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Religious Art and Power

Contestations and Affirmations

BUDAPEST, HUNGARY | OCTOBER 17-19, 2024

Religious Art and Power

Contestations and Affirmations

As art and religiosity interlace culture and society, religious art has traditionally been a hub of social reflections. As a field of creativity, intuitive expression, professionalism, communication, and even social agency, religious art can appear in any form of performative activity and can be studied “through the prism of the genre,” as Leonard Primiano once wrote, the genre architecture, dress, photographs, artifacts, narratives, bodily communication, dance, music or song.

Artistic creativity and expressions of vernacular religiosity incorporate a reflection on power, be it affirmative and legitimizing or critical and resistant. Besides examining the power of institutions and their role in bestowing, legitimizing, and subverting social and spiritual power, the 2024 conference also encourages attendees to look at how power, authority, and agency play out at the vernacular level.

As religion and power have a complex relationship and interaction, religious art – whether on the level of the individual, the religious community, or society at large – also targets several contemporary issues of “mundane” power (climate change, crises, war, migration, social discrimination, and others). However, art is not only a tool for expressing a critical position and commentary on social, cultural, and political power, but it can also appear as an agent to shape and affirm it.

At our conference, presenters will have 20 minutes to hold their lecture, followed by a 10-minute debate. If one exceeds the given time limit, the excess time will be deducted from the debate time, ensuring all presenters have an equal opportunity to share their work. Five minutes before the end of the presentation, the panel organizer will remind the presenter about the remaining time, respecting your contribution and the audience’s time.

VENUE:

HUNGARIAN ACADEMY
OF ARTS RESEARCH
INSTITUTE OF ART THEORY
AND METHODOLOGY

ADDRESS:

1121 Budapest,
38, Budakeszi street
(Villa Hild)

SCIENTIFIC & ORGANIZING COMMITTEE:

VICTORIA HEGNER ■
CLARA SARAIVA ■
KINGA POVEDÁK ■
ALESSANDRO TESTA ■
THORSTEN WETTICH ■
LÁSZLÓ KOPPÁNY CSÁJI ■
MÁRK NEMES ■

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

DAY 1 | 17th of October

- 14:00 – 15:00 Registration
- 15:00 – 15:30 Welcome Addresses
- 15:30 – 17:00 **SESSION 1**
Theoretical Insights
- 17:00 – 17:15 Coffee Break
- 17:15 – 18:00 **ROUNDTABLE**
Religion and Power Project
(Tobias Köllner, Eva-Maria Euchner, Alessandro Testa)
- 18:00 – 19:00 **Reception and Book Launch Session**
(Charting New Territory – Book Launch panel)

DAY 2 | 18th of October

- 11:00 – 11:30 Coffee Break
- 11:30 – 13:00 **SESSION 2**
New Religious Movements
- 13:00 – 14:30 Lunch Break
- 14:30 – 16:00 **SESSION 3**
Ritual Arts and Performative Practices I.
- 16:00 – 16:30 Coffee Break
- 16:30 – 18:00 **SESSION 4**
Ritual Arts and Performative Practices II.
- 18:00 – 22:00 Group Dinner

DAY 3 | 19th of October

- 9:30 – 11:00 **SESSION 5**
Contemporary Art, Gender and Politics
- 11:00 – 11:30 Coffee Break
- 11:30 – 13:30 **SESSION 6**
Sensory Religion
- 13:30 – 14:00 Sandwich Lunch
- 14:00 – 17:00 **Group Excursion**
- 17:00 – 19:00 **Closing Ceremony & Dinner**
- 19:00 – 19:30 **Return to Villa Hild**

SESSIONS

SESSION 1 | 17/10/2024 15:30 – 17:00

THEORETICAL INSIGHTS

15:30 – 16:00

ÁKOS WINDHAGER

Hungarian Academy of Arts Research Institute of Art Theory and Methodology

**The Holy Fool as the Artistic Truth-Teller
of Political Discourse**

16:00 – 16:30

THORSTEN WETTICH

University of Bremen

Ambiguity Tolerance-Intolerance

16:30 – 17:00

LAURA IANCU

HUN-REN Research Institute of Ethnology, member of Hungarian Academy of Arts

Faith And Power in Verbal Art

SESSION 2 | 18/10/2024 11:30 – 13:00

NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

11:30 – 12:00

LÁSZLÓ KOPPÁNY CSÁJI

Hungarian Academy of Arts Research Institute of Art Theory and Methodology

**Dimensions of Power in the Religious Art (Songs and Memes)
of a Hungarian New Religious Movement**

12:00 – 12:30

MÁRK NEMES

Hungarian Academy of Arts Research Institute of Art Theory and Methodology

**Agency & Power Through Artistic Production – Case Study
of the Italian Damanhur Community**

12:30 – 13:00

ACCURSIO GRAFFEO

DREST – University of Modena and Reggio Emilia University of Turin

**Religion, Technology, and AI: The Art of Power
or the Power of Art?**

SESSION 3 | 18/10/2024 14:30 – 16:00

RITUAL ARTS AND PERFORMATIVE PRACTICES I.

