

Enchanted Modernities

Theosophy and the arts in the modern world

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Book of Abstracts



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DAY 1

Session 1

Keynote Address

Raphael Rosenberg (University of Vienna) 'Mapping the Aura in the Spirit of Art and Art Theory: Blavatsky, Leadbeater, Besant, and Steiner'

In 1966 Sixten Ringbom made the first attempt to demonstrate in detail that it was the interest for esoteric movements (theosophy, anthroposophy) that gave painters such as Wassily Kandinsky and Piet Mondrian the decisive boost to the invention of abstract art. Ringbom thus attracted the attention of art history to the books of Annie Besant and Charles W. Leadbeater's *Man Visible and Invisible* (1902) and *Thought-Forms* (1905) with their abstract representations of auras. Ringbom's theses were ignored for two decades. It is the exhibition *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985* (Los Angeles County Museum, 1986) that made them popular. Meanwhile his ideas are considered to be the most popular explanation for the creation of abstract art.

The similarities and the potential dependence of early abstract paintings and esoteric illustrations have been repeatedly discussed. However neither Ringbom nor any other art historian has inquired the sources of the abstract images in the books of Besant and Leadbeater. After some extensive research, I conclude that the starting point for these images lies in the confrontation with synesthesia. Synesthesia, a phenomenon that still is partly enigmatic, became fashionable for scientists in the 1880s in the nascent field of psychology. At the same time the founder of the Theosophical Society, Helena P. Blavatsky developed the idea of an auratic egg, a multi-coloured envelope of the physical body that can be seen by clairvoyants. This was useful to elucidate a phenomenon that academic sciences could not explain: The colours seen by synesthesia are the aura; synesthesia is a form of clairvoyance. Blavatsky did not give details about the colours and forms of the aura. It was only after her death in 1891 that leading members of the Theosophical Society attempted to give an exhaustive description of the Aura—first in essays, later in books: Alfred P. Sinnett in 1893, Leadbeater from 1895 on, Besant from 1896 on, August J. B. Marques in 1896. They made extensive lists about the significance of each colour and gave explanations about the meaning of certain lines and forms. From 1896 they helped themselves with non-representational images.

I will demonstrate that the theosophical explanations about auratic colours and lines derive from art and especially from aesthetic theories that were popular among artists in the 19th century and particularly among the avant-garde around 1900. Recognizing that the source for the visualization of the aura lies in art and art theory enriches the understanding of the theosophical and Anthroposophical system. At the same time this mitigates the importance of *Thought-Forms* for the genesis of abstract art.

Session 2

2A: Early abstraction / art institutions

Marty Bax (Bax Art, Amsterdam), 'Mondrian and the power of primary colours'

Piet Mondrian became world-famous as the pioneer of complete abstraction. He named his art Neo-Plasticism, a direct reference to the theosophical concept of the Plastic Essence of life. The main characteristics of Mondrian's work are his use of primary colours and planes defined by straight lines. Mondrian was also a theosophist by heart, and remained so all his life after having entered the

Theosophical Society in 1909. In the lecture, I will explain the theosophical thoughts behind his pictorial choices, and how he tried to integrate his study as an artist of the essential, material means of art with a cosmic world view based on Blavatsky's theosophical principles.

Dmitrij Kraft (Ludwig-Maximilian University, Munich), 'Malevič's avant-garde artistic concepts and the esoteric occult tradition of his period'

It was only in the end of the eighties of the XX century that art historians began to look afresh at the occult side of modern art – up to then mostly ignored. True, science today is fully aware of the important role theosophical occult doctrines played in the development of art in the beginning of the XX. century. However, the degree of contamination emanating from the rich field of the esoteric movements into the various philosophical constructs of the main representatives of the modern art movement, especially of the Russian Avant-garde, has as yet not been systematically researched.

This is particularly true for Kazimir Malevič – one of the outstanding artists of the Russian Avant-garde movement. His work and philosophical-artistic concepts were directed towards a radical renewal and reconstruction of all spheres of life.

His own thoughts on this matter constituted part of a larger field of hermetic tradition with its search for a new psychological perception and a will to reach higher spiritual spheres, where authentic reality resided. The natural sciences themselves seemed to underpin these new perceptions of reality so typical for that era.

