

BODY. CULT. RELIGION.

Perspectives from Antiquity to the Present
25 October 2024 – 26 February 2025



ANNUAL THEME 2024/2025
BODY AND RELIGION

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS FOR THE EXHIBITION

Opening of the exhibition and start of the annual theme

Body. Cult. Religion. Perspectives from Antiquity to the Present
Fürstenberghaus, Room F2
Friday, 25 October 2024, 6 pm

Guided tours

A look behind the scenes at the exhibition

With curators Saskia Erhardt (classical archaeology),
Jan Graefe (history), H.-Helge Nieswandt (classical archaeology)
Archaeological Museum of the University of Münster
Sunday, 10 November 2024, 8 December 2024,
26 January 2025, at 2 pm

Dance workshop

Moving realities

With Sevi Bayraktar, professor of dance, performance and music
in a global context, Cologne University of Music and Dance
Location to be announced
Friday and Saturday, 15 – 16 November 2024

The workshop approaches the theme of “Body and Religion”
from the viewpoint of dance as a physical form of thinking
and perceiving. Through different types of dance, participants
can experience the relationship between the body and
spirituality, and the objects in the exhibition, from a different
perspective – namely, that of their own body. This raises a
number of questions: What is the body made of? Of a physical
material or an energetic entity? What do we perceive when we
look at the objects on display and the exhibition spaces from
a bodily perspective?

The artistic concept of the workshop was developed by the
Cologne University of Music and Dance. No previous knowledge
of dance is required.

A “walk and talk” through the exhibition

“Body and Religion” in the Museum

With the exhibition curators Achim Lichtenberger (classical
archaeology), Angelika Lohwasser (Egyptology) and Holger
Strutwolf (Protestant theology)
Archaeological Museum of the University of Münster
Friday, 10 January 2025, 4 pm

Film evening

“Drugs & Prayers” (India 2009)

Followed by a discussion with social anthropologist Helene
Basu, producer of the film from the Cluster of Excellence
“Religion and Politics”
Cluster of Excellence lecture theatre, Room JO 1
Tuesday, 28 January 2025, 6.15 pm

In India, the causes of mental illness are often thought to be
sorcery and possession, with those affected therefore seeking
help at religious sites such as the graves of Muslim saints. The
anthropologist Helene Basu has observed these people there.
But she has also met psychiatrists who, she says, attribute
mental illness to brain malfunction, and offer psychotropic
drugs at the holy sites rather than prayers and trance rituals.
The film documents how the different worldviews collide at a
Muslim shrine. With German subtitles and without a commen-
tary, the film is based on research that Basu conducted at the
Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics”.

Closing event of the exhibition

Body. Cult. Religion. Perspectives from Antiquity to the Present
Archaeological Museum of the University of Münster
Wednesday, 26 February 2025, 6 pm

LECTURE AND PANEL DISCUSSIONS

Lecture in English

Corpses as instruments of well-being: Jeremy Bentham’s
Auto-Icon and the status of dead bodies
Michael Quinn (political philosophy)
Cluster of Excellence lecture theatre, Room JO 1
Tuesday, 29 October 2024, 6.15 pm

The lecture presents the scientific and public debates
surrounding the “Auto-Icon” of the philosopher Jeremy
Bentham, who died in 1832 and whose mummified body is
still on display at University College London. It also deals
with the ideas behind the preservation of one’s own body.

Panel discussion

Crossing boundaries in body and mind

With Stefan Schneider (sports scientist and theologian),
Sevi Bayraktar (dance scholar and dancer), Hans-Jürgen
Drechsler (pastor and marathon runner), Angelika Messner
(East Asian scholar)
Moderated by Ines Michalowski (sociologist of religion)
Cluster of Excellence lecture theatre, Room JO 1
Tuesday, 12 November 2024, 6.15 pm

What does it mean to experience spirituality in one’s own
body? The panel will see researchers and athletes shed
light on spiritual experience from different perspectives,
and discuss the role played in this by crossing physical
boundaries, for example through asceticism or high-
performance sports. Also discussed will be whether and to
what extent conquering one’s own physical needs frees the
mind for spiritual experience.

Panel discussion

Religions make clothes

With Nadezhda Beliakova (historian), Maryam Palizban
(actress and theatre scholar), Carola Roloff (religious scholar
and Buddhist nun), and Levi Israel Ufferfilge (rabbi and head
of the Jewish Grammar School in Munich)
Moderated by Dorothea Schulz (cultural and social
anthropologist)
Cluster of Excellence lecture theatre, Room JO 1
Tuesday, 21 January 2025, 6.15 pm

The panel discussion will focus on how religions use clothing
to stage, mark and control human bodies, with particular
attention being given to the controversial use of head
coverings. This practice will be discussed within a broader
comparative cultural and religious context. Also addressed
will be the extent to which supposedly religious dress codes
and practices are shaped by other cultural conventions, and
how far these conventions are themselves religiously coded
or reinterpreted in specific contexts.

