

Weltempfänger. Mediumistische Kunst in Theorie und Praxis 1850–1950

Internationales Symposium, 25. und 26. Januar 2019

Georgiana Houghton (1814–1884), Hilma af Klint (1862–1944) und Emma Kunz (1892–1963) entwickelten unabhängig voneinander eine abstrakte, mit Bedeutung hoch aufgeladene Bildsprache. Die Künstlerinnen verstanden sich als Empfängerinnen von Botschaften, die nur sie wahrnehmen konnten. Ihre Kunstwerke resultierten aus ihren spirituellen Erfahrungen und ihrer Kommunikation mit einer höheren Welt. Alle drei wollten in ihren Arbeiten Naturgesetze, Geistiges und Übersinnliches sichtbar machen.

Ihr Selbstverständnis als Medium erlaubte es den Künstlerinnen, die Schöpfung ihrer Bilder einer externen Quelle zuzuschreiben. Dies gab ihnen die Freiheit, soziale, kulturelle und ästhetische Grenzen zu überwinden.

Auch John Whitney (1917–1995), James Whitney (1921–1982) und Harry Smith (1923 – 1991) strebten danach, mit bildnerischen Mitteln geistige Welten und kosmische Prinzipien sichtbar zu machen. Im Kalifornien der Nachkriegszeit produzierten sie abstrakte Filme, die – wie die Werke der Künstlerinnen – in ihrer Doppelfunktion als ästhetisch überzeugende Kunstwerke und Instrumente zur Erlangung höherer Erkenntnis die Kunsttheorie vor neue Herausforderungen stellen.

Das Symposium beschäftigt sich damit wie mediumistische Praxis den traditionellen Kunstbegriff erweitern und die Definition von Abstraktion verändern kann. Es versammelt internationale Expertinnen und Experten, die dieses Phänomen aus ideengeschichtlicher, kunsthistorischer, feministischer oder medientheoretischer Perspektive diskutieren. Damit verfolgt es einen methodischen Ansatz, der das Aufkommen und die Genese der künstlerischen Abstraktion nicht als rein formale Innovation betrachtet, sondern sie mit Blick auf die Kontexte ihres Entstehens zu deuten versucht.

Organisiert von: Karin Althaus, Lars Bang Larsen, Marco Pasi und Sebastian Schneider

Symposium mit Vorträgen in englischer Sprache – mit Ausnahme der Abendveranstaltung am Freitag. Sie sind jedoch herzlich eingeladen, Ihre Diskussionsbeiträge auch auf Deutsch zu formulieren.

Friday, January 25, 2019

09.30 am: Welcome and Introduction

World Receivers. Mediumistic Art in Theory and Practice 1850–1950

Karin Althaus and Sebastian Schneider, curators of the exhibition, Lenbachhaus, Munich

09.45 – 10.15 am: Marco Pasi

University of Amsterdam

The Art of Esoteric Posthumousness

In his lecture, Marco Pasi discusses the concept of “posthumousness,” i.e. the inability or unwillingness to promote one’s art in the public sphere during one’s own lifetime and the process that leads to the belated, posthumous recognition of its value. In the case of the three women artists featured in the exhibition in the Lenbachhaus, we are dealing with a specific case of this concept, which we might call “esoteric posthumousness.” To what extent is the posthumousness of these three artists related to the “esoteric” or “spiritual” quality of their art? In answering this question, Pasi will engage in a comparative analysis of the “esoteric posthumousness” of these artists, showing not only their similarities, but also their significant differences.

10.15 – 10.45 am: Massimo Introvigne

CESNUR Center for Studies on New Religions, Turin

When Spirits Paint: Is There a Spirit Art?

Recent exhibitions of Georgiana Houghton and Hilma af Klint led to a renewed interest in works of art allegedly produced by spirits guiding the hands of the artists. The expression “spirit art” is, however, ambiguous and, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, has been used with different meanings. Massimo Introvigne’s lecture surveys different kinds of “spirit art,” their

ideological subtexts, and their cultural impact.