Besides harking back to the century-old tradition of high cultural hermetic (from Masonry to theosophy and anthroposophy) the representatives of the post-symbolic avant-garde drew their spiritual impulses equally from the sub cultural archaic currents (primitive cultures, folkloric motives and - thinking modes), although these various spheres can very often not be very well distinguished from one another. It is interesting that in Malevič's philosophical art concepts these two different sources of inspiration are closely intertwined.

In my talk I want to reveal Malevič's artistic program with its hermetic background which he formulated on the one hand in his theoretical texts on the other in the medium of painting and especially in his auto portraits.

Rose-Carol Washton-Long (Graduate Center, City University of New York), 'Back to Barr: MoMA's 2013 origins of Abstraction'

The recent exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York returned to the guidelines formulated by its first director - Alfred Barr, Jr. – in attempting to explain the development of 20th century abstract art. While Barr avoided contextual information for political reasons, the 2013 exhibition was not facing a threat from either Hitler or Stalin. Why then did this exhibition omit all discussion of Theosophy, anarchism and other contextual information from both the exhibition and the catalogue? This paper will attempt to shed light on this omission by returning to Barr's 1936 catalogue of *Cubism and Abstract Art* as well as examining the input of Theosophy and anarchism upon Wassily Kandinsky's large 1911 oil painting, *Composition V*, the only major Kandinsky oil from before World War I in the MoMA exhibition. By analyzing Kandinsky's embrace of contemporaneous anarchist and Theosophical ideas as crucial to his advocacy of dissonance as a strategy for shocking the public into a condition of empowerment, I plan to demonstrate that the absence of contextualization seriously undermines our comprehension of early 20th century modernist abstraction.

Pietro Rigolo (The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles), 'Instilling in humanity warmth and a new spiritual light - Theosophy and Modern Art in Harald Szeemann's exhibitions'

Harald Szeemann (1933-2005) was one of the most prominent curators of his generation, having organized more than 150 art shows during a career that spanned almost 50 years. Far from being concerned only with contemporary art, he organically worked on a body of exhibitions characterized

by a vivid interest for topics such as utopia, Gesamtkunstwerk, the history of intentions and obsessions, trying to build an European history of alternatives based on a multi-disciplinary approach and on the study of Art brut, psychoanalysis, pataphysics, religious devotion and, last but not least, Theosophy and Anthroposophy. In this context, a special role is played by his lifelong project of building a museum on Monte Verità, the hill in Ticino which hosted from the second part of the XIX century onwards different groups and colonies of anarchists, vegetarians, nudists, artists and life reformers.

In my paper, I will address the role of Theosophy and Anthroposophy in Szeemann's practice as a curator, as well as in his thinking about modern art, particularly focusing on the exhibitions in which he presented works by Rudolf Steiner, or had Theosophy as a central theme: the already mentioned *Monte Verità* (1978), *Der Hang zum Gesamtkunstwerk* (1983) and *Money&Value – The last taboo* (2002), that represent mayor examples of mainstream temporary display of Theosophy-related material in the last decades. Special attention will be devoted also to the relationship and professional collaboration with Joseph Beuys, presented in 17 of Szeemann's mayor exhibitions and considered by the curator to be the most important artist of the second half of the XX century, and to an unrealized project dated 1975, *La Mamma*, meant to focus on the idea of a feminine deity and to the body of women, which was supposed to present also the life and work of Helena Blavatsky and Annie Besant.

2B: Architecture and applied arts

Susan R. Henderson (Syracuse University), 'Lauweriks, Behrens, and the Kunstgewerbeschule in Dusseldorf'

In 1908, Karl Ernst Osthaus (1874-1921), heir to an industrial fortune, founded an artist colony to be located on a ridge above the city Hagen in the Ruhr Valley. Over the years, he commissioned a series of buildings, culminating in a row of artist houses designed by the Dutch architect and theosophist, J.L.M. Lauweriks (1864-1932). Hohenhof was perhaps the most fully realized expression of the Lauweriks's theosophical design method and the colony itself became something of a crossroads of artists and architects, such that Lauweriks's exemplification of a theosophical architect was studied by a surprising roster of eminent twentieth century architects. Le Corbusier, for example, visited the site, probably having learned about it from Peter Behrens. Behrens was fascinated by Lauweriks theoretical constructs, as his Hagen crematorium with its distinct Theosophical underpinnings demonstrates. His junior assistant on that work was Walter Gropius.