BODY. CULT. RELIGION.

The body has always been part of religious practices and beliefs across the world. This is shown in the exhibition organized by the University of Münster's Cluster of Excellence "Religion and Politics" on "Body. Cult. Religion. Perspectives from Antiquity to the Present". Part of the Cluster of Excellence's interdisciplinary annual theme for 2024/2025 on "Body and Religion", the exhibition can be seen at the Archaeological Museum and the Bible Museum of the University of Münster from 25 October 2024 to 26 February 2025.

The exhibition will present important artefacts from the Louvre in Paris, the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, the Kunsthistorische Museum Vienna, the Fundação Pierre Verger in Salvador, as well as from museums in the region. The exhibits range from ancient representations of the body, such as the statue of the ancient Egyptian God's Wife Ahmose-Nefertari and the statuette of the Roman god Hermaphroditus, to ritual objects such as a nail fetish from the Congo and a Jewish Levite jug.

Also on display are replicas of famous pieces such as the death mask of the Unknown Woman of the Seine and modern photographs of trance rituals in Brazil. The exhibition also includes films such as the animated film "The public swimming pool between bikini and burkini", which is about religion and the body in public spaces, and a multimedia installation with interview films on the subject of religious head coverings.

The exhibition draws on the findings of the Cluster of Excellence's interreligious, transepochal and interdisciplinary research on the relationship between religion and the body, and involves many disciplines: for example, ancient studies (Assyriology, Near Eastern archaeology, Egyptology, classical and Christian archaeology), Jewish studies, Arabic studies, Christian and Islamic theologies, religious and social sciences, sinology, and anthropology, as well as the University of Münster's Brazil Centre. The exhibition is sponsored by the Kulturstiftung der Länder and the Rectorate of the University of Münster.

THE EXHIBITION'S THEMES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

- Divine figures – the physical representation of the divine
- Gender roles? – how the world's religions deal with gender roles
- Religion and healing – medical practices and religious healing rituals
- After death ... – how past and present religions deal with the dead body

BIBLE MUSEUM

- Purity of the body – purification rites in religions
- Rituals of life – initiation rituals and practices to do with entering new stages of life
- Disembodiment – the relationship between mind and body in the religions of the world



CATALOGUE AND VOLUME OF ESSAYS FOR THE EXHIBITION

Body. Cult. Religion: Perspectives from antiquity to the present

Erhardt, S., Graefe, J., Lichtenberger, A., Lohwasser, A., Nieswandt, H.-H., Strutwolf, H. (eds.); Nünnerich-Asmus Verlag. Münster 2024.

The Body in Religion: Images and practices

Lichtenberger, A., Lohwasser, A., Strutwolf, H. (eds.); in the series "Religion and Politics", edited by the Cluster of Excellence "Religion and Politics", Ergon Verlag. Baden-Baden. Forthcoming.



VENUES

Archaeological Museum of the University of Münster

Domplatz 20 – 22, 48143 Münster
Tue to Sun 10 am – 6 pm
Public holidays 10 am – 6 pm
Open until midnight on the 2nd Friday of the month

Bible Museum of the University of Münster

Pferdegasse 1, 48143 Münster
Tue to Sun 10 am – 6 pm
10 am – 10 pm on the 2nd Friday of the month

Fürstenberghaus

Domplatz 20 – 22, 48143 Münster

Cluster of Excellence "Religion and Politics" lecture theatre

Johannisstraße 4, 48143 Münster

ORGANIZATION

Exzellenzcluster „Religion und Politik“

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ANNUAL THEME 2024/2025 "BODY AND RELIGION"

In the world's religions, the body is both an object and an expression of religious ideas. This is the issue that the Cluster of Excellence is exploring in the 2024/2025 annual theme "Body and Religion". Whether healing and purification rituals, asceticism and fasting, head coverings and tattoos, or practices on the dead body – religious ideas about people, gods, and the worlds beyond are reflected in how people have treated the human body across epochs and cultures. The lines of tradition stretch from ancient polytheistic religions to today's interpretations of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The annual theme presents the Cluster of Excellence's current research on "Body and Religion" in an exhibition and an extensive programme of events that allow researchers and the general public to come together for discussion.

CLUSTER OF EXCELLENCE "RELIGION AND POLITICS"

The Cluster of Excellence has been investigating the complex relationship between religion and politics across eras and cultures since 2007. The 140 researchers from 20 disciplines in the humanities and social sciences focus in this funding phase (2019 to 2025) on the "dynamics of tradition and innovation". They analyze in transepochal studies ranging from antiquity to the present day the conditions and factors that make religion an engine of political and social change, with their focus being on the paradox that religions often develop their innovative potential precisely by drawing on their traditions. The research network is the largest of its kind in Germany; and, of the Clusters of Excellence, one of the oldest and the only one to deal with the issue of religion. It will receive funding of 31 million euros from 2019 to 2025.



Current Information on the programme of the annual theme 2024/2025