

The Making of Catholic Emotions: a Cultural Studies Approach to Church Architecture

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To investigate the connection of bodies, objects and religious expression, it is absolutely essential to look at the social and cultural effects of religious space and religious architecture. The built space of catholic churches is structuring and organizing religious gestures as well as other practices of belief; it is a key element in the production and the making of religious emotions.

The paper underlines the necessity of thematizing sacred architecture as a material “medium” shaping the social and generating religious practice. Catholic churches will be read not only as spaces of symbolic representation, but rather as spaces of production and reproduction of belief through sensory experience. Situated in the contexts of recent Material Religion Studies, Historical Anthropology and Empirical Cultural Analysis, my study will show that catholic sacred spaces are important catalyzers for the circulation and transmission of religious expression. In my presentation, I will furthermore suggest a theoretical framework for the cultural analysis of sacred space. This framework considers four dimensions: The church as 1) a space of symbolic order, 2) a space of cultural memory 3) a space of sensuality and emotional practice, and 4) a space of social interaction.

Bio

Education: Studies in European Ethnology/Cultural Studies, German Literature and Philosophy at University of Tübingen (GER), University of Vienna (AUT) and Humboldt-University Berlin (GER); 2009 Doctorate (Humboldt University Berlin); 2015 Habilitation and appointment as private lecturer (University of Vienna). Academic Positions: 2009-2015 Assistant Professor, Institute for European Ethnology, University of Vienna (AUT); 2015-present Academic Counsellor (Akademischer Rat), Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich (GER); 2016-present Heisenberg-Fellow of the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft), University of Vienna (AUT).