



BESONDERS/EXEMPLARISCH **Morphomatische Fallstudien zu Biographie und Portrait**

Abstract

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On the Phenomenology of Touch in the Renaissance

In what can be called a Renaissance phenomenology of perception, scholars dealing with the question how artifacts, images and sensual forms were perceived, produced and experienced, two senses play the preeminent role: sight and touch. But whereas sight, in particular its growing epistemological relevance in contemporary medical, natural philosophical and aesthetic discourse, has been thoroughly studied, touch, despite its acknowledged importance from Aristotle on, remains still the 'exceptional' sense: it is "complex, ambiguous, and contradictory" (Harvey 2002).

In fact, when it comes to 'exceptional' phenomena in that period, touch plays a pivotal role: in the aesthetic practices surrounding 'miraculous images', talismans, votive offerings or 'living portraits', in images and texts explaining the relation between perception and conception, or even in iconoclastic acts.

My talk will focus on two very different but equally significant cases of miraculous images in the 15th and early 16th centuries, one south, one north of the Alps: the Annunciation fresco in Santissima Annunziata in Florence and the Schöne Maria of Regensburg. Both sites were much frequented in that period. My goal is to elaborate an enactive phenomenology of touch in which life and sensuality are concomitant with or emerge from the vibrant, material and 'manual' dynamics of the four tactile qualities. This phenomenology, it will be argued, pertains not only to 'exceptional' artifacts but also lies at the heart of crucial debates on the impact of images in the Renaissance.



