Because of my dissertation’s focus on issues of materiality, touch, and tactility, this kind of direct examination of late medieval pendants is imperative to my project. Meetings with scholars and curators held throughout the summer helped to refine the questions I was asking about my case studies and determined new avenues for exploration, allowing me to finalize my chapter outline. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the ICMA, especially to Nancy Ševčenko and Ryan Frisinger, and the European institutions and scholars I visited for supporting my project and making this extensive research trip a possibility and success.

The report of Student Research Award Winner Krisztina Ilko (University of Cambridge) will appear in the April Newsletter.


This exhibition is something of a family reunion. Known and sought throughout Europe, *opus anglicanum*—English-made textiles covered with embroidered iconography and utilizing luxury materials like thread made of precious metals—traveled far from this artistic center and are now in the permanent collections of museums and churches all over the continent (Figure 1). They are brought back together at the Victoria & Albert Museum. London is the ideal place to gather these high-quality crafts; the city was known in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries for its skilled and creative embroiderers and the production of these textiles. Like the term *opus francigenum,* referring to Gothic architecture, *opus anglicanum* is a rare phrase in our discipline that has its origins in the Middle Ages rather than reflecting a nineteenth-century qualitative judgment.

The exhibition begins by focusing on this point; a schematic map shows some of the myriad places throughout Europe where these objects found their homes. As we progress, we learn that vestments that were separated from Whalley Abbey are reunited in the V&A’s cases. Likewise, the Butler-Bowden cope and Chichester-Constable chasuble, orphrey, and stole probably originated in the same workshop—an argument that becomes extremely compelling when we see the objects displayed together and note their formal similarities (Figure 2).
One does not get the sense that *Opus Anglicanum* is thesis-driven. Rather, it is vaguely chronological, plotting the spread of *opus Anglicanum* from the earliest examples of episcopal use (objects surviving to us as grave goods) through popularization and eventually transference into secular garments owned by high-status lay people, like the Black Prince’s funeral achievements on loan from Canterbury Cathedral, featuring an embroidered wool surcoat. The vestments are displayed alongside a variety of contextual objects, some of which are quite compelling in their own right. Parallels are offered for the designs of the embroideries in other media, in particular stained glass and manuscript illumination; in a section on embroidery and the court, one finds the extant panels from Henry III’s painted chamber, loaned by the British Museum. The curators have included rubbings on paper of monumental brasses in situ that show their subjects wearing *opus Anglicanum* vestments, a clever way to bring representations from the parish church into the V&A (Figure 3). Certain included objects seem to have sacrificed their resonance at the altar of logistical concerns, however, such as a fantastic cope chest from York Minster. The chest, topped with ironwork, with hinges shaped like beasts, is a fortunate survival (one of only six in the country), but its position at the beginning of the exhibition, grouped with the unrelated map of the spread of *opus Anglicanum* downplays the experience of seeing an object which ought to be viewed in the round.

In most instances, though, the design of *Opus Anglicanum* is advantageous to the objects. Copes are displayed in one of two ways: flat against a wall so the entire object can be viewed at once, or on a stand that represents the way the garment is worn. In the second instance, they are displayed in cases that can be seen from both sides as one snakes through the exhibition. The display is minimal and pleasing, but one wonders if the slick exhibition design contributes to the interpretation for some objects being frustratingly obscure. For example, one must turn to the exhibition catalogue for a clear description of the main technical skills involved the production of these embroideries (underside couching and split stitch). One of the final objects in the exhibition is the fantastic Steeple Aston cope which survives as two separate liturgical furnishings. It is covered with foliate green men, depictions of saints’ lives, and musical angels on horseback. Though a wonderful video has been commissioned which represents the way that the cope was taken apart and reused, there is no clear label that indicates that the two objects, contained in different cases, are of a piece.

The present reviewer is grateful that no corny attempt has been made to make the space feel like a church or look medieval; rather the objects are well served by the clean and modern design that prioritizes them. A series of videos have been commissioned that show a modern embroiderer using the techniques of *opus Anglicanum*, zoomed-in details of the stitches, and a reconstruction of the Steeple Aston Cope as it originally was. Only in one instance did the objects feel overshadowed: early in the exhibition, an unexplained marquee that hangs from the ceiling records the names known of the makers of *opus Anglicanum* (Figure 4). Made to look like a cinema billboard, this strikes the viewer as a moment of rupture. One eventually puzzles out that the names listed there are known monikers of the craftspeople, men and women, who made *opus Anglicanum*: names like Mabel of Bury St. Edmunds who embroidered goods for
CROSSING THE Hanseatic THRESHOLD AND BEYOND
(continued)

Henry III, Gregory of London, and Rose, wife of John of Bureford. Though I question the relationship of the marquee to the rest of the design, I appreciate its inclusion as a means of showing that names are known of the embroiderers (unusual enough in a medieval context), and that people of both genders were successful in making and selling opus anglicanum.

Though the interpretive thread is occasionally lost, Opus Anglicanum is a well-curated exhibition that brings together finely-crafted garments and furnishings now dispersed throughout Europe, offering a chance for close study and for new viewers to be captivated by their luxurious materials and fine details.

Meg Bernstein
PhD Candidate, UCLA


Upon entering the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s spectacular and wildly popular exhibition Jerusalem, 1000-1400: Every People Under Heaven, one encounters a curious map created by the Benedictine monk Matthew Paris in the 13th century (Figure 1). The map features a strange and compelling vision of medieval Jerusalem. It’s a colorful Jerusalem, a small, walled-off Jerusalem, and an entirely imaginary Jerusalem, as Paris, like so many of the visitors to the exhibition, had never set foot in the holy city.

Like the exhibition, Paris’ map invites viewers to partake in an imaginary pilgrimage. His map begins in London and ends in Jerusalem (while ours begins and ends on 5th Avenue). In a way, the map exists outside the bounds of time and space, as it seamlessly positions contemporary cityscapes alongside Biblical sites, such as the resting place of Noah’s Ark. By bringing together disparate objects and narratives, the exhibition achieves a similar effect, creating a cohesive whole that invites the viewer in.

The outsider’s view of Jerusalem presented in Paris’ map reflects the power of imagination to transform the identity of a place. His longed-for Jerusalem becomes equally palpable and real to audiences as the actual medieval city itself. This is a fact beautifully represented in the exhibition, where Jerusalem — the Jerusalem of the Jewish salutation “next year in Jerusalem” and of the old adage “Paradise longs for Jerusalem and Jerusalem longs for Paradise” — is present in the resplendent reliquaries, precious manuscripts, and ornate mosque lamps of the treasure trove of artifacts that the exhibition contains (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Map of the Holy Land, from the Chronica majora, vol. I, written and illustrated by Matthew Paris, St. Albans, England, ca. 1240–53. (Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC: http://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/viewexhibitionId=%7b3e2bd038-7aea-4779-9951-2974ca566d97e%7d&oid=652546&pkgids=372&pg=1&rpp=4&pos=1&ff=*; The Master and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge [MS 26])

Figure 2. Installation image, Jerusalem, 1000-1400: Every People Under Heaven. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City. (Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art: http://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2016/jerusalem/exhibition-galleries)