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# The Dance of Death in the Middle Ages: Image, Text, Performance (STUDIES IN THE VISUAL CULTURES OF THE MIDDLE AGES)

*Elina Gertsman*

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**The Dance of Death in the Middle Ages: Image, Text, Performance (STUDIES IN THE VISUAL CULTURES OF THE MIDDLE AGES)** Elina Gertsman
**Medieval Academy of America's John Nicholas Brown prize for 2014**

**Winner of the ICMA-Samuel H. Kress Research Award 2009**

This book introduces readers to the texts and imagery of the Dance of Death, a subject that first emerged in western European art and literature in the late medieval era. Depicting a long procession of representatives of different classes and ages, seized by prancing skeletons, the Dance eloquently communicated the message of the inevitability of death and the futility of human ambition. The image was frequently accompanied by verses, written in the vernacular, which comprised a dialogue between Death and its victims. The volume inquires into the theological, socio-historic, literary, and artistic contexts of the Dance of Death, exploring it as a site of interaction between text, image, and beholder. The first part of the book outlines the structures of visual, textual, aural, pastoral, and performative discourses that informed the creation and reception of the Dance of Death images. The second part proposes different modes of viewing for four particular Dance of Death paintings, each of which-shaped by its artist, patron, local context, and local audience-offered the beholder an active, kinesthetic experience necessarily predicated on movement.

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