Art of the Dark Ages Showing Merovingian artefacts in North American public and private collections


Early Middle Ages not particularly well represented to North American museum visitors

medieval studies in North America largely has a late chronological focus; popularity of period rooms and disdain for Byzantine as non-western primitive helped aid the overlooking of so called "Dark Age" material

fell in between chronological periods

early medieval objects not part of the national past in North American and therefore had no political meaning comment on how the situation is different in Europe but still insular in so far as French archaeologists work on French early medieval, etc.

interest in the medieval period in 19th/20th c NA came from Romantic trends as a reaction against industrialization and the moralistic values ascribed to the period

original emotional response to Middle Ages shifted from its role as progenitory of NA customs to its alterity

high medieval had the architectural component but early medieval did not

early medieval artefacts labeled as minor arts

not included in archaeological collections because they weren't classical nor in anthropological collections because they were European

short-lived popularity after 1931 exposition in Paris

change in attitude towards the acceptance of comprehensive medieval collection during first part of 20th century due largely to J. Pierpont Morgan dn MMA

*early medieval artefacts from Dordogne did not enjoy this shift of approval*

early medieval collections for the most part housed in art museums–emphasis on examples of stylistic development and not historical context

many of the pieces in NOth American catalogs lack data or provenance perhaps out of disconnect with the local/regional history

"a number of early medieval artefacts that entered European and North American collections in the early part of the century have later been shown to be partial or complete fabrications. These pieces were produced primarily to impress wealthy and inexperienced buyers with the lavishness of their materials." 103