14:30 – 15:00

ALFONSINA BELLIO

École Pratique des Hautes Études-PSL

**In the Shadow of Pupazze in Flower:
Religion, Gender, Politics**

15:00 – 15:30

KAMILA BARANIECKA-OLSZEWSKA

Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Polish Academy of Sciences

**How to Talk About Medieval Times: The Role of Religious Art
in Representing the Christianization of Western Pomerania**

15:30 – 16:00

VIDISHA BAGUL

Indian Institute of Technology

**Ritual Performance and Social Order: A Performance
Ethnography of Somvati Amavasya in Jejuri, Maharashtra**

SESSION 4 | 18/10/2024 16:30 – 18:00

RITUAL ARTS AND PERFORMATIVE PRACTICES II.

- 16:30 – 17:00** **ANNA MÁRIA BÓLYA**
Hungarian Academy of Arts Research Institute of Art Theory and Methodology
Chain Dance as a Societal Phenomenon
- 17:00 – 17:30** **ISTVÁN POVEDÁK**
Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design
The Politics of the “Roma Pilgrimage” of Csatka
- 17:30 – 18:00** **ZOLTÁN KÖRÖSVÖLGYI**
Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music
Protective Religious Art Today

SESSION 5 | 19/10/2024 11:30 – 13:00

CONTEMPORARY ART, GENDER AND POLITICS

- 9:30 – 10:00** **KINGA POVEDÁK**
HUN-REN-SZTE ‘Convivence’ Research Group & Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, University of Szeged
Harmonizing Faith and Power: Christian Popular Music in Hungary
- 10:00 – 10:30** **VICTORIA HEGNER**
Georg-August-Universität Göttingen
Performing Shekinah – The Ritual Art of Playfully Contesting Gender and Ecological Regimes in Contemporary Judaism (online contribution)
- 10:30 – 11:00** **MARIO KATIĆ**
Department of Ethnology and Anthropology, University of Zadar
Performance of Mirila as an Expression of the Power of Art

SESSION 6 | 19/10/2024 13:30 – 15:00

SENSORY RELIGION

- 11:30 – 12:00** **CLARA SARAIVA**
Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon
Funerary Art: Religion, Power and Contestation in the Era of QR Codes and Digital Ghosts
- 12:00 – 12:30** **TÜNDE KOMÁROMI**
Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary
Touching the Icon – Moving the Icon: Affirmations of Power in Nicula
- 12:30 – 13:30** **DÓRA PATARICZA**
Szeged Jewish Community’s Archive
ÁGNES IVETT OSZKÓ
Hungarian Museum of Architecture and Monument Protection Documentation Center
Sacred Power and Architectural Grandeur: The New Synagogue of Szeged

ABSTRACTS

SESSION 1 | 17/10/2024 15:30 - 17:00

THEORETICAL INSIGHTS

ÁKOS WINDHAGER

The Holy Fool as the Artistic Truth-Teller of Political Discourse: The “Clown” Character in the Oeuvres of Zoltán Kodály and Dmitry Shostakovich

Both Zoltán Kodály and Dmitry Shostakovich have composed works that include the clown archetype. This figure typically represents the artist's self-portrait or the revered fool, known as the slavonic yurodivy. The structural modifications in premodern public communication raised the importance of the fool's persona because of their heightened function as an intermediary of information. Within the Romantic character inventory, the holy fool possesses the ability to discern and convey the truth, and he is the one individual who possesses this knowledge. He, therefore, takes on the role of an advocate for different societal strata and serves as a lone voice in public conversation. The effectiveness of his communication lies in its dual code: it may be perceived by the ruler (or the people) as “profound wisdom” or dismissed as “foolish talk”. The earliest famous example of a Romantic yurodivy is the court jester in Alexandr Pushkin's Boris Godunov, who appears to talk openly and honestly about the ruler. The fool's speech is devoid of peril, as seen in Pushkin's play when he grows inclined towards self-destruction. Kodály's artistic creed demonstrates his engagement with the yurodivy-story. “There exist two distinct categories of artists: the prophet, who possesses profound insight and foresight, and the fool, who lacks wisdom and judgment.” We are acquainted with his prophetic expressions through his writings, such as Psalmus Hungaricus, Jesus and the Traders, and The Oath of Zrínyi. However, what about the fool? How does the presence of the “yurodivy” character become evident in Kodály's body of work? The research compares private notes, letters, and contemporary remarks with other artworks like Hány János, Mátra Pictures, and Concerto for Orchestra. The perspective surfaced in the 1970s about Dmitry Shostakovich suggests that his music is an artistic representation of contemporary yurodivy behavior. While this interpretation has popularity and appears to be backed by the grotesque features in his art, it gives rise to several inquiries. Examining the works of both writers shows the presence of the “Emperor's New Clothes” ars poetica in both its mythical and mythicized variations.

