

The Senses: Present Issues, Past Perspectives

24 April 2023 – 27 April 2023

Congressi Stefano Frascini, Monte Verità, Switzerland

We invite abstracts for 20-minute papers in the field of medieval sensory studies for the international workshop ‘The Senses: Present Issues, Past Perspectives.’ The workshop is organised by Prof. Annette Kern-Stähler (University of Bern, Switzerland), Prof. Elizabeth Robertson (University of Glasgow, UK), and Dr Laura Bernardazzi (University of Bern, Switzerland) and is funded by the Congressi Stefano Frascini, Monte Verità, Switzerland, and the University of Bern.

THE WORKSHOP

This workshop will bring medieval studies in conversation with sensory research in contemporary science and philosophy. The workshop will consist of a series of six panels, each of which will address a key topic in contemporary sensory research. Each cluster will include an articulation of the issue by a contemporary philosopher or scientist, followed by two responses by scholars in medieval studies. We are inviting medievalists in all disciplines to join one of the following panels:

- 1. Multimodal Perception.** How was the interaction of the senses understood in medieval culture? How does contemporary research on multisensoriality and cross-modal perception help us understand medieval ideas of perception?
- 2. The Problem of Pain.** What role do the senses play in the perception of pain? How do we account for the disparity between an experience of a physical event (such as piercing or tattooing) and expressions of this event in language and art?
- 3. Sensory Engineering.** How can medieval understandings of sensory compensation and/or enhancement elucidate the aims and achievements of contemporary sensory engineering involving, for example, the creation of robotic limbs or the development of sophisticated forms of sensory substitution or augmentation?
- 4. Hallucination and Illusion.** How do we, and how did people in the medieval past, distinguish between veridical perception and illusions and/or hallucinations? How did people in the medieval past evaluate such illusions we today call perseveration, diplopia, polyopia and dysmorphopsia? How did medieval writers and artists depict illusions and hallucinations?
- 5. Virtual Reality and Digital Sensoriality.** What is the role of the senses in the construction of virtual reality? How might we use digital technology to recover the medieval sensorium, and in which ways do such technological efforts compete with those using medieval archaeological remains (e.g. buildings, pilgrims’ flasks, saints’ relics, food vessels) and other artefacts?
- 6. Proprioception and Kinesthesia.** How does a body orientate itself in an environment? How are proprioception and kinesthesia articulated in medieval art and literature?

THE VENUE

Situated on a hilltop in the sunniest region of Switzerland, the venue has been at the heart of European intellectualism, idealism, and cultural dialogue for almost two centuries. Today, Monte Verità continues to be a meeting place of minds and a cultural centre through Congressi Stefano Frascini, a platform of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology of Zurich (ETH Zurich) hosting between 20 and 25 events organized by professors working at Swiss academic institutions, and a regular program of public events. The venue is also home to a museum complex and extensive gardens.

Please send an abstract of 200 – 250 words by 30 June 2022 together with a short statement indicating your affiliation and the panel you are interested in to: sensesconference.ens@unibe.ch