), May 7–9, 2026

The paneling of the pulpit originally in the collegiate church in Klosterneuburg (Lower Austria), executed in enamel techniques by the Maasland goldsmith Nicholas of Verdun and completed in 1181 is an outstanding work in many respects: it is one of the largest surviving works of goldsmithing from the High Middle Ages. The donor's inscription explains the theological concept and names not only the patron and the date of completion but also—unusually for the period—the goldsmith. Through a style that innovatively adapts ancient models, the work conveys multiple layers of meaning simultaneously: its typological structure forms the foundation, with harmonized pictorial compositions clearly illustrating the relationship between the First and Second Testaments. At the same time, significant attention is given to the world of visible things (nature, emotions, etc.), with an approach not seen in the visual arts since antiquity.

Since the blockbuster exhibitions of the 1970s dedicated to the treasure art created around 1200 in the regions of Rhine and Meuse, isolated attempts from various methodological perspectives have been made to approach the phenomenon of “Nicholas of Verdun”. However, the complexity of his oeuvre has yet to be fully explored.

The conference aims to create a forum for a transdisciplinary examination of the goldsmith's oeuvre from new theoretical perspectives: Art-historical observations are to engage in dialogue with philological, paleographical, and historical analyses, alongside contributions from historians of theology and philosophy. The planned topics are: (1) the pulpit cover from 1181 to the present day—function, reception, appropriation; (2) the dialogue of the three eras—typology and temporality; (3) the complex of works related with the Klosterneuburg pulpit—Nicholas as author, executor and entrepreneur; (4) Nicholas of Verdun—man and myth; (5) a historiographical analysis of the studies on the pulpit (and on Nicolas of Verdun) in the socio-political context of the last two centuries.

Call for papers until May 31, 2025

incl. title und abstract (one page max.), CV, poss. website/Google Scholar profile

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