A Polymorphic Deconstruction of the Bishop’s Eye of Lincoln Cathedral
According to the Optical Theory of Robert Grosseteste
Noé Badillo, University of Arizona
10:15-10:45

Abstract

Two large circular stained glass windows flank the transept of Lincoln Cathedral. The north window is known as the Dean’s Eye. On the south is the Bishop’s Eye, directly across the churchyard from the bishop’s palace, where Robert Grosseteste resided during his tenure, and conducted research into theology, philosophy, and optical science. This paper provides an analysis of the Bishop’s Eye according to the epistemic rigors of Deconstructionist philosophy. First by providing a system of binary oppositions interpreted within the formal and visual structure of the window as an aesthetic language and vocabulary, and second by providing an understanding that is revealed once these diametrical elements are broken down. The opposition of Light/dark may be decomposed to reveal the essential beauty in the corpuscular beams of illumination that pass through the window and trace the floor of the church with their visual language. Corporeality/immateriality, as in the philosophy of Grosseteste represents the substantial, yet metasensorial nature of light. Temporality/atemporality is the perception of light through the window within and beyond the structural sphere. The cognitive/precognitive opposition is syntactically deconstructed within the geometry of syllogistics to reveal the Trinitarian form of the window’s tracery. Grosseteste’s philosophy of light and optics are employed along with the science of language and aesthetics to bring forth a new understanding of the Bishop’s Eye of Lincoln Cathedral.
Speaker Bio

Noé Badillo holds an MA in art history and a BFA in studio art from the University of Arizona. He is a scholar of architectural history and theory, and focuses primarily on the intersection between architecture, optical theory, and the philosophy of science. The paper he is presenting follows a forthcoming publication entitled “Robert Grosseteste and the Phenomenological Nature of Geometry and Light” in Bishop Robert Grosseteste and Lincoln Cathedral: Tracing Relationships between Medieval Concepts of Order and Built Form, ed. John Hendrix, Nicholas Temple and Christian Frost (Surrey: Ashgate, 2014). He is currently writing another paper, contrasting Grosseteste’s cosmogony with Georges Lemaître’s proposal of the Big Bang. He is currently an adjunct professor at Pima Community College in Tucson, Arizona.