Step by Step Towards the Sacred (Brno, 16-17 May 18)

Hans Belting Library, Brno, Czech Republic, May 16–17, 2018
Deadline: Feb 25, 2018

Veronika Tvrzníková

Step by Step towards the Sacred
Ritual, Movement and Images in the Middle Ages

Organizers:
Veronika Tvrzníková, Masaryk University in Brno
Martin Lešák, Masaryk University in Brno and Université de Poitiers

The conference aims to reflect on the ways medieval images – ranging from Late Antiquity to the 14th century and across wide span of media – were comprehended and activated through the motions of participants in diverse religious rituals. At the core of these reflections is the moving body, whether individual or collective, which enters into dialogue with the surrounding space (architectural or urban), objects and images, thus awaking their sacred potentiality through each and every step.

Within its scope, the conference falls into the long-term and widespread interest of art historians in the liturgical function of medieval architecture and other visual elements forming part of the rituals. At the same time, it is embedded in the beholder-centered approaches concentrating on perception and reception of objects of art – such as Ernst Gombrich's psychological approach and Alexei Lidov's hierotopy – hinted at already in the ideas of Pavel Florensky in 1922 and resulting in the so-called sensorial turn in medieval studies. Shifting the focus towards the essential importance of movement within medieval religious rites, however, the perception and understanding of the sacred in the course of liturgy and other rituals will be approached through the physical experience of the human bodies participating in them.

Paper topics may address, but are by no means limited to such issues as:
- Dialogue between movement in the architectural or urban space and objects, liturgical furnishings, vestments, vessels, etc. used in the medieval rituals, liturgy, or stational liturgy.
- Perception of medieval liturgical objects through the moving body (individual or collective, e.g. within religious processions).
- Instructions or schemes that advised the viewers how to perceive (sacred) images in a given ritualized context.
- Physical movement of both humans and images (e.g. by displaying or carrying) within the rituals as a means to reach an (emotionally) moving state of mind, some sort of spiritual elevation or even an encounter with the sacred itself.

The conference is intended primarily for Ph.D. and postdoctoral students in art history, but also in other academic fields, such as anthropology, religious studies, etc. It aims to explore future perspectives on the above-mentioned topics in an innovative way and to lay down the foundations for further cooperation between researchers coming from diverse academic backgrounds.

The organization will provide accommodations for all participants; additionally, partial funding is available to support travel expenses and will be dealt with individually.

Proposals of around 250–350 words, accompanied by a short CV, should be submitted by 25 February 2018 to: tvrznikova.v@gmail.com and lesakmartin1@gmail.com.

Reference:

CFP: Step by Step Towards the Sacred (Brno, 16-17 May 18). In: ArtHist.net, Jan 17, 2018 (accessed Nov 24, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/17123>.