Call for Papers

Presence and InVisibility - sign-bearing artefacts in sacral spaces.

International research conference, Heidelberg, February 23rd-25th 2015

For many cultures sign-bearing artefacts are an immanent component

of sacral spaces, which constitute themselves through their presence.

This applies to actual specific places, as well as to cultural space

in its broadest sense. In the latter case, sacral space is to be

understood as social instead of architectural.

The conference will focus on the interaction of mobile or immobile

sign-bearing artefacts – ranging from smallest objects to entire

buildings – and the protagonists of sacral spaces in Europe and the

Near East. By analysing material residues of advanced civilizations

from antiquity to the middle ages, the entire spectrum of religions

within this temporal and geographical margin shall be investigated,

including phenomena generally termed as “magical”. An important point

of investigation within this context will be the correlation of

presence and InVisibility of these artefacts, as well as cultural or

religious changes and transcultural relations.

The term “sign” includes all signs found on artefacts that aim to

communicate in any way, may it be in characters, in pictographic signs

or other undetermined forms.

Questions of interest in the context of presence and

visibility/invisibility of sign-bearing artefacts could include:

Are all these sign-bearing artefacts aimed at a specific group

of people? Could their messages be received by others? Do authors,

scribes, or commissioners put effort in reaching a specific circle of

people, and if so, how? Is the visibility of such an artefact or a sign

necessary to ensure the delivery of the intended message? Are artefacts

or signs of restricted visibility actually to be seen as visually

restricted or are they simply intended for a specific group of

recipients? Do visible and invisible artefacts or signs differ in

their effect on protagonists of sacral spaces? What about artefacts

or signs that are visible but bear messages that cannot be understood

without further means? Is an artefact always a mere medium of a message

or can it be a message itself? What practices were performed in this

context and with these artefacts? Could the knowledge of presence be

more important than the actual presence? Is presence exclusively

provided through visibility? In what way could the material properties

or conditions influence the visibility/invisibility or presence of an

artefact?

The conference shall address these questions and attempt to answer them

through lectures by national and international researchers.

Contributions from all disciplines are welcome. The length of a lecture

should not surpass 30 minutes and can be held in English or in German.

Accommodations in Heidelberg will be provided; travelling costs will

be refunded (in case of complete financing of the conference). A

publication of a conference transcript is intended.

The conference is conducted by Wilfried E. Keil (Art History), Sarah

Kiyanrad (Islamic studies), Christoffer Theis (Egyptology), and Laura

Willer (Papyrology).

Lecture proposals consisting of an abstract (1/2 page), a short

curriculum vitae, and a list of previous publications can be sent as

an email attachment to [w.keil@zegk.uni-heidelberg.de](https://www.arup.cas.cz/webmail/src/compose.php?send_to=w.keil%40zegk.uni-heidelberg.de) up until

September 15th 2014. The conference committee will then choose from

all proposals.

Younger researchers are explicitly encouraged to contribute.