THORSTEN WETTICH

Ambiguity Tolerance-Intolerance

Ambiguity tolerance-intolerance is a psychological construct originally formulated by Else Frenkel-Brunswik in a research project on ethnocentrism (1949), further developed in a study on the authoritarian personality (1950). It will be used in this presentation to analyze some recent and historical developments in the perception of religious art. The concept of ambiguity tolerance-intolerance serves to define and measure individual perceptions of ambiguous, that is, inconclusive, situations. It has been picked up by Thomas Bauer to research the history of tolerance towards ambiguous situations in Middle-Eastern cultures largely defined by Islamic culture (2011). Bauer found that tolerance for ambiguity was widespread in medieval and early modern Muslim societies, especially in religious literature. According to Bauer, this tolerance was decreased in the 19th century under the influence of European imperialism. Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* (1988) and the caricatures of Muhammed (2005) are younger examples of art with religious connections that have been perceived very controversially. The reactions to the two examples can be measured according to the psychological achievement of integration of ambiguous stimuli with fundamentalism and bigotry as examples on the intolerant end of the spectrum. The paper attempts to read recent debates on conspiracy theories, racism, antisemitism, and wokeness in the realm of art with religious connotations against the theory of ambiguity tolerance-intolerance and its sociological and anthropological dimensions.

LAURA IANCU

Faith and Power in Verbal Art

The question of the relationship between religious art and power can also be approached by saying that religious art is a work of folk poetry (e.g. an oral, artistic expression, an artistically valid narrative, a prayer, etc.), and power is the basis of religious devotion: the supernatural power (God). This relationship, at the level of the individual or at the level of the lived faith or vernacular religion, from the point of view of the phenomenology of religion or psychology of religion, precedes the relationship of power between religious institutions (e.g. the church, the church art, etc.) and the various secular powers (e.g. politics). Hence, speaking about at least two types of power or relations and relationships seems necessary. In the case of one type, the relationship is between the individual (and his artistic manifestations) and God (and his power); in the case of the second type, the relationship is between the institution (the church) and the secular power. Of course, this distinction is artificial; we do not claim that there are unrelated, pure types of relationships. The necessity of distinguishing between the two levels, the two relations, is that it sheds light on the fact that one power relation (religion/church – power) derives its source of legitimation from the other (individual faith – the power of God), and light on the fact that, despite this, so little attention is paid in scholarship to the otherwise (truly elusive) relationship between faith and (divine) power. In my presentation, through examples of verbal and artistic expressions of vernacular religion collected in recent fieldwork, I will attempt to illustrate the relationship between the individual and divine power, with particular attention to the artistic specificity of verbal expressions distinct from everyday language.

SESSION 2 | 18/10/2024 11:30 - 13:00
NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

LÁSZLÓ KOPPÁNY CSÁJI

Dimensions of Power in the Religious Art (Songs and Memes) of a Hungarian New Religious Movement

I analyze the power mechanism in a new religious movement established in Romania in 2008 and spread across Hungary, Serbia, and Slovakia since then. The founder is a Hungarian charismatic leader (a folk prophet) who had the central power in the movement, but the group's vernacular authority (according to Robert Glenn Howard's term) shapes his will. The supposed 'divine power,' the 'political power(s)' of the states (countries) and the EU, also appears in the religious songs and memes as an implicit or explicit reference. I outline the discourse space of the group, considering the dimensions of power(s). Religious art is not only a representation of the group or results of individual creativity but also a tool for reflecting on the endeavors of power(s). How does this system of relations (affirmations and rejections articulated by art) appear in the artworks? I use the hybrid method of network analysis, discourse theory, cognitive semantics, and the anthropology of art when I seek an answer. The movement's discursive religious field does not seem to have a homogeneous and ultimate frame but rather a dynamic scene of personal activities based on status, core values, and relevant narratives. Art can also be considered a complex phenomenon: a result of individual creativity, the community's discourse (their habitus – according to Pierre Bourdieu's term), the communicative reactions to their social environment, and the interactive platform of common emotional experiences. Based on my anthropological fieldwork, I set up a model of power relations that can be applied to other contemporary religious groups.

