

Press release, 10 August 2017

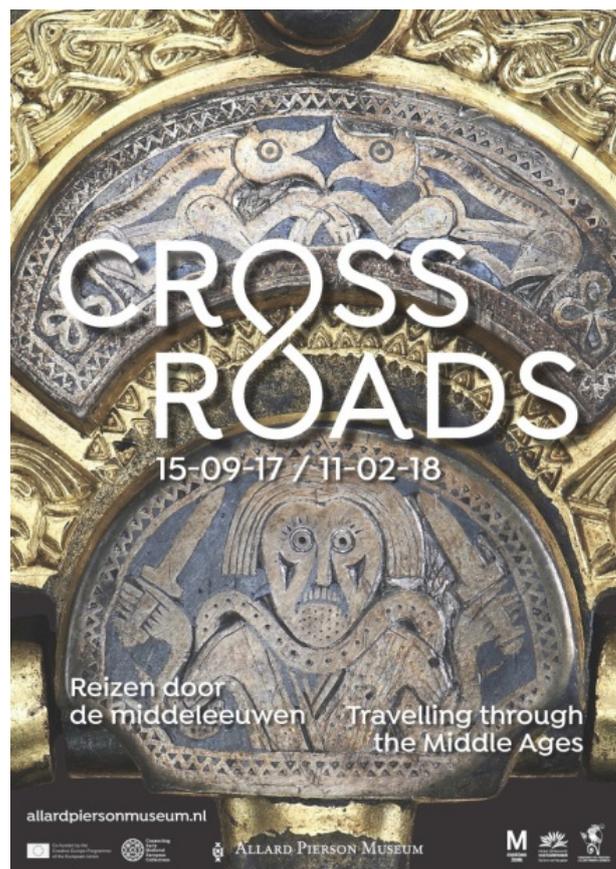
Cultural diversity in early-medieval Europe explored

*The **Crossroads** exhibition shows the early days of migration and cultural exchange in Europe*

From 15 September 2017 to 11 February 2018, the Allard Pierson Museum is hosting an exhibition entitled *Crossroads. Travelling through the Middle Ages*. The exhibition features a wide variety of unique objects from all over Europe, from the period popularly known as 'The Dark Ages'. *Crossroads* throws new light on this misconception, presenting a fascinating image of migration, contact and exchange – of the birth of Europe.

Identity and influence

In the Early Middle Ages, Europe was a place of great change and mobility. The influence of ancient civilisations continued to be felt, while at the same time, new religions from the Middle East began to take hold. After the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476, entire populations were on the move. This dynamism brought a huge amount of cultural exchange and diversity. The countless beautiful objects from every corner of the continent that can be seen in *Crossroads* are not only a testimony to the plural identity of Europe, but also to the mutual influence in different spheres: religious, cultural and material.



Visitors to the exhibition see objects ranging from an alluring Egyptian lady on a fragment of cloth from late antiquity, to a fierce Germanic god portrayed on a gilded buckle from a female grave of the Pannonian Avars. Early Christianity is represented by the cover of a sarcophagus from Syria. The sarcophagus, which has been digitally reconstructed, would have contained a saint. It was possible to pour oil into the sarcophagus, which became consecrated through contact with the bones, and was then collected. The change in religious ideas can be clearly seen in a Byzantine icon which has been painted over several times through the centuries. The Muslim Umayyad Caliphate in Spain is represented by a tenth-century diadem of gold and skilfully worked glass.

Themes and stories

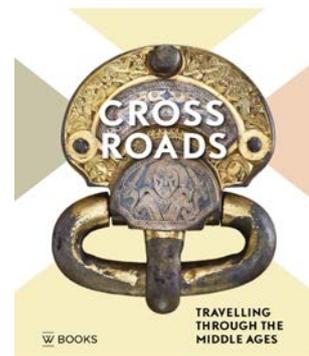
Crossroads uses eight themes to bring together top exhibits from leading collections of artefacts from the Early Middle Ages from museums in the Netherlands and beyond, including the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam, the LVR-LandesMuseum in Bonn, the Byzantine and Christian museum in Athens, the Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum in Budapest, the Museo de Jaén (Spain), the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels and the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden.

Early medieval travellers provide the connection between the themes and the objects. The travellers – actual historical figures – tell their story in an introductory film and the publication accompanying the exhibition, and feature throughout the exhibition itself. Digital applications provide more in-depth information: holographic boxes are used to add digital content to objects, and visitors can access a Cross Culture Timeline to focus on a particular object and request extra details.

Activities, publication

The museum is offering guided tours of the exhibition, as well as a range of lectures and symposia. More information about these will be published on www.allardpiersonmuseum.nl. A special route for families through the exhibition encourages dialogue between children and their accompanying adults (parents, grandparents, friends) on the objects shown.

The exhibition is accompanied by the lavishly illustrated book *Crossroads. Reizen door de middeleeuwen / Crossroads. Travelling through the Middle Ages*. Published by the Allard Pierson Museum in collaboration with WBOOKS, Zwolle. ISBN 97 89 46258 2231 (Dutch) and 97 89 46258 2248 (English). Price € 24.95.



CEMEC

The *CROSSROADS* exhibition is an initiative of the European CEMEC project. Following Amsterdam, *CROSSROADS* can be seen in the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens and the LVR-LandesMuseum in Bonn. For more information about CEMEC, see the following page.

Members of the press who would like to attend the opening evening on 14 September are kindly requested to contact Marleen Smit: marleen.smit@uva.nl and 020- 525 6042. Preview visits earlier in the week may also be arranged.

Allard Pierson Museum
Oude Turfmarkt 127, 1012 GC Amsterdam
www.allardpiersonmuseum.nl

Open: Tue–Fri 10:00–17:00, Sat–Sun 13:00–17:00

Note to the editor: For more information, interview requests and high-resolution image material, please contact Marleen Smit, Communications department, Allard Pierson Museum, marleen.smit@uva.nl and 020 525 6042.

CEMEC

Connecting Early Medieval European Collections (CEMEC) is an EU-funded cooperation project between universities, museums and technical partners. Its main goal is to create appealing and innovative presentations of objects from the Early Middle Ages collections of the participating cultural heritage institutions.

The cooperation concerns both the content and the presentation. The aim is to produce interesting exhibitions using advanced presentation techniques such as holographic projections, 3D models, sound effects and a Cross Cultural Timeline; techniques which are intended to contribute to providing a complete visitor experience.

CEMEC is funded by the EU Creative Europe Programme and coordinated by the University of Amsterdam / Allard Pierson Museum, Amsterdam. The *CROSSROADS* exhibition was made possible by CEMEC.

See also www.cemec-eu.net.

CEMEC partners

Allard Pierson Museum, Amsterdam / University of Amsterdam
LVR-LandesMuseum, Bonn / University of Bonn
Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum, Budapest / Eötvös Lóránd University, Budapest
Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens
Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche ITABC, Rome / Museo Nazionale dell'Alto Medioevo, Rome
University Institute of Iberian Archaeology, Jaén / Museo de Jaén
University College Dublin / National Museum of Ireland, Dublin
Ashmolean Museum, Oxford
Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen
Royal Museums of Art and History, Brussels
DEN Dutch knowledge centre for digital heritage and culture, The Hague
E.V.O.C.A., Rome
NoHo, Dublin
Fraunhofer-IGD, Munich
Moobels, Hilversum