This web of associations and influence typifies the quiet diffusion of esoteric ideas in early twentieth century architecture. An earlier chapter of my work studied the role of Lauweriks at Hagen and began an exploration of the influence he effected on eminent architects such as Behrens. To further this study, I would like to present to the Amsterdam conference a study of Lauweriks, Behrens, and the students of the Kunstgewerbeschule in Dusseldorf when Behrens was the school's director and Lauweriks, its theorist. This is something of a prehistory to the Hagen episode. It was in 1903 that Behrens became director of the Kunstgewerbeschule, and in 1904 that he hired Lauweriks as an instructor in architectural theory. Lauweriks's tenure in Dusseldorf lasted from 1904-1909. As reported by the great Dutch architect, H.P. Berlage in 1908, 'At the Kunstgewerbeschule in Dusseldorf . . . all design is worked out according to a similar but very stringent method as directed by the Dutch teacher Lauweriks. Indeed he takes it farther than anyone else'. From this period emerge such projects as Behrens's Oldenburger Exhibition Pavilions (1905) and Music Pavilion in Cologne (1906) with distinct, but as yet unstudied Theosophical overtones. Behrens would soon become the chief architect and designer for AEG in Berlin; his works for that company confirmed his stature as one of the great early twentieth century architects. His employees there included Walter Gropius, Adolf Meyer, and, for a time, Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier. Adolf Meyer became a renowned architect in his own right, remembered particularly for works on which he partnered with

Walter Gropius. As a student at the Dusseldorf Academy, Meyer's works were chosen as models to exemplify Lauweriks's design theory, and Theosophical elements continued to echo throughout his work. Men like Behrens and Meyer are not known for their Theosophical interests, but rather as practitioners of a modernism based in science and rationalism. The complexity of their architecture philosophy awaits a fuller treatment of its less canonical aspects.

Sven A. Clausen (Independent Scholar, Lübeck) 'The method Lauweriks, System-based design and theosophy in architecture'

Around the turn of the 20th century the Dutch architect, teacher, and writer J. L. M. Lauweriks formed an aesthetic theory based mainly on theosophical assumptions, which served for the development of a logically structured method to create organic unity in art. With that method that he called *Entwerfen nach System* [system-based design], the idea that every being and every object in nature is related to one another is supposed to be expressed within a building or any other piece of art. Therefore an artist starts a draft or composition by inventing a kind of germ cell – in form of a geometrical diagram – before he elaborates the real work of art. Every drawn-out element derives from the pre-designed material, which then appears as the abstract centre of the work. Hereby the artist creates a substructure that causes coherency beyond traditional stylistic idioms and leads to a higher level of liberty in the artistic process. Furthermore, the pre-designed substructure can be understood as an order in which each part is a reduced-size copy of the whole, a fractal. Being close to theosophical metaphysics, Lauweriks used this concept of self-similarity to give his works the significance of an image of a divine cosmic order.

Together with this system he also found a characteristic language of shapes that on the one hand corresponds with theosophical symbols like the snake, the spiral, or the swastika. On the other hand this language of shapes is focused on a strict geometry and initiates an orientation towards the effects and possibilities of abstraction in art.

With the invention of his system and the clear and abstract language of shapes Lauweriks had some influence on the contemporary art and also on following generations. But his name wasn't always mentioned when his ideas served as a basis for new developments. Le Corbusier, for example, conceived his anthropometric scale of proportion, the Modulor, under the impression of Lauweriks' method without any clear indication of his source. So Lauweriks appears as a secret inventor of a tool to create a new style in architecture and this tool is deeply connected with theosophy.

Mariël Polman (Netherlands Cultural Heritage Agency and University of Amsterdam), 'Van Nelle. The stratification of colours of an exceptional factory'

The Van Nelle complex in Rotterdam, a processing factory for tobacco, coffee and tea, was built in 1925-31. It was designed by Brinkman & van der Vlugt architects in co-operation with the structural consultant J.G. Wiebenga. The patron was C.H. Van der Leeuw, who was directly involved in the design- and building process. The Van Nelle, the first 'daylight factory' of the Netherlands, is considered to be one of the masterpieces of the modern movement. It is a masterpiece with social, technical and aesthetic qualities.