MÁRK NEMES

Agency & Power Through Artistic Production: Case Study of the Italian Damanhur Community

Since the late 1960s, new religious movements have continuously offered new and alternative ways to re-attain agency, power, and individuality and ultimately achieve more direct contact with the "wholly Other" for those involved. Of these alternative ways, creative expression has played a vital role. It allowed the involved to strengthen their individuality while maintaining connections to something greater than themselves. It also offered a more "personal" connection to transcendence, establishing an *intimate* and, more importantly, *intense* relationship with the *Other*. These artistic productions – like religiously inspired paintings, performative dances, classical and slam poetry, architectural innovation and output, sculpture-making, metalworking, and many more – underline several critical themes. Besides offering ways of expressing individuality and

agency, these activities also create an environment where dialogue about power – both within the community and about “outsiders,” as well as about *ultimate power* – may be initiated. My presentation will provide valuable insights into one such movement, where artistic production has a crucial role and shapes the community even today. Founded in 1975 by Oberto Airaudi, the Italian Damanhur commune is one of Europe’s biggest, still-standing New Age movements. Their Underground Temple, living quarters, and communal spaces are highly decorated with the followers’ creative production (etc.). Since the founder’s death, the artistic of religious life has gained a higher significance and even seeped into communal decision-making and internal political, ethical, and social ruling. Based on a fieldwork period in early 2024, my lecture will discuss this internal dynamism, focusing explicitly on the relations between the two and how Damanhurians gain, maintain, transfer, and transform power through art.

ACCURSIO GRAFFEO

Religion, Technology, and AI: The Art of Power or the Power of Art?

What is an AI-focused New Religious Movement (NRM), and how can it be related to art and power? An NRM is a group expressing alternative beliefs to mainstream religious views. It’s led by individuals with charismatic authority and is predominantly first-generation. This essay will compare two of the main movements focused on AI and technology: Turing Church and Theta Noir. Giulio Prisco, the founder of Turing Church, describes himself as a writer, futurist, cosmist, and extropian on his social media. Although Prisco does not consider the Turing Church a religion, scholars classify it as such. In his conception of mankind’s future, even in an eschatological sense, technology and religion exist within a cosmic and transhumanist perspective: “I am persuaded that we will go to the stars and find Gods [extra-terrestrial intelligence], build Gods [AI], become Gods, and resurrect the dead from the past with advanced, space-time engineering and ‘time magic.’” This perspective appears to have significant potential power. Theta Noir’s belief combines art and religion with AI in a unique way. Theta Noir is a well-defined and studied artistic operation that includes aesthetics, philosophical foundations, and ritualization, with the aim to integrate religion, AI, and art for a metaphysical revalue of specific aspects of human intelligence. Unlike human intelligence, AI cannot be considered artificial or intelligent in a bi-logical way. While human intelligence is enhanced by art, which breaks the barriers of singular logic, some technologies, such as AI, lack this creative element. Both the ‘technological’ Turing Church and the ‘artistic’ Theta Noir highlight the power of narratives related to AI and technology, with a focus on religion: “Our AI gods are, therefore, already here, embedded in the way in which we tell stories about our technology.”

SESSION 3 | 18/10/2024 14:30 - 16:00

RITUAL ARTS AND PERFORMATIVE PRACTICES I.

ALFONSINA BELLIO**In the Shadow of Pupazze in Flower:
Religion, Gender, Politics**

In the 'grecanica' - a Greek-speaking - region of Calabria, and in Bova to be precise, Palm Sunday is characterized by anthropomorphic female plant statues, known as *pupazze*, which here represent the centerpiece of the celebration at the start of Holy Week. In the agro-pastoral society of the past, and up until the 1960s, these very special Palms were prepared by young engaged couples and offered to their promised brides as part of an important village dynamic. Blessed during the Palm Sunday mass, once the ceremony was over, the whole community would get together to dismember the plant statues, which were then shared, and everyone went home with branches to protect their homes and fields for the year. The preparation of the *pupazze* had almost disappeared and was recently taken over by a cultural association set up to promote the 'grecanico' heritage. Strongly contested and shaped by the ecclesiastical authorities, banned at one point, this practice and its history are now becoming an interesting observatory of divergent forms of religion, those that emerge or develop in opposition to established forms. Between the symbolic fabrication of gender, the political dimension, and the struggles between opposing regimes of power, this paper will explore the question of an ethnographic and religious 'object' that assumes the value of an artistic performance at the center of media interest. In this village, which was almost deserted twenty years ago, the *pupazze* evokes crucial cultural heritage dynamics.

