

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT ENDOWMENT FUNDS

Faculty Research Fund

Award Date: Fall 2023

Proposal Title: Stuff, Sound, and Selling: Late Medieval and Early Modern Estate Inventories, Whistles, and Mercantile Fairs

Principal Investigator: Katherine Baker

ABSTRACT

In Art History, presence is a critical aspect of research. When working with objects, there is no substitute for touch, particularly when the items themselves were meant to be handled. For those who work with the archival, looking at documents is an exploration of both the material and immaterial – the concreteness of paper and ink, and the ephemeral nature of things and people from the past. Physical proximity often necessitates travel, and in my case I need to visit France and Spain to achieve my research goals. With the support of this grant, in the fall of 2024 I will complete three projects. The first is the transcription of five Parisian estate inventories from around the year 1500, all of which will be uploaded to the digital humanities project Documentary Archaeology of Late Medieval Europe (<https://dalme.org/>). For publication, I need high quality images and correct transcriptions, and I will be able to make sure I have both while in the Archives nationales - Paris. Also in the archives are a series of unpublished documents that relate to the annual mercantile event called the Lendit Fair. The records -- which list payments for booths made by participants between 1487 and 1579 -- will be the foundation of my second book. This study will explore the history, physical layout, and individuals involved in the fair during the period. The final project will take me to museums in both Paris and Madrid. In these collections, I will look at whistles in various media, including elaborately carved examples in ivory. Objects that cross into the realms of music, play, falconry, and even religious devotion through pilgrimage, whistles have rarely been examined in studies of late medieval and early modern material culture. I will be redressing this lack through an article about this enigmatic object-type.