



Call for Papers

Female Spaces in the Medieval World

We invite proposals for papers to be presented at the international conference *Female Spaces in the Medieval World*, to be held at the University of Amsterdam on 2, 3 and 4 June 2027.



Master of the Legend of St. Catherine, Virgin, Child and Two Saints, XV c., Capilla Real de Granada

The conference, sponsored by the [Dutch Research School for Medieval Studies](#) and the [Amsterdam School of Historical Research](#), aims to reflect on the intersection between gender and space, and urban space more particularly, in the period between the 5th and the 16th centuries CE. Its conceptual core is the idea of 'female spaces' as spaces open to women (either predominantly or exclusively), shaped by women, and providing a collective mode of life in the form of communal living or other forms of shared activity. 'Female spaces' can be understood as referring to forms of monastic and semi-monastic living, court life, urban life, as well as the life of the household. 'Female spaces', however, are also related to women's cultural production and consumption, intersecting art and architectural history, book history, and the history of women's writing. Speakers will be asked to explore the tension between needs and aspirations, as well as the interplay of coercion and choice.

In the history of female monasticism in Christian societies, the Beguines movement, women's work, and the history of prostitution, a feminist perspective was instrumental in bringing the issue of space to the fore, already in the 1960s and 1970s. Scholarship, however, has often implicitly assumed the centrality of Christian forms of religion and devotion as an explanatory factor. In adopting a global approach to the 'medieval world', this conference intends to comparatively test questions around female spaces beyond Christian and European medieval contexts, including, for example, in Buddhist monasticism, in Islam, in Jewish communities or in Mongol female-led courts. The profound discontinuities introduced by the advent of the Reformation, the Catholic Reform and processes of secularisation, in Western Europe and in colonial contexts, transformed but did not eliminate the fundamental questions around female-dominated and gender-segregated spaces. The conferences will offer a pre-modern historical perspective on questions that continue to be important, politically controversial, and often deeply resonant with people's lived experience and aspirations in contemporary societies.

Proposals for 20-minute papers should include a **400-word abstract** and a **short profile of the applicant**, and be sent via email to Prof Serena Ferente at femalespacesconference@gmail.com, by **15 November 2026**. We strongly encourage proposals from PhD candidates and early-career researchers, as well as more established scholars. Selected speakers are expected to cover their own travel and accommodation expenses during the conference. Limited financial support is available, however; requests should be mentioned in the proposal and motivated.



Dutch Research School
for Medieval Studies