The enlightened spirit of enterprise of Van der Leeuw reflected on the complex. Besides principles of American efficiency and the modern architecture of the *Bauhaus* in Dessau, which he had investigated personally during special study trips, theosophical influences are obviously. Both he and his brother J.J. Van der Leeuw were important members of the Theosophical Society and close friends of Krishnamurti and Annie Besant. J.A. Brinkman was theosophist and J.G. Wiebenga was freemason.

This paper will concentrate on the theosophical aspects, to be recognised in the physical and historical use of colours and materials in the complex.

The architecture of the Modern Movement is seen as 'colourless' and the theosophical influence as a social context, not as an expression in itself. Over the last 14 years, I have examined the colours of the Van Nelle on a deeper level. Thus, I came to these conclusions:

In the first place are the physical colours in the scope of the architecture as a whole. In 1999-2004, the buildings are converted into a 'Design Factory' in order to accommodate offices and workshops of architects, industrial and graphic designers and alike. I executed the architectural paint research in that period and it turned out that the qualities of the applied colours and finishing were as essential for the architectural concept as was the use of reinforced concrete, steel and glass.

Secondly, I wrote a thesis on the colours of the Modern Movement in the Netherlands during the Interbellum period (2011). Besides the results of several restoration projects, I investigated the use of colours and paints within the context of the ideas on colours, the knowledge of colour theories and the situation of house painters and paint industries during the interwar period. Thus, it is possible to place the colours of the Van Nelle in a broader, historical context. From this point of view, the Van Nelle factory was modern in the use of colour.

In the third place, the colours can be explored from a theosophical perspective. This will show the artistic significance of important sources like H.P. Blavatsky, C.W. Leadbeater, Annie Besant and I.K. Taimni. The painters Kandinsky and Mondrian left us important writings on colour which lead us back to theosophy as well. Also the theosophical Vahana lodge In Amsterdam (1896-1914), run by architects and designers, can open the door to gain an insight into the use of colour.

In all cases: the colours matter a lot, regardless of the general idea.

Jonathan Massey (Syracuse University, New York, USA), 'Ornament as Time and Space: Reconsidering Modernism via Claude Bragdon and Bruno Latour'

'Beauty in architecture is largely the result of structural necessity,' explained Claude Bragdon in 1918 to justify his claim that beauty in ornament should 'spring from a necessity which is numerical' (*Architecture and Democracy*, 1918). By promoting a system of ornament based on n-dimensional geometry, the American architect tried to regulate design according to a universal and eternal language of cosmic mathematics. In reconciling the technical rationality of engineering with the aesthetic rationality of architecture, Bragdon's projective ornament reflected his Theosophical mission to reintegrate the sundered realms of disenchanting modernity: male and female, West and East, reason and faith, modernity and antiquity.

In *Crystal and Arabesque: Claude Bragdon, Ornament, and Modern Architecture* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009) I showed how Bragdon's transnational transmedia modernism symbolized the progressive potential of modernity for Theosophists, social reformers, and community choruses in and beyond New York. In this paper I revisit Bragdon's work to develop a new reading of the contentious debates about ornament that preoccupied European and American architects and theorists during the late 19th and early 20th century.

During this period, Western concepts and practices of ornament were bound up in the modernist idea of time as a linear progression. When John Ruskin celebrated hand-carved stone ornament for the slowness of its creation, its longevity, and the extended looking required for its appreciation, he mobilized ornament as a bulwark against the accelerating changes associated with modernization. When Vienna's Secessionists proclaimed 'To the time its art, to art its freedom' as justification for original ornament, they made the case by appealing to the principle of historical progression. So too did Adolf Loos, their chief antagonist, in describing ornament as a sign of wasted time and a marker of evolutionary lag. When postmodernists revived traditional ornament, they often did so in the mode of nostalgia, reaffirming the association of ornament with bygone time.

But what might ornament mean if we set aside the premise that there is only one time, and that it moves ineluctably forward? Drawing on anthropological theories of time, historian of science Bruno Latour has challenged the narratives of disenchantment and scientific revolution that describe Western modernity (*We Have Never Been Modern*, 1991). If we have never been modern, then the

modernist conceptions of time, history, and evolution that so powerfully shaped the discourse and practice of ornament are myths.

