Theosophy and the arts in the modern world (Amsterdam, 25-27 Sep13)

University of Amsterdam, Feb 8–Mar 1, 2013
Deadline: Mar 1, 2013

Dr Sarah Victoria Turner

CALL FOR PAPERS

Enchanted Modernities: Theosophy and the arts in the modern world

A Conference at the University of Amsterdam, 25-27 September 2013

This is the first conference of the newly established research network, Enchanted Modernities: Theosophy, modernism and the Arts c. 1875-1960, funded by the Leverhulme Trust. The conference will be organized in collaboration with the Centre for the History of Hermetic philosophy and related currents, University of Amsterdam.

Building on a very successful exploratory colloquium at Liverpool Hope University in December 2010, this conference will explore what the arts can tell us about the complex relationships between Theosophy, modernity and artistic culture c. 1875-1960. The purpose of this conference is to bring together an international group of scholars working on Theosophy and the arts across the globe in this period, and as a result, map the rich variety of artistic responses to the influence of Theosophy and the Theosophical movements in the modern world. The connections between Theosophy and modernist aesthetics have been well documented in relation to certain artists such as Kandinsky and Mondrian, as well as composers like Scriabin and Rudhyar. However, the purpose of this conference is to develop a more nuanced and complex picture of the multiple layering of art, modernity and mysticism in a range of artistic practices in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The wider critical significance of the relationships between painting, sculpture, applied and decorative arts, music, architecture on the one hand and Theosophy on the other, with the exception of a few well known case-studies, is still largely to be explored, possibly because, as the historian Alex Owen has suggested, 'the very notion of mysticism and the occult seem to run counter to our conception of modern culture and the modern mind set'.
Individual papers might explore how artists, musicians and performers came into contact with Theosophy and other mystical doctrines or practices, and how Theosophical ideas, especially those of key figures in the Society in this period, such as Helena P. Blavatsky and Annie Besant, were given material, visual and audible form and shape.
Other topics of interest for the conference will include: the international artistic networks of the Theosophical movements (including R. Steiner's Anthroposophy and post-Theosophical developments, such as G.I. Gurdjieff's Work), the interrelations of mysticism, music and the visual arts; women artists/musicians and Theosophy; the artistic significance of A. Besant's and C.W. Lead-

beater's book Thought Forms (1901).

We plan to publish the proceedings of this conference. Please indicate whether you are interested in developing your paper, if accepted, for a publication of collected essays after the conference.

In 2015, the network will hold another conference at Columbia University, New York, which will focus more on literature and text.

Language: English
Deadline for paper proposals: Friday, 1st March 2013
Proposal format: abstract (300 to 500 words) and a short bio (100 to 200 words)
Please send your proposals to Dr. Marco Pasi: m.pasi@uva.nl

Check the dedicated conference website for further information and news:
http://www.york.ac.uk/history-of-art/amsterdam-theosophy-conference/

For further information on the Network please visit our website at:
http://www.york.ac.uk/history-of-art/enchanted-modernities

Reference:

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