KAMILA BARANIECKA-OLSZEWSKA**How to Talk about Medieval Times:
The Role of Religious Art in Representing
the Christianization of Western Pomerania**

In this paper, I analyze how the story of the Christianization of Western Pomerania is told today through the images of Otto of Bamberg. The year 2024 marks the 900th anniversary of Otto's mission to the region. This occasion is used by the Roman Catholic Church and local governments to reintroduce a project of Christian identity for Western Pomerania. While many of these attempts are autonomous and carried out independently by priests or mayors of subsequent towns, they all use religious art as a visual identity for their projects, and Otto of Bamberg has become a particular regional brand. Few images of the saint are utilized, and interestingly, the same images reinforce religious and academic historical narratives. Images of Otto of Bamberg and the so-called Baptism of Western Pomerania are assembled, reassembled, digitally recreated, and composed into the story of Otto's mission, which in turn is presented as the history

of the region. Religious art legitimizes and authenticates history, even when it is presented by scholars. A Roman Catholic saint literally became the face of Western Pomerania. Focusing on the jubilee celebrations of Otto's mission in the Roman Catholic Church, local towns, and academia, I explore the role of religious art in legitimizing religious and/or historical narratives. I examine how the representation of the history of the Christianization of Pomerania through images of St. Otto transforms the complex medieval political history of power relations in the region into a hagiography.

VIDISHA BAGUL

Ritual Performance and Social Order: A Performance Ethnography of Somvati Amavasya in Jejuri, Maharashtra

Somvati Amavasya is a festival celebrated on a new moon day that falls on a Monday. It is a grand occasion for devotees of the renowned folk deity *Khandoba*, who is revered as the *Martanda Bhairava* incarnation of Shiva. The festival is held in the temple town of Jejuri, located in Maharashtra's Pune district. On this day, devout followers partake in various ceremonial practices, including ritual baths in the holy river, participation in local deity rites, and offerings. The highlight of the festival is the ritual bathing of the idol of the deity, *Khandoba*, accompanied by his consort *Mhalsa*, in the nearby Karha river. This community event creates a spectacle as the devotees dramatically perform the ritual. The ritual procession follows an intricate choreography of rituals, which includes carrying the palanquin by members of various communities from the locality, from the temple to the riverbank, and making stops at specific points in the town. Jejuri undergoes a dynamic transformation from a sleepy town to a crowded and active ritual site, attracting throngs of devotees to the village to witness the palanquin procession, ritual bathing, and devotees entering into a trance. This paper presents an ethnographic study conducted in Jejuri from January 20 to April 23, 2023. The study aims to explore the powerful role of rituals in shaping social reality and their profound impact on the lives of the participating population. It examines the various ways rituals create and maintain social order within a community, facilitate the expression and negotiation of power dynamics, and forge a deep connection with the sacred.

SESSION 4 | 18/10/2024 16:30 - 18:00

RITUAL ARTS AND PERFORMATIVE PRACTICES II.

ANNA MÁRIA BÓLYA

Chain Dance as a Societal Phenomenon

Religion and dance are often closely associated, except during the period of European Christian culture from around the 12th century. This is when the phenomenon of chain dancing (chorea, carole) was gradually replaced by the culture of couple dancing (danse), and the internationally used term 'danse' appeared in the 13th century. Today, the term 'danse' is also used to refer to chain dancing. However, it is important to note that in their ritual, social, and communal contexts, danse and chain dancing are two completely different cultural phenomena. Other art forms emerged later than dance from the Christian liturgical milieu of the spiritual mainstream. The question arises as to why and how dance, movement, and social effervescence, which I believe to be the most central element of religions, diverged from Western European religion, particularly Roman Catholic liturgy, and what transformations the meaning of dance has undergone. In 20th-century Europe, choral movements regained importance, often in a mass form. However, it is important to note that dictatorial regimes often favored such mass movements for extrinsic motivation. However, choral movements have been found to create a sense of communal bonding that has been described as 'muscularized.' Additionally, cognitive and somatic approaches have emphasized the physical nature of certain mental processes. Dance is considered a significant aspect of a culture, historical period, or community, profoundly impacting the relationship with life in that environment. Numerous studies have confirmed that studying dance can significantly contribute to cultural understanding across various disciplines. Therefore, dance holds deep cultural significance. In this presentation, I will explore the significance of using dance as a metaphor rather than solely studying the rituality of dance as a cultural element. By doing so, I hope to provide new insights into the relationship between dance and power.

ISTVÁN POVEDÁK

The Politics of the "Roma Pilgrimage" of Csatka

The largest "Roma pilgrimage" in CE Europe is organized every September in the small Hungarian village of Csatka. Around 30000 pilgrims arrive, of whom roughly 90% are Roma. The presence of the Roma has always provoked controversy among the authorities, the police, church people, the locals, and non-Roma pilgrims. One of the reasons for the disputes is that the vernacular religiosity and the behavior of the Roma are considered "unusual" by members of the majority society. Roma have always dressed in their own festive costumes, spending money at the vendors on kitsch, bringing huge bouquets of flowers and enormous candles, and even making dozens of dresses for the Virgin Mary statue. All this is accompanied by ambiguity among the non-Roma pilgrims. The Roma "turbofolk" music party in the meadow near the church further intensifies

the conflict between Roma and non-Roma. The ethnic pilgrimage offers an opportunity to observe and compare the behavior and religious practices of both Roma and non-Roma pilgrims. Furthermore, it sheds light on the colonization strategies and attitudes of non-Roma pilgrims, the Catholic Church, the clergy, and the (tabloid) media representations.

