

# Religious Art and Power – Contestations and Affirmations

OCTOBER 17–19, 2024.

BUDAPEST

**Conference organized by SIEF Ethnology of Religion Working Group and the Research Institute of Art Theory and Methodology, Hungarian Academy of Arts**

As both 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 of social agency, religious art can appear in any form of performative activity and can be studied “through the prism of genre”, as Leonard Primiano once wrote, be the genre architecture, dress, photographs, artefacts, 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. Not only should we study the power of institutions and their role in bestowing, legitimizing, and subverting social and spiritual power, but the conference also encourages us 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.

The conference organizers invite scholars from empirically based fields such as European Ethnology, Folkloristics, Social and Cultural Anthropology, Sociology of Religion, and Cultural History, with a focus on the complex, multi-layered relationship between religious art and any form of power (political, cultural, economic, etc), including but not limited to the following questions:

1. How is religious art used as a manifestation or legitimization of power?
2. How is religious art used to criticize or subvert legitimacy, authority, and power?
3. Which interactions can we observe between power and religious art?
4. What kind of discursive practices appear in religious art?
5. What is the role of emotions and the senses in legitimizing or subverting forms of power and authority?
6. How do new media and new technologies shape religious artistic practices by empowering marginalized voices, deconstructing traditional hierarchies, or creating alternative narratives?
7. How do performative approaches in religious practices play a crucial role in expressing, shaping, or contesting religious authority or power?

## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

### **LOCATION:**

Research Institute of Art Theory and Methodology, 1121 Budapest, 38 Budakeszi Street (Villa Hild)

**DATE:** October 17–19, 2024

Proposals (an abstract of no more than 300 words) should be sent by April 5, 2024 to: [igazgato@mma-mmki.hu](mailto:igazgato@mma-mmki.hu). The selection committee will make its decision by May 5, 2024 to allow reasonable time for participants to apply for travel funds.

Conference fee: €40 for senior lecturers/professors/full employees; €20 for junior researchers/students and scholars from low-income countries (the fee includes all costs of conference materials, reception, food, and drink during coffee breaks, lunchtime, and the dinner on 17th and 18th October).

## SPECIAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

Scholars in need of financial support may apply for free accommodation and a financial contribution to cover travel costs. Bursaries also include a conference fee waiver.

## SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

The Board of the SIEF Ethnology of Religion Working Group (Victoria Hegner, Alessandro Testa, Clara Saraiva, Kinga Povedák, Thorsten Wettich), and the Director of the Research Institute of Art Theory and Methodology (László Koppány Csáji).