

## Sacrality, Materiality and Early Modern Globalization (Zurich, 21 Sep–14 Dec 22)

University of Zurich, Rämistrasse 59, 8001 Zurich, Auditorium RAA-G-15, Sep 21–Dec 14, 2022

Nora Guggenbühler, Kunsthistorisches Institut Zürich

Public Lecture Series "Institute Colloquium": Negotiations of Sacrality and Materiality in the Early Modern Globalized World.

Organized by Raphaële Preisinger and Nora Guggenbühler

The establishment of maritime trade routes between continents and the circulation of persons and commodities it initiated have shaped our perception of the early modern period as 'the first globalized age'. While goods circulated widely in separate zones of interaction as early as the thirteenth century, the trade across distances came significantly closer to being truly globe-encompassing when a Spanish colonial outpost was established in the Philippines in 1572. Trade routes such as the Portuguese India fleet, the maritime route proceeding from Spain to Veracruz on the Gulf of Mexico, and the route connecting Acapulco on the Pacific coast with Manila made early modern circulations almost global in the contemporary sense of the term.

In the early modern era, the transcontinental itineraries of people, materials and artifacts challenged conceptions of sacrality and materiality around the globe. While colonialism often provided the framework for the encounter between cultures, notions of sacrality and materiality became the object of long-lasting processes of negotiation wherever different traditions met. Those in positions of power defined what was to be considered sacred, but centuries-old local traditions continued shaping perceptions and rituals, often unnoticed. The introduction of material objects in new geographical and cultural contexts led to shifts in these objects' functions, while the aesthetic qualities of rare or precious materials from afar were intensely explored and exploited.

Questions to be considered in this lecture series include:

How were notions of sacrality misunderstood, challenged, or violently extirpated as a consequence of intercultural encounters?

How did newly introduced objects and materials shape the perception and imagination of those confronted with them?

And how did objects which emerged from transcontinental circulations contribute to shaping new cultural identities?

---

Program

Wednesday, 21st September

Wendy Shaw (Freie Universität Berlin)

"The European 'Bilderverbot': Jews, Muslims and the Prohibition that Never Was"

Thursday, 6th October

Aaron M. Hyman (Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore)

"Letterform Literacy, or Seeing Script in Sixteenth-Century New Spain"

Wednesday, 2nd November

Samuel Luterbacher (Occidental College, Los Angeles)

"Smooth and Seamless: Export Lacquerware and the Sacred Image across Two Oceans"

Wednesday, 16th November

Anatole Upart (Royal Society of Arts, London)

"Antemurale Christianitatis: Early Modern Italian Engagement with Eastern Christianity"

Wednesday, 23rd November

Bat-ami Artzi (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer-Sheva)

"The Death of the Inca and the Martyrdom of a Missionary (Vilcabamba 1571): a Chronicle of Clashing Interests and Cultural Misunderstandings"

Wednesday, 30th November

Gabriela Siracusano (Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero/CONICET, Argentina)

"Hidden Material Traces of Sacred Andean Spaces within the Viceroyalty of Peru"

Wednesday, 14th December

Thomas B.F. Cummins (Harvard University, Cambridge)

"The Sacred Materials of America and their Transformations in Colonial Mexico and Peru: Obsidian, Wood, and Cloth"

All lectures take place at 18.15-20h in Hörsaal RAA G-15, at Rämistrasse 59 in Zurich.

The lecture series is open to all, registration is not necessary. For further information, see: <https://www.khist.uzh.ch/de/institut/staff/assistantprofessors/preisinger/activities/coll.html>

Reference:

ANN: Sacrality, Materiality and Early Modern Globalization (Zurich, 21 Sep-14 Dec 22). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 26, 2022 (accessed Jan 18, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/37475>>.