



**** CALL FOR PAPERS ****

**Commun(icat)ing Bodies
The Religion & Body Conference**
<http://communicating-bodies.net>

**University of Graz / Austria
15 – 17 February 2012**

Abstract

Religious traditions are highly symbolic and effective communication systems. Over time they have developed a sophisticated 'language' to communicate their ideas, values, and norms. Central to the system of rules and meanings of many religious traditions is the body, i.e. the status of the body, what should be done with or to the body, or the role of bodily pleasures. To communicate their visions, religions idealize, normatize, gender, denounce, or make bodies fit into their imaginations. What is often overlooked, however, is that 'this' idealized, denounced, or imagined body develops its own dynamic in which the body becomes a medium in its own right. As medium, the body bears witness to the religious traditions trying to inscribe their belief systems onto and into the body.

The conference *Commun(icat)ing Bodies*, thus, understands the body *as* medium in the communication system 'religion' and explores how 'both bodies' – the abstract and idealized body and the concrete body existing and living in time and space – tell stories and express religious narratives and structures. Studying the relevance of the body-medium, the conference aims to contribute to a better understanding of how religious communication works and how the body *as* medium transforms the religious traditions that try to mark the body and inscribe their visions into the body-flesh.

Submissions

We welcome original and critical papers from scholars from a variety of disciplines (e.g. religious studies, sociology of religion, theology/philosophy, cultural studies, communication studies, film/media studies,...) exploring the impact of the body on religious communication. As in our global world the boundaries between different religious traditions continuously transform, we are looking for contributions that appreciate the religious diversity in West and East in both its historic and contemporary dimensions. In particular, we are interested in papers dealing with the following topics and their relevance for today's societies and religions:

** The Body as Medium*

The body as medium in religious communication systems
The body as medium of meaning in asceticism
Religious practices as body practices, as embodied practices

** Representations of the Body-Medium*

Representations of the body-medium in arts and media
Representations of the body in religious writings/texts
Body technologies

Deadline / Submission

Please submit your 400 words abstract to **bodies@uni-graz.at** – the deadline for submissions is **Sept., 30 2011**.

Financial Support

We are committed to encourage the participation of scholars from a broad range of countries and disciplines. Therefore - depending on conference funding -, financial support may be available for a limited number of presenters. In particular, we aim to support independent and unemployed scholars who do not have access to other forms of funding, post-docs, and doctoral researchers. To apply for funding, please include a short statement of why you require financial support when submitting your abstract.

Background

The conference is part of two research projects at the University of Graz funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF):

- the international and interdisciplinary research project *Commun(icat)ing Bodies* at the Institute of Fundamental Theology (Graz) involving theology and religious studies scholars from Austria, Italy, and Switzerland;
- the research project *Asceticism in Modern Monasticism* at the Institute of Religious Studies (Graz) in collaboration with the Centre d'Etudes Interdisciplinaires des Faits Religieux (CEIFR / Paris).

Organizing Team

Dr. Christian Feichtinger

christian.feichtinger@uni-graz.at

Institute of Religious Studies
Graz

Dr. Isabelle Jonveaux

isabelle.jonveaux@uni-graz.at

Institute of Religious Studies
Graz / CEIFR Paris

Dr. Alexander D. Ornella

alexander.ornella@uni-graz.at

Institute of Fundamental Theology
Graz



Conference Venue

The *Commun(icat)ing Bodies* conference takes place at the Universitätszentrum Theologie – University Center Theology (UZT) of the University of Graz. Founded in 1585, the University of Graz is one of Austria's largest universities today and

hosts Austria's second oldest Faculty of Theology.

Graz, Austria's second largest city and capital of the federal state of Styria, stands out through its historic city center and the Schlossberg, a little hill in the middle of

the city offering a great view onto the city. Graz was European Cultural Capital 2003 and has recently received the UNESCO City of Design award. It features several highlights in modern architecture:



the *Kunsthaus* (Graz Museum of Modern Art), designed by the famous architects Peter Cook and Colin Fournier,

and the *Murinsel* (Mur Island), designed by the acclaimed architect Vito Acconci.