– Coffee Break –

11 – 11.30 am: Raphael Rosenberg

University of Vienna

The Amimetic Strategy of Visualizing the Invisible and Its Relation to Twentieth Century Abstract Art

Raphael Rosenberg contends that there has been a long tradition of visualizing invisible events with amimetic (i.e. non-figurative) pictures—from the Middle Ages to painters as Houghton and af Klint. From around 1910 on, avant-gardist painters as Kandinsky were also building on this convention, as well as and even more so on two other traditions of amimetic pictures: on blots made by chance and on discourses related to aesthetic effects. They clearly differ from the “world receivers” presented in the present exhibition: not in the form of their paintings, but in their intentions and in the way painted forms relate to meaning.

11.30 am – 12.10 pm: Panel Discussion

Massimo Introvigne, Raphael Rosenberg, Marco Pasi

Moderation: Karin Althaus

– Lunch Break –

2 – 3.30 pm: Lea Porsager

Artist, Copenhagen

FAR ØUT — CØSMIC STRIKE

Working as a visual artist, Lea Porsager takes science into more fragile and unmeasurable realms. She seeks to situate spirituality, sensuality, and hard science in a forced triangle.

“I very much see works of Georgiana Houghton, Hilma af Klint, and Emma Kunz as a reverberation of waves and particles, visionary flowers of otherworldly monstrous jellyfish-like creatures, portals and openings, visibility and obscurity. Un-timeliness, out-of-this-world

experiences. I meet these three artists as spooky companions in my own work. They are like revelations out of sync. They present different string figures and layers of space-time bending. I seek these trans(re)ceivers, these psychic transmitters of far-out networks!"

2.30 – 3 pm: Simon Grant

Curator and editor, *Tate Etc.* magazine, London

Georgiana Houghton: Wonders of the Worlds

Georgiana Houghton lived during a century of extraordinary change; a time when cross-disciplinary activity was the norm, when the popularization of science was at its peak, and when the most fundamental questions of human existence were being scrutinized. Did Georgiana Houghton produce her works in a vacuum, or was she, like Hilma af Klint, influenced by the wonders of the worlds around her?

3 – 3.30 pm: Lars Bang Larsen

Moderna Museet, Stockholm

Politics of the Imperceptible

Lars Bang Larsen's presentation will depart from the notion of the spectral as it was employed by critical theory around the turn of the millennium, in order to loop back to revisit the agenda of nineteenth century Modern American Spiritualism, a movement whose rise coincided with the 1848 revolutions in Europe. Spiritualism is notable for its confrontation of patriarchal institutions, including religion, science, and the right to own slaves. Despite its ambiguities, the movement was also a much more extroverted and progressive articulation of political agency than Marxist prejudice would have it. This perspective on Spiritualism and its enabling political power ought to vindicate it from twentieth century denigrations of it as dubious credulity and closet-authoritarianism. It could also serve a sort of script-flipping function on Derrida's famous analysis of Marx's ghosts. To revisit this history today might serve in a continuous search for a new politics and aesthetics.

3.30 – 4.10 pm: Panel Discussion

Simon Grant, Lars Bang Larsen, Lea Porsager

Moderation: Marco Pasi

– Coffee Break –

4.30 – 5 pm: Daniela Stöppel

Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München

The Artistic Work of Elena Guro (1877–1913) as a Practiced Female Aesthetics of the Dissolution of Boundaries

Among a wider audience, Elena Guro is known neither as a poet nor as a visual artist. This may be due to the fact that she died in 1913, while her husband, Mikhail Matiushin, gained international recognition within the context of the so-called “Russian Avant-Garde.” Guro’s abstract pictorial creations, which she generated from a kind of inner fusion with nature, remained unnoticed. The lecture attempts to grasp this principle of fusion—also in comparison with Guro’s literary texts and in the context of theosophical and gender-bound role models—as a specifically female strategy of the dissolution of boundaries.

5 – 5.30 pm: Julia Voss

Leuphana University of Lüneburg

Five Things to Know About Hilma af Klint

The lecture will present the latest results of the research on the artist’s life and work. It will dispel many false myths about the Swedish artist that have been perpetuated over the years. The artist’s spiritual, scientific, and art historical interests will be put into perspective, and her work will be described as a holistic project.

