

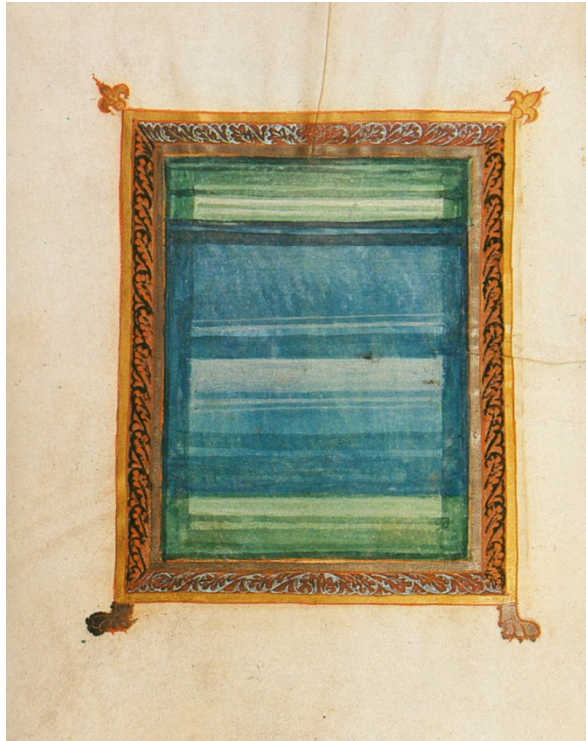
# AHIS 511: SEMINAR IN MEDIEVAL ART

## *LABOR, LUXURY, ABSTRACTION\**

Spring 2024

Thursday 2-4:50 PM (THH 308)

Professor Luke Fidler ([lfidler@usc.edu](mailto:lfidler@usc.edu))



*Gospels of St. Andrew of Cologne, end of 10<sup>th</sup> century. Darmstadt, Hessisches Landesmuseum, Inv.Nr.KG 54:213a, b, fol. 126v.*

**Course Description:** This course tracks the shifting relations between three concepts—labor, luxury, and abstraction—throughout the artistic production of the western Middle Ages from late antiquity to the sixteenth century. These terms were repeatedly redefined by profound shifts in the conditions of artistic labor, the changing semantics of materials, the rediscovery of Aristotelian philosophy, and the rise of the mendicant orders who condemned luxury and valorized communal work. Special attention will be paid to the role that medieval theories and practices of valuation played in shaping how artists crafted ambitious aesthetic objects and construed their meanings in a social field; interpreting the latter is a task that required medieval beholders to fashion new protocols for reading form. Drawing on such formulations, the course queries how art historians confront questions of exclusion, privation, and political economy in the visual record. In interrogating premodern art's contribution to the rise of the racial capitalism, we will test the resources of medieval, Marxist, and more recent abolitionist accounts of labor and value against a range of works in diverse media, from Lenten veils to deluxe manuscripts, many drawn from Los Angeles collections.

\*This course may be taken for VSGC (Visual Studies Graduate Certificate) credit.