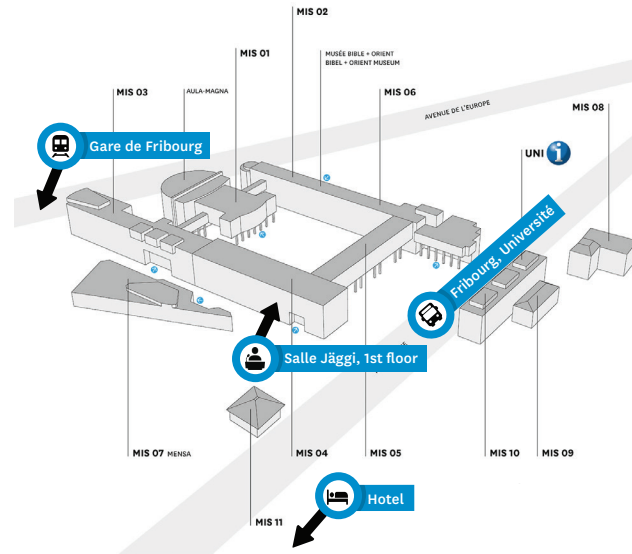


This symposium brings together scholars from across disciplines to explore how bodies were imagined, regulated, and materially transformed between the 16th and 18th centuries. Foregrounding comparative, praxeological, and interdisciplinary approaches, the conference will encourage dialogue between historians of medicine, art and literature, social and cultural historians, anthropologists, and scholars of science and technology. Contributions will address themes such as embodied labor and skill, training and educational technologies, medical and surgical interventions, representations of bodily change, and the entanglement of corporeal practices with religious, political, and social norms. By doing so, the symposium aims to reframe the early modern body (or rather, bodies) as not a stable given but as a mutable, contested, and productive site of human experience. Moreover, it attempts to compare different practices of corporeal modification across the early modern world and to analyze their significance for past (and present) societies.

VENUE

University of Fribourg Miséricorde, MIS 04 4122 (Salle Jäggi)



From Fribourg Train Station: 5-minute walk.

By Bus: Nr. 3 (direction Jura) or Nr. 5 (direction Torry, Bonnesfontaines) to “Fribourg, Université”.