5.30 – 6.10 pm: Panel Discussion

Daniela Stöppel, Julia Voss

Moderation: Sebastian Schneider

– Break –

7 pm: Filmvorführung mit Julia Benkert

(in German)

Ihrer Zeit voraus – Hilma af Klint (D 2018), arte, 26 min.

Seit ihrer Jugend fühlte sich Hilma af Klint von höheren Wesen geleitet. 1904, während einer Séance, bekommt sie den Auftrag, Bilder für einen Tempel zu malen. Eine Vision, die sich verblüffender Weise gut ein Jahrhundert später, 2018, mit der Ausstellung im Guggenheim Museum in New York zu erfüllen scheint.

Buch und Regie: Julia Benkert, freie Autorin und Regisseurin, München

Einführung: Matthias Mühling, Direktor Lenbachhaus

Im Anschluss: Julia Benkert im Gespräch mit Karin Althaus

Saturday, January 26, 2019

09.30 – 10 am: Walter Kugler

Social Sculpture Research Unit, Brookes University, Oxford

Every Human Being Is a Clairvoyant. The Balancing Act Between the Sensual and the Supernatural Worlds

“Higher Beings Commanded...” is the title of a series of works by Sigmar Polke from 1966–69. By giving the series this title, he satirized the longing for transcendence, the spiritually absolute, and “paths to paradise” (Otto Piene), which were the trademark of Yves Klein and the ZERO group. With Beuys, however, a new orbital period in terms of transcendence began. He called his installation, which he created in London in 1974, *Directive Forces*—a term which Rudolf Steiner had variously used in the sense of “Initiation Forces.” Not a medium dictates what happens between above and below, between transcendence and immanence, between the sensual and the supernatural, but the momentum of the search for knowledge is what makes up life. These abilities are given to every human being, as Steiner stated in a lecture in Munich in 1918: “Every human

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being is a clairvoyant.”

10 – 10.30 am: Pascal Rousseau

Sorbonne University, Paris

The Creative Act. The Artist as a Mediumistic Being

In a famous conference titled “The Creative Act,” delivered in Houston in 1957, Marcel Duchamp declared that, “to all appearances, the artist acts like a mediumistic being.” Anticipating the post-structuralist “death of the author” (Barthes, Foucault), Duchamp uses the model of mediumism derived from the *fin de siècle* occulture to propose alternative strategies of the modern artist’s displacement of authority.

10.30 – 11.10 am: Panel Discussion

Pascal Rousseau, Walter Kugler

Moderation: Lars Bang Larsen

– Coffee Break –

11.30 am – 12 noon: Hanne Loreck

University of Fine Arts Hamburg

The Medium’s Scriptings. Hilma af Klint and Her Use of Diagrammatic Systems (with Reference to Harry Smith and Others)

In her talk, Hanne Loreck will speculate about the means and methods of imparting individual spiritual or supernatural information to others. To unveil their insights and visions, Loreck will argue that practitioners organize them according to the common scientific and artistic modes of knowledge representations of their times—discourse, non-objective images, annotated illustrations, drawings, diagrams, photography and so forth—while at the same time wrapping their cognition up into a genre we might call visual science fiction.

12 noon – 12.30 pm: Robert Stockhammer

Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München

Media as Media. Some Interferences between Parapsychic Practices and Communication Technologies

“Media have always produced ghostly apparitions”: Friedrich Kittler alluded to an affinity between the personal ‘media’ of parapsychic experiments on the one hand, and ‘media’ in the presently prevalent sense of communication technologies on the other. Anecdotally, this affinity started with the Hydesville ghosts of 1848, who used a kind of telegraphic sign system to communicate their messages. In his talk, Robert Stockhammer will show that interferences like these are more than superficial.

12.30 – 1.10 pm: Panel Discussion

Hanne Loreck, Robert Stockhammer

Moderation: Lars Bang Larsen, Marco Pasi

Der Eintritt ist frei

Alle Vorträge finden im Georg-Knorr-Saal im Lenbachhaus statt

Alle Vorträge sind öffentlich