Materiality and Conversion (Brno, 30 Nov–1 Dec 20)

Brno, Czech Republic, Nov 30–Dec 1, 2020
Deadline: May 31, 2020

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Materiality and Conversion: The Role of Material and Visual Cultures in the Christianization of the Latin West

organized by the Center for Early Medieval Studies
Department of Art History, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic

This workshop, the first of three interdisciplinary encounters, will assess the material and visual cultures involved into the complex yet extremely efficacious process of the "conversion" of the Roman Empire to Christianity during Late Antiquity: in less than 150 years, most of the population in the Mediterranean area was Christianized. We are interested in new perspective regarding all possible tangible aspects of this "conversion" (images, objects, architecture, liturgical furnishings, clothing, etc.), which should be reconsidered within the frame of the main question of the workshop: "What was the role of material and visual cultures during this rapid religious and social change?"

Since we are aiming at promoting an interdisciplinary discussion on the theme, paper proposals from fields such as archaeology, anthropology, religious studies, art history, sociology, etc. are especially welcome. The participants of the workshop will be given a unique opportunity to connect expertise from different fields, with the aim of encouraging deeper interactions and transfer of knowledge between humanities while having in mind a common and specific question.

We are open to questions such as (but not limited to):
- To what extent were initiatory spaces and objects present in public and everyday life in Late Antique society?
- How did the appearance of religious agents contribute to the potency of a complex ritual environment?
- What were the similarities and differences between Christian and other initiatory ritual spaces, and how were they created and perceived?
- What role did less visible material elements, such as fragrance, touch, or sound play in the initiatory rituals accompanying catechumens, in addition to images?
- How were the immaterial and ephemeral elements used in the process of conversion reflected in materiality, and vice versa?
- What are the limits and benefits of archaeological and hard-scientific approaches in the process of understanding (and interpreting) the preserved material culture?
- How are the liminal notions of death, resurrection, and re-birth mirrored in the material and imma-

terial elements involved in the process of conversion?
- Can we indicate comparable mechanisms or similar powers of material and visual culture in contemporary society?

We would like to kindly ask you to confirm your interest as soon as possible and send us your paper proposals by May 30, 2020.

The organization will provide room and board for all participants; additionally, partial funding is available for the reimbursement of travel expenses.

Should you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate and contact us directly:
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Reference:

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