

**CALL FOR
PAPERS**
for workshop

materiality and conversion



*The Role of Material
and Visual Cultures in
the Christianization of
the Latin West*

Brno
Hans Belting Library
30/11—1/12 2020

materiality and conversion

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

The Christianization of the Roman Empire has no parallel in European history: in less than 150 years, the vast majority of the population in the Mediterranean area was Christianized. We believe—and this is the key hypothesis of this workshop—that a decisive role in this mass phenomenon was played by initiatory rituals and their material and immaterial elements, used in catechetical preparation, the very experience of baptism, and postbaptismal indoctrination. These were complex and multisensory processes created by movements, architecture, sounds, smells, touch, images, words and the mindsets of all participants.

The goal of this workshop is to advance and broaden our knowledge about *the role of material and visual cultures during this rapid religious and social change*. The main enquiry we wish to reassess is how these elements—especially architecture, various images, objects, and specific ritual performances—contributed to the process of conversion.

Besides this, 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 immaterial elements involved in the process of conversion?
- » Can we indicate comparable mechanisms or similar powers of material and visual culture in contemporary society?

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

We kindly ask you to confirm your interest in attending as soon as possible. Paper proposals of no more than one page can then be submitted *until 30 May 2020* to:

Klára Doležalová

dolezalova.klara@gmail.com

Katarína Kravčíková

kravcikova.katarina@gmail.com

Pavla Tichá

pavla.ticha@phil.muni.cz