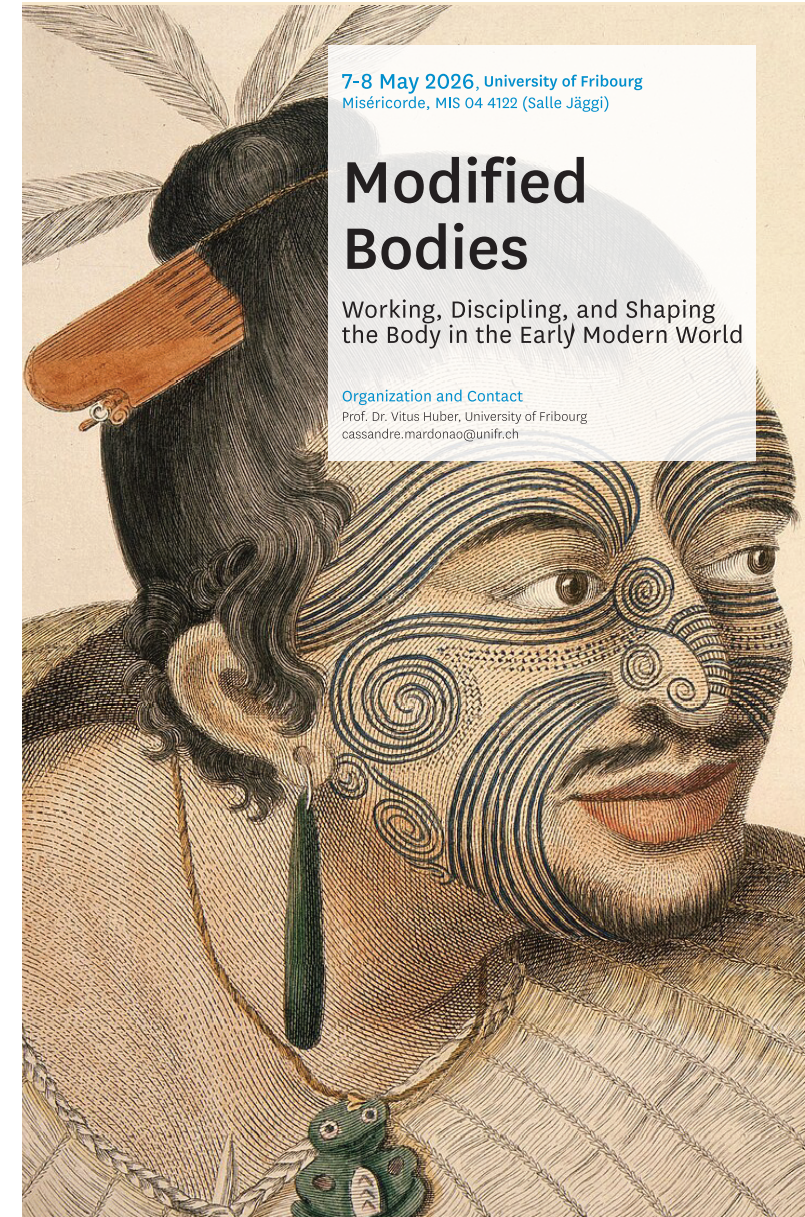
Organization and Contact

Prof. Dr. Vitus Huber, University of Fribourg
cassandra.mardonao@unifr.ch

Credits: Thomas Chambers after Sydney Parkinson, Maori Chief (1784).

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UNIVERSITÉ DE FRIBOURG
UNIVERSITÄT FREIBURG



7-8 May 2026, University of Fribourg
Miséricorde, MIS 04 4122 (Salle Jäggi)

Modified Bodies

Working, Discipling, and Shaping
the Body in the Early Modern World

Organization and Contact

Prof. Dr. Vitus Huber, University of Fribourg
cassandra.mardonao@unifr.ch

9:00–9:30 | Introduction
Vitus Huber, University of Fribourg

Session 1: Foreign Body Modifications

Chair: **Claude Bourqui**, University of Fribourg

9:30–10:15 | A Clever Man's Invention?
 Speculations on the Chinese Practice of Foot
 Binding in Early Modern Travel Writing
Jasmin Mersmann, FU Berlin

10:15–11:00 | The curious case of one-breasted
 bodies
Alanna Skuse, University of Reading

Coffee Break

11:15–12:00 | “Different de celui des hommes”:
 French Colonial Perspectives on Body Modifica-
 tion and the “Bardache” in the Late-Seventeenth
 and Early-Eighteenth Centuries
Lance Pederson, University of Illinois –
 Urbana Champaign

Lunch

Session 2: Medical Body Modifications

Chair: **Glaire Gantet**, University of Fribourg

13:45–14:30 | Margaret Cavendish and the
 “Medicine that Could Renew Old Age” in the
 Early Modern Atlantic World
Edith Snook, University of New Brunswick

14:30–15:15 | The Body and the Sea: Modifying the
 Body Via Transformative Qualities of the Sea in
 Magical Healing Practices Across Islands of the
 Early Modern Greater Mediterranean
Carolin Schmitz, King's College London

Coffee Break

Session 3: Shaping Power

Chair: **Olivier Richard**, University of Fribourg

15:45–16:30 | Mending the Ruler's Body: Injury,
 Mutilation and Prosthetics in Early Modern Court
 Culture
Benjamin Steiner, University of Munich

16:30–17:15 | The Inca Rulers Between Institu-
 tional Sacredness and Individual Personality
Karoline Noack, University of Bonn

Break

Keynote

Chair: **Thomas Lau**, University of Fribourg

18:00–19:15 | High Hair in Early Modern Europe
Evelyn Welch, University of Bristol

Dinner

FRIDAY, 8 May 2026

Session 4: Shaping Youth

Chair: **Cassandre Mardonao**, University of Fribourg

8:45–9:30 | The Transformative Power of Physical
 Exercise in Early Modern Europe
Valerio Zanetti, University of Oxford

9:30–10:15 | Teaching the Physical Practice of the
 Healthy Soul: Corporeal Pedagogies at Die
 Franckeschen Anstalten, 1698–1750
Trine Outzen, University of Lund

Coffee Break

Session 5: Religious and Legal Body Modifications

Chair: **Marco Schnyder**, University of Fribourg

10:30–11:15 | Not of This World: Radical Protes-
 tantism and Bodily and Spiritual Manipulation,
 c. 1700
Karin Sennefelt, Stockholm University

11:15–12:00 | Legal Modifications: Judicial Facial
 Disfigurement in Early Modern Britain
Emily Cock, University of Cardiff

Lunch

Session 6: Aesthetic and Dietetic Body Modifications

Chair: **Dominic-Alain Boariu**, University of Fribourg

13:15–14:00 | Shaping Beauty and Health:
 Concepts of Body Modification in Early Modern
 Medicine and Art
Romana Sammern, University of Salzburg

14:00–14:45 | Damn the Barber! The Embodied
 Experience of Early Modern Personal Grooming
Alun Withey, University of Exeter

14:45–15:15 | Final Discussion