

The Spiritual in the Age of Science (NCSA, Asheville 22–24 Mar 12)

Asheville, NC, Mar 22–24, 2012

Deadline: Sep 19, 2011

Marsha Morton

Call for papers for a panel at the Nineteenth-Century Studies Association (NCSA) 33rd Annual Conference "Spiritual Matters/Matters of the Spirit"

Sacred Matter: The Spiritual in the Age of Science

The nineteenth-century has unequivocally been regarded as the era of scientific materialism, notable for major developments in all branches of the physical, biological, and earth sciences that changed epistemological foundations forever. At the same time, matters of faith and spiritual belief tenaciously endured not only among the religious but also among many secular scientists and philosophers. Beginning in Germany with the Naturphilosophie of the Romantics and the harmonious order of Alexander von Humboldt's Cosmos, and continuing through monism and theosophy at the end of the century, nature continued to be regarded as having a spiritual component, whether immanent or transcendent. This panel seeks to explore the work of artists, designers and architects who explored this fusion. What forms did these mergers take? How did artists convey their message within depictions of the natural world? What were their motivations? Examples might include artists who responded to scientific theories in which matter was encoded with a spiritual dimension, to new forms of nature religions, to science coupled with folk literature and legends, or with the mystical and/or paranormal. Topics could address aspects of pantheism and transcendentalism, which were influenced by Jean-Baptiste Lamarck and by Herbert Spencer's 'softened' version of Darwinism, or Ernst Haeckel's monism in which sentient cells with 'souls' powered evolutionary development, or the new visual world of microscopic life. Papers are especially welcome which consider the artistic use of illustrations in scientific texts and popular culture.

Please e-mail abstracts (250 words) for 20-minute papers that provide the author's name and paper title in the heading, as well as a one-page c.v to Mortonmarsha10@gmail.com and blarson@uwf.edu

Reference:

CFP: The Spiritual in the Age of Science (NCSA, Asheville 22-24 Mar 12). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 3, 2011
(accessed Dec 21, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/1764>>.