ZOLTÁN KÖRÖSVÖLGYI

Protective Religious Art Today

“Why only art can save us?” – asks Santiago Zabala, suggesting a new aesthetic centered on the nature of the emergency that characterizes the twenty-first century. Drawing on Heidegger’s distinction between works of art that rescue us from emergencies and those that are rescuers into emergencies, Zabala argues that works of art are not simply a means of consumerism or contemplating beauty – rather, points of departure to change the world. Boris Groys argues similarly, claiming “art becomes politically effective only when it is made beyond or outside the art market – in the context of direct political propaganda... This kind of art is not a commodity.” Although art with religious symbols could have been customary in Europe in the Middle Ages, can we imagine that in the twenty-first century? The protests of the late 2010s in Venezuela – following the collapse of the economy and the state – elevated an artist, Oscar Olivares, and his artworks, many of them with religious imagery – like Jesus or the Virgin – on the banners, specifically on homemade disobedient objects (e.g., protecting shields for street protests). The images circulated worldwide in the press and paved the way for success for the artist who keeps on addressing political subjects of emergencies, like the ecological crisis in his oeuvre. The author wishes to introduce and analyze the subject and compare it with the Hungarian artist drMáriás’ works on similar subjects (though never applied in street protests).

SESSION 5 | 19/10/2024 9:30 - 11:00

CONTEMPORARY ART, GENDER AND POLITICS**KINGA POVEDÁK****Harmonizing Faith and Power:
Christian Popular Music in Hungary**

This paper delves into the intersection of Hungarian popular music and religion, particularly examining the changes instigated by the Orbán government's support for Christian popular music since 2016 to strengthen religious faith, leading to a rapid increase in its visibility. This top-down approach aims to infuse religious themes into mainstream secular music, evident through state funding, establishment of Christian music awards, and increased visibility of religiously inclined artists. This support has elicited mixed reactions, with dissent among musicians and the public, and sparked debates on the effectiveness and consequences of such intervention. Questions arise about the impact on public perception of Christianity, potential backlash against religious culture, and the relationship between religious artistic expression and political influence.

VICTORIA HEGNER**Performing Shekinah – The Ritual Art of Playfully
Contesting Gender and Ecological Regimes
in Contemporary Judaism (online contribution)**

Based on ethnographic fieldwork among one of the fastest-growing new religious branches within Judaism, called Jewish Renewal, the paper wants to trace the art of performing rituals. One attractive characteristic of Jewish Renewal is its invitation to play artistically with Jewish canonical texts, practices, and traditions. It is not only a route to deeper religious experience but a way to question patriarchal power relations within the Jewish religion. Patriarchy, in this context, refers to more than the system of male dominance over women but to a general gendered relationship between humans and the 'natural world.' Hence, rituals turn out as a highly feminist and inherently ecological – environment activist – statement. Drawing ethnographically close to ceremonies of US and German-based Jewish Renewal groups that center around the worship of "Shekinah" – the manifestation of the Wisdom Goddess of the Kabbalah and the Old Testament – I will lay open the rituals' different performative dimensions (including the liturgical as well as sensual-material aspects) and thereby the experiential artistic play with religious interpretation of gender and the 'world' that unfolds. It is precisely the artistic play, as I argue, that challenges established gender and ecological regimes in contemporary Judaism and thus turns into a powerful religious practice and artwork in itself.

MARIO KATIĆ

Performance of Mirila as an Expression of the Power of Art¹

Using the work of performance artist Josip Zanki as a starting point, I want to problematize the power of artistic reinterpretation of vernacular religious rituals and the contribution art can have in constructing identities of fragile environments and communities through the concepts of intangible cultural heritage and protected areas. Josip Zanki found inspiration in one element of vernacular religiosity connected to the death ritual practices of the Dalmatian hinterland – Mirila. Mirila is a drystone monument built in the Dalmatian hinterland to commemorate the resting place of the deceased while the corpse was carried from the village to the cemetery on foot. This death practice stopped being performed on the Velebit mountain in the 1970s; however, in early 2000, Mirila became an intangible cultural heritage of the Republic of Croatia. Based on this death practice, Zanki developed a performance of erecting Mirila for living people in diverse ambiances, such as museums, galleries, forests, lakes, and rivers worldwide. He used artistic power to promote and reinterpret one local religious custom based on pre-Christian beliefs in wandering souls that need to have a mark in the landscape to prevent their return to the world of the living. In contemporary Croatia, the Velebit mountain region is a protected national park that promotes the uniqueness of natural and cultural elements of the landscape, among other things, Mirila. The artistic (re)interpretation of Mirila played an essential role in the contemporary (re)creation of Mirila within this protected area.

