

Seminar Series 2024-2025

Emotional Grammars  
of Globalization

Mediterranean Emotions  
**MEEM**  
A Global Research Hotspot



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Image adapted from Bernard Picart, frontispiece for the Dutch edition of *Cérémonies*, engraving (details), in *Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde*, Amsterdam, 1727. Zentralbibliothek, Zürich, Q 35. © Courtesy Zentralbibliothek.

**PAOLA  
VON WYSS-GIACOSA**  
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**Drawing  
Distinctions.  
Bernard Picart's  
*Tableau des  
principales  
religions du  
monde* (1727)**

**26 May 2025**

**11.00-13.30**

**University of Florence  
Via San Gallo 10  
Aula Parva**

**[meet.google.com/ajm-uyxx-bqn](https://meet.google.com/ajm-uyxx-bqn)**

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## ABSTRACT

This seminar will focus on the *Tableau des principales religions du monde*, a large engraving designed and executed by the renowned French illustrator Bernard Picart and introduced to the public in 1727 as frontispiece for the *Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde* (Amsterdam, 1723-1737). Picart was responsible for the pictorial conception and execution of the seven in-folio volumes. He was personally involved in and knowledgeable about religious debates of his time. His frontispiece, as I argue, was not merely a visual prelude, nor was it just a gripping synthesis of the *Cérémonies* volumes' argument. The elaborate sheet, featuring "the main religions of the world," was quite deliberately composed in the manner of a *tableau vivant* and is a noteworthy visual source for the study of emotions' history: its conception was theatrical, and no doubt meant to be affectively engaging, with personifications of religious views and historical figures seemingly taking the stage to defend their position, displaying a wide range of emotional reactions, facial expressions and gestures as well as intriguing iconological references. We will discuss how Picart intended to challenge his viewers, both intellectually and emotionally, through this highly sophisticated composition. What he created was a crucial discursive pendant to his pictorial scholarship on ceremonial action, a dense image offering a visual space for public reflection and dialogue on religion(s).

## THE SPEAKER

**Paola von Wyss-Giacosa** is member of the Gotha Research Centre (University of Erfurt) and of the international research group Media and Religion. She is one of the editors of the Brepols series *Histories in Motion* and of the journal *Cromohs*. Her research interests include the early modern discourse on religion and idolatry, antiquarianism and visual culture. She is author of *Religionsbilder der frühen Aufklärung: Bernard Picarts Bildtafeln für die 'Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde'* (2006). Among her edited volumes are *Understanding Jesus in the Early Modern Period and Beyond. Across Text and Other Media* (2019, with C. Facchini), *Through Your Eyes: Religious Alterity and the Early Modern Western Imagination* (2021, with G. Tarantino) and *Visual Reflections across the Mediterranean Sea* (2023, with N. Fritz).