



SenSArt- The Sensuous Appeal of the Holy. Sensory Agency of Sacred Art and Somatised Spiritual Experiences in Medieval Europe (12th-15th century)

Is sight the only sense actively involved in the perception of art? This is a crucial question for Western culture, dominated today by the hegemony of vision and the suppression of the other senses. By challenging the current ocularcentric paradigm, and assimilating notions on the cultural values of sensation, SenSArt provides the first examination of medieval sacred art from the unconventional lens of its sensory agency. Between the 12th and the 15th century Europe underwent an extraordinary artistic evolution and an impressive cultural revitalization, which sparked a reassessment of the role of sensory perception in systems of knowledge and spiritual enlightenment. SenSArt explores and compares different social environments in six selected regions, pursuing three groundbreaking objectives: A) it will analyse quantitatively and qualitatively the perceptual schemes that orientated the reception of sacred art, scrutinizing how art solicited its beholders through multiple sensory inputs; B) it will develop and investigate the new notion of 'sensory agency' of art, establishing sacred art as a primary actor capable of exerting, through sensorial stimulation or deprivation, a social agency on its audience; C) it will provide an overall phenomenology of experiences on a European scale, by comparing the diverse patterns that different social groups lived on a local, regional and supranational scale. SenSArt will achieve its goals by developing a new combined approach at the crossroad of Art History, Philosophy and Text Studies; it will establish a multidisciplinary team of scholars to delve into a comparative set of materials, including normative texts on the senses and works of art. The project promises to bring about a paradigm shift in our understanding of Medieval Europe. It will shed new light on wide historical, devotional and cultural phenomena, outlining complex networks of social interactions where humans, art and the senses interplayed with each other..

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