

In most societies, the night is associated with danger, criminality, the liminal, or death, and pre-modern Europe is no exception – on the contrary, its image is embedded in the romanticized view of an age that feared the end of day. Despite abundant research on this side of darkness, there was another, less obvious attitude towards the night which has seen much less scholarly attention yet: nocturnal activities that were cherished, sought after, or thought only possible during night-time. This conference looks for such positive sides of night: The search for the relics of saints, the night-time prayers, the pursuit of astronomy or other sciences at the foot of a candlestick, or social events that took place when the labors of the day were over. In short, we ask for the bright side of night in medieval and early modern times.

Based on different methodological approaches, empirical evidence, temporal and spatial circumstances, the papers will discuss individual aspects. Their common aim is to focus on the night as enabler, as a positive time of day, offering chances and possibilities that a sun-lit workday could not provide. In doing so, we want to open up the view towards our own perception of night, and it might well be that the bright nights of modern megacities of our age turn out only to be the electrified answers to the dreams of the pre-modern world.

Contact & registration | [vitus.huber@unige.ch](mailto:vitus.huber@unige.ch)

Please register by 7 June.

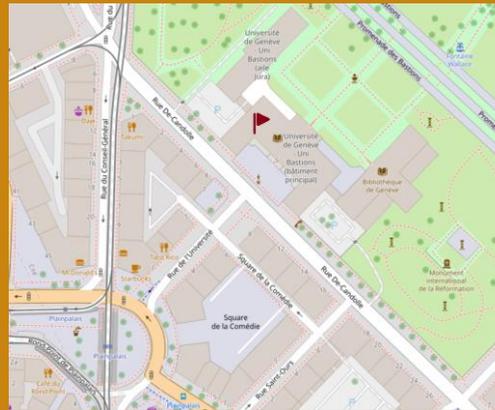
## Organisation

Dr. Vitus Huber  
University of Geneva

Prof. Dr. Romedio Schmitz-Esser  
Heidelberg University

Dr. Maria Weber  
University of Munich

Venue | Bastions B002, University of Geneva



## Credits

Steen, Jan Havicksz (1626-1679): L'as de coeur – Ace of Heart. National Museum Stockholm

The conference is sponsored by



# The Bright Side of Night



## Nocturnal Activities in Medieval and Early Modern Times

University of Geneva, 10–11 June 2022

## Friday, 10 June 2022

9:00-9:30

Toward a Positive Perspective on Nocturnal Activities. An Introduction  
Vitus Huber (University of Geneva)

### Session 1 Temporality and Creativity

Chair: Loraine Chappuis (University of Geneva)

9:30-10:15

Why the Monks Do Not Sleep (or Sleep so Little) at Night  
Jean-Claude Schmitt (EHESS Paris)

10:15-11:00

Vigilant Throughout the Night. The Watchman in Medieval Spiritual Poetry  
Agnes Rugel (University of Munich)

### Coffee break

11:15-12:00

Artists in the Night  
Chiara Franceschini (University of Munich)

### Lunch

### Session 2 Materiality and Lighting

Chair: Claire Gantet (University of Fribourg)

13:45-14:30

Before the Bright Night. Methods and Materialities of Urban Lighting in Premodern Europe  
Maria Weber (University of Munich)

14:30-15:15

Illuminated Night. The Development of Street Lighting and Nighttime Activities in the 18th Century  
Sophie Reculin (University of Lille)

### Coffee break

### Session 3 Freedom and Order

Chair: Karine Crousaz (University of Lausanne)

15:45-16:30

Freedom, Religion, and Sugar. Nocturnality's Promise in the Early Modern Caribbean  
Adrian van der Velde (University of Illinois)

16:30-17:15

The Regulated Night. The Construction of a Nocturnal Public Order in the 18th Century  
Marco Cicchini (University of Geneva)

### Break

18:00-19:30

### Keynote

Chair: Andreas Würigler (University of Geneva)

Whose Night? Contested Nocturnal Activities in Medieval and Early Modern Times  
Craig Koslofsky (University of Illinois)

### Dinner

## Saturday, 11 June 2022

### Session 4 Sleeping Spaces

Chair: Constance Carta (University of Geneva)

9:00-9:45

Soporific Tonics and Early Modern Recipes  
Sasha Handley (University of Manchester)

9:45-10:30

The Agency of Beds  
Ilaria Hoppe (Private Catholic University Linz)

### Coffee break

### Session 5 Spirituality

Chair: Mathieu Caesar (University of Geneva)

10:45-11:30

'Ea vero nocte hiltegart...' Nocturnal Activities and the Dead  
Romedio Schmitz-Esser (Heidelberg University)

11:30-12:15

The Sleeper's Creative Night: Nocturnal Visions, Dreams and Thoughts in the 13th Century  
Anne-Lydie Dubois (University of Geneva)

12:15-13:00

Final Discussion