Bragdon's geometric ornament reflected his conception of time as a perceptual distortion created by limited space-perception and his assertion of space rather than time as the basis for a re-enchantment of modern life. By contrasting Bragdon's work to mainstream modernist theories and practices of ornament, I reframe their arguments about ornament as a power struggle--a contest over the ordering principles of 20th century modernity.

Session 3

3A: Symbolism

Christel Scheftsik Naujoks (Aix-Marseille University), 'Spiritual steps and artistic evolution of Paul Sérusier (1864 – 1927'

At the end of 1888, Paul Sérusier (1864-1927), along with Maurice Denis, is the founder of the group called Nabis (*prophet* in Hebrew). Under this denomination, his aim was to announce to the world what became for him the 'new gospel of the painting' (Antoine Terrasse).

In the steps of Gauguin, who he had met in Pont-Aven, Sérusier intended to replace the image by the symbol, the representation of nature by the interpretation of the idea. Thanks to both an exaltation of pure colours and simplification of forms, a symbolist ideal would rise up and would deliberately break up with impressionism. This double research – colour and line – evolves indissociably with spiritual quest of Paul Sérusier.

His friendship with Jan Verkade, who chose to join the Benedictine monastery of Beuron (Germany), guided him on the way to Faith. However, he renounced to imitating his friend, as he was concerned about keeping a total liberty of art and creation. From then on, the artistic identity of the founder and theorist of the Nabis group always sought an Ideal that would take its origin both in spirituality and spiritualism. His friendship with Schuré as well as his readings (Plato's *Timeaus*, the Bible, Balzac's *Louis Lambert* and *Séraphita*, Huysmans) had a strong impact on his art, as much as on his spiritual development.

The kind of abstraction which slowly arose in a singular way of expression, in a context in which modern artists come back to sheer religious art, is based on the combination of geometry, in the way of the Aesthetic of Beuron wanted by Father Desiderius Lenz, and the simplification of the colours chosen thanks to a triangle inside the colour circle (the 'Harmony Door', *ABC de la peinture*, Paul Sérusier, 1942).

From these, the economy of both colour and line expresses harmony in the purest way. Works of art such as *The Blind Force* (1892), with the title as well as with the composition, *The Origins*, the *Gold Cylinder* and *The Tetraedrons* (about 1910), as well as the wall decoration in his own house at Châteauneuf-du-Faou (Finistère) show the influence that Schuré's *Grands Initiés* probably had on Sérusier: the iconographic choices and plastic compositions bring to light his inclination for the Mystic. Sérusier envisaged his art as a way to God, Harmony and Truth. According to him, Art has to be subordinated to religious and mystical purpose, the work of art has to overcome the technique with the aim of serving the elevation of the mind.

In our communication, it should be important to appreciate the actual impact the friendship and the work of Schuré had on Sérusier, his art, his theory about line and colour, and his spiritual development.

Pascal Rousseau (Université Paris I), 'Aristie and Sâr Peladan: Occultism and the sacerdotal mediation of art'

This paper's analysis will focus on the occultist writer Sâr Joséphin Péladan, promoter of the symbolist Salons de la Rose-Croix (1892-1897) and his theory of 'Aristie'. Derived from the Greek 'aristocracy,' Péladan's neologism 'aristie' declared the new age of the 'Arts as a Religion,' defending the 'ariste' as a spiritual authority. Not only a figure of social sovereignty but of phallocratic egocentrism, the ariste will develop a dandy dietetics of intelligence, based on the literature of psychical research and theosophy as well as psychopathological medical treatises of the period, which excludes female creativity in favor of a sacerdotal mediation in aesthetics.

