

Mediterranean Research Focus Group of the IHC presents a lecture.

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"Zisa and Cuba: Gardens and the Image-Performative"

4:00-6:00, Thursday, 24 May 2007, Lobero Room, UCen, UCSB



The gardens and parks built by the twelfth-century Norman kings of Sicily in the environs of Palermo are famous because of the few partly ruined but strikingly magnificent pavilions such as the Zisa and the Cuba. These remnants of a landscape environment have been studied largely architecturally so that their roots and origins in Islamic building traditions have become clear. They have never been connected to the painted *muqarnas* ceiling of the Norman palatine chapel of the royal palace. This paper argues that these figures and scenes model the experience of the Norman pavilions and their landscapes as a *hapax*, a cultural enterprise brought from another context -- the Islamic world. There it possessed a unique status as an evocation of a sacred realm of sensual delight.

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