¹ This research was co-financed by DigiFren project of Croatian National Science Foundation and CHANSE.

SESSION 6 | 19/10/2024 11:30 - 13:30

SENSORY RELIGION

CLARA SARAIVA

Funerary Art: Religion, Power and Contestation in the Era of QR Codes and Digital Ghosts

Death confronts us with issues of power, identifiable in the funerary art of cemeteries. The city of the dead portrays the prestige relations present in the city of the living. Nowadays, art related to death is taking new shapes and dimensions. One may decide not to build a mausoleum designed by a renowned architect for his/her rich grandmother but instead have her body cremated and the ashes turned into diamonds, becoming an expensive art/jewelry piece that one can wear on the lapel. If artistic family mausoleums have been classified and cemeteries became spaces to contemplate art through the ages (mostly Catholic ones), some cemeteries are investing in QR codes as a way for people to interact with them in an artistic way. What happens with other spiritualities/religions, where there is not a physical/artistic cemetery? What forms of art do death artifacts take? Also, what happens when we now create digital ghosts in the digital era, and the memory of the dead one is shared and debated by 3000 Facebook "friends" who post artwork that they feel is a way to praise their beloved ones? How do we move from "placing the ancestors," connecting the dead to a physical place, marked through funerary art, to sending them into the virtual world? How do the real and digital funerary art worlds connect? The third issue concerns modern art relating to death. Two case studies will be called upon. One is the event that took place in Lisbon a few years ago, with several artists talking about their views on death; the second is the case of the funerary artwork of Sara Leme After Hours, which looks into the Memento Mori tradition and zooms into the transformation of our bodies, questioning the self-Mourning jewelry of the 21st century. These two cases represent instances where the artists drew away from classical funerary art and developed innovative funerary art.

TÜNDE KOMÁROMI

Touching the Icon - Moving the Icon: Affirmations of Power in Nicula (Transylvania)

According to local legends, the Hodigitria-type icon of the Mother of God from Nicula descended from Heaven on a tree. The original wooden church incorporated the remains of this old tree. The official narrative talks about the painter from a nearby village (1681) and the miracle of weeping in 1699, the year when the Greek Catholic Church in Transylvania was established. Until 1948, the Basilian order was in charge of the shrine for two and half centuries. In the 19th century, a "brick church" was built next to the wooden church, with a special iconostasis incorporating the miracle-working icon. Tens of thousands of pilgrims arrive at the monastery for the feast of Assumption. Most of them

spend days in this sacred space (“namolennoe mesto”), sleep there, touch the wooden church, and some of them circumvent it on elbows and knees. The most important way of contacting sacred power and experiencing blessing (har) is to touch the icon and pray in front of it. I will present the details of this tradition. Nicula is the most important Orthodox shrine in contemporary Transylvania. Greek Catholics claimed back unsuccessfully the monastery after 1989. A huge Orthodox church was built in the last decades, and the miraculous icon was moved into this church (2021), altering the previous scenario of the pilgrimage. The brick church and the Basilian cells stay abandoned among the new buildings. The Catholic way of the crossing of some pilgrims and their rosaries knocking on the glass of the icon recalls the past. Nevertheless, the shrine remains a shared one, where next to the Orthodox majority, Greek Catholics and even Calvinist Hungarians pray together and sense the complexity of rituals and religious art with all their senses. The touch is their lingua franca.

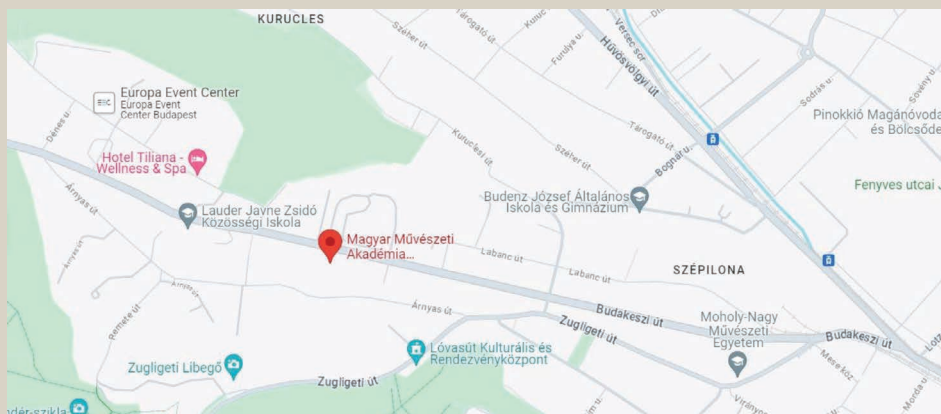
DÓRA PATARICZA & ÁGNES IVETT OSZKÓ **Sacred Power and Architectural Grandeur: The New Synagogue of Szeged**