Sarah V. Turner (University of York), 'Orphic modernity: Theosophy, the visual arts and cultural exchange between Britain and Belgium in the early twentieth century'

This paper examines the important cultural networks between Theosophy and the visual arts in Britain and Belgium at the beginning of the twentieth century. As a case study, I look at the work of artists associated with the Theosophical Arts Circle, which was founded by Clifford Bax in London in 1907, and its journal *Orpheus*. This group had particularly strong connections with the Belgium artist Jean Delville and his work was regularly reproduced on the pages of the journal. My paper traces these relationships through the articles and images reproduced in *Orpheus*, an important channel for Theosophically-inspired ideas about the mystical and imaginative power of art at the dawn of the new century. The role of the visual arts in fostering internationalism and cultural exchange across national borders was a strong theme running throughout the journal and I use the connections between Bax, Delville and the artist Francis Colmer, translator of Delville's *The New Mission of Art: A Study of Idealism in Art* into English in 1910, to think about the international artistic networks fostered through an interest in Theosophy and mysticism more broadly at the beginning of the twentieth century.

3B: Music 1

Andrew Owen (Louisiana State University), 'Holst's Textual Synthesis: The Texts of The Hymn of Jesus'

The textual sources of Gustav Holst's 1917 choral masterwork *The Hymn of Jesus* demonstrate the composer's interest in ancient philosophies. The piece's main text is from a late second-century work titled the *Acts of John*, a gnostic non-canonical text that was recovered in 1897 in the Imperial Library in Vienna. This discovery caught the attention of the theosophist G. R. S. Mead, who was Madame Blavatsky's former secretary and Holst's friend. In 1907, Mead published his own translation and commentary on the text, ten years before Holst began to work with it and other versions of the hymn so that he could set it to music. With the help of Jane Joseph, G. R. S. Mead, and Clifford Bax (who was also a theosophist), Holst's modifications of the text maintained the style of Mead's translation, but made it more direct and understandable. Many of these modifications advanced his personal interpretations of the hymn text and many also made the hymn easier to understand. Holst intensified the text's emphasis on volition as a requirement for spiritual advancement, for instance, when he changes passive verbs like 'seest' to active ones like 'gaze.' Holst clearly saw in the text the three-part pattern of a passive statement, followed by an active statement, followed by a stabilizing 'Amen' (a stability that Mead notes in his commentary on the text). Holst directly set the first two in various, often opposing, ways, and the 'Amen' in a consistent, repetitive way. The closer the attention goes to the active/passive dyad, the more varied the music is, and the closer the attention goes to the stable monad 'Amen,' the more stable the music is. Holst's awareness of Mead's theosophical interpretations of the hymn greatly influenced the musical style of the *Hymn of Jesus*. He knew that a more concise and direct version of the text that satisfied his imagination and incorporated current thought on the hymn would be more dramatically effective

than a setting of Mead's original words. Though existing scholarship on Holst has previously considered only broad implications of Holst's theosophical understandings, none has hitherto examined specifically how they affected the text and the musical structures of this piece. With the *Hymn of Jesus* being the only gnostic text set by a major composer, Holst's incorporation of relevant theosophical principles make the work well fit for representing the text's original philosophies.

Dominik Šedivý (University of Salzburg), 'Dodecaphonic Universalism: Equivalent balance as a counter model to monocentrism and duality'

The last century originated a number of prominent composers that have created an elaborate combined system of a neoplatonic and hermetic musical world view. While the scientific community is more or less aware of Alexander Skriabin's (1872–1915) musical mysticism, comparatively little parts of the tremendous amount of material left by Olivier Messiaen (1908–1992) has reached the awareness of greater circles. Even less is known about the spiritual world of the Austrian composer and theorist Josef Matthias Hauer (1883–1959) who created an extensive system of universalistic thought based on the principle of dodecaphony.

In 1919, Hauer established his 'twelve-tone law' (which he called '*Nomos*') by claiming a fragile, but harmonic balance (on the basis of the Golden Section) between all twelve pitches caused by self-regulation. He explained this concept in terms of a Harmony of the Spheres, saying that the 'solar systems [= 12 pitches] temper each other' by necessity and thus establish a well-tempered and dodecaphonic Harmony of the Spheres. Although it is neither evident nor likely that Hauer actually considered Ramon Llull's *Ars Magna* (esp. fig. 1 of this work) in his thought, the apparent similarities are indeed striking: All different elements (pitches) concur with each other in perfect harmony. The sum of all possible combinations that is represented by one specific current aggregate ('atonal melody') points to a meta-harmony in the center of the circle of tones represented by the term 'Melos': a fundamental spiritual idea behind the physical appearance of sound expresses both balance and proportion as an aesthetical and as one ethical implication. Another implication with regard to the act of composition is the predisposition of the musical material in terms of the twelve-tone row, its trope and the resulting series of 4-part chords ('harmonic bond').