The New Synagogue of Szeged was built between 1900-1903 in a Historicizing and Art Nouveau style. Its 1340 seats and 48.5-meter-tall central dome make it the fourth largest in Europe. It was designed by architect Lipót Baumhorn in cooperation with Dr Immanuel Löw, a botanist and the chief rabbi of Szeged. Without a doubt, Baumhorn’s masterpiece was the Neolog Synagogue in Szeged, which, in addition to its complex form and large size, was made unique by the symbolic depiction of the Jewish religion. The architect and the rabbi worked in tight cooperation on the design process of the synagogue. The synagogue garden, also designed by Löw, is unique, being the building’s organic part, presenting the flora of Israel and Hungary. Aligned with the progressive Neolog denomination of Hungarian Jewry, Immanuel Löw and Lipót Baumhorn envisioned integration into Hungarian society. The synagogue, with towers outside and an organ inside, was intended to reflect in every aspect the ideas of the Neolog denomination, aiming for progress and reforms within Judaism, in line with Löw’s work. The synagogue was commissioned by its citizens. The paper presents the remarkable Szeged Synagogue, which combined Jewish ideas with the proud Hungarian national identity of a once-flourishing Jewish community in the Hungarian countryside. It also explores how the principles of Neology and the architectural embodiment of the synagogue can be regarded as a manifestation of the economic potency of the Jewish community. The synagogue has been built asserting the power of local Jewry under the belief that showing power can be done as at the time of the building of the synagogue; there was peace, acceptance, and equality; however, tragically, this proved to be a mistaken historical conclusion.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE VENUE

The conference is scheduled to be held at Villa Hild, located at Budakeszi Street 38, 1121 Budapest. There are several convenient ways to reach the venue, with the following options being recommended:

- **By car:** presenters are welcome to park in the designated parking lot at Villa Hild (coordinates: 47°31'09.7"N 18°58'44.1"E).
- **By public transport:** from Széll Kálmán Square: Take buses 22, 222, or 22A and alight at the “Bíróság” stop, then proceed 350 meters in the opposite direction to reach Villa Hild on the right side of the road.
- **By taxi or private transport:** Uber is not available in Hungary. Typical fares from the city center for standard taxis range from 3500 to 9000 HUF, depending on the exact distance and time of the day.



Attendees are responsible for arranging and financing their accommodation during the conference. We recommend exploring options on Booking.com and Airbnb.

The conference venue is equipped with a projector, a presenter laptop, and access to the local wireless network. However, we recommend saving all presentations on an external USB drive to prevent technical issues from occurring due to network disturbances.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

EXTRACURRICULAR EVENTS

The 2024 Budapest SIEF conference includes various extracurricular events, free and open to all presenters. Guests and other attendees may attend these events; however, the organizers do not cover their expenses.

These events are:

DAY 1 | RECEPTION AND BOOK LAUNCH

At the end of Day 1, all attendees are invited to the book launch of *Charting New Territory*, with editorial opening speeches and guest reception at Villa Hild's Researchers' Hall, starting at 18:00.

DAY 2 | GROUP LUNCH

Between 13:00 and 14:30, presenters walk to the NFI Filmlab's canteen (1021 Budapest, Budakeszi Street 51, just across the road from Villa Hild) for a group lunch with pre-selected menus, which the organizers will cover.

DAY 2 | GROUP DINNER

At the end of Day 2, at 18:00, presenters are invited to a group dinner at Etalon Restaurant with pre-selected menus paid for by the organizers.

DAY 3 | GROUP EXCURSION & CLOSING DINNER

As a closing program of Day 3, registered presenters are invited to a guided excursion to the Csillaghegy Hare Krishna Educational and Cultural Center. Presenters' luggage may be stored at Villa Hild's secretary's office for the duration of the trip. The group will take a private bus from Villa Hild to Csillaghegy at 14:00 and return at the end of the excursion to the place of departure using the same method by 19:00 at the latest. The planned excursion will include a tour of ISKCON's local temple, monastery complex, and cultural center, all complemented by English-language guidance. The tour will end with a closing dinner freshly prepared and served by local ISKCON members. Note: ISKCON is a vegetarian religious organization. Therefore, they do not serve meat or use meat in their meals. However, dairy products (such as milk and cheese) are regularly used. Guests who have registered their special dietary needs in advance (lactose-free or vegan diets) will be served vegan meals.



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