Rather than to Western hermeticism, Hauer often explicitly referred to ancient Greece, to the Harmony of the Spheres, to Daoism and to the *Book of Revelation*. He considered the equivalent harmonic balance within a plurality (of twelve items) a universal principle of thought that is or can be combined with other twelvefold systems such as colours, musical keys and intervals, months, zodiacs, fundamental consonants, vocational classes, the *I Ching* and the set of fundamental principles thought. To a certain extent, this 'atonal' system also constitutes a counter-model in contrast to ascending (or descending) monocentric –therefore 'tonal': he actually referred to a 'natural trope' and the harmonic series as a counterpart to his 44 'atonal tropes'– scales with reference to integer proportions, the *Tetraktys* and the Ptolemaic system such as Robert Fludd's pyramids or his Divine Monochord. It also explicitly opposes bipolar concepts such as the Platonic *Lambda* or the Thimusian *Lambda*.

Although Rudolf Steiner was provably aware of Hauer and saw many affinities between his own anthroposophical understanding of music and Hauer's musical thought, it was Arnold Keyserling (1922–2005) who elaborated Hauer's and his *Zwölftonspiel's* remarkably close connections to Boethius's triad *Musica Mundana – Humana – Instrumentalis*.

Lucy Craddock (The Open University), "'Point of Departure": the enduring influence of theosophy on the composer Edmund Rubbra'

As a student of Cyril Scott and then Gustav Holst and R.O. Morris, it was almost inevitable that the young English composer Edmund Rubbra (1901–86) would gain an interest in theosophy. His unpublished Op. 1, *The Secret Hymnody*, is a setting of a hermetic Greek text translated by G.R.S. Mead. During the 1920s, Rubbra's early involvement with theosophy was reflected in his

unconventional lifestyle, including his work as a composer and pianist with the travelling theatrical company the Arts League of Service. Much of his early vocal and incidental music has a connection with theosophical or mystical texts, and musically contains the seeds of his mature style. Fifty years later, Rubbra still singled out his first published work, the song 'Rosa Mundi', Op. 2 (1921), as 'the point of departure for [his] future development.'

Rubbra subsequently moved out of London and from the late 1930s began to build a reputation as a symphonist. He became increasingly influenced by Roman Catholicism, culminating in his reception into the church in 1947. It would be easy to dismiss his earlier enthusiasm for theosophy as a passing following of fashion or a youthful rebellion against his working-class, low church upbringing. Yet, as Rubbra himself acknowledged, the interest that it aroused for Eastern religion, philosophy and music remained with him for the rest of his life, leaving a lasting impression on his music. This resurfaced particularly in the late 1950s and early 1960s in such works as the Piano Concerto (1956), the *Pezzo Ostinato* for harp (1958) and the song cycle *The Jade Mountain* (1962) setting poems from the T'ang Dynasty translated from the Chinese by Witter Bynner. Musically, the Orient is expressed in a sensuous concern for timbre, subtlety of rhythm and mode, and use of delicate ostinati – qualities that are also present in his earliest works.

This paper will explore examples of his early and later music, setting the works in their biographical context to show how, from the start of his career, an interest in theosophy and the East enabled Rubbra to create a very original and individual soundworld.

Session 4

4A: Australia, Canada, and Mexico

Patricia Plummer (University of Duisburg-Essen), "An enthusiastic exponent of Theosophy & the teachings of Krishnamurti": Louisa Haynes Le Freimann (1863-1956), Australian artist and Theosophist'

This paper focuses on hitherto overlooked Australian woman artist Louisa Haynes Le Freimann (1863-1956) who joined the Theosophical Society in Sydney and was a life-long devotee of the teachings of Krishnamurti. The painter and her contribution to the arts, particularly in the context of the TS, have remained largely unacknowledged, except for some critical (and partly sensationalist) attention that her Impressionist Bush picnic scene near Adelaide (c. 1896, National Library of Australia) has received. Her seemingly conventional, but enigmatic, oil paintings and watercolours stand in marked contrast to her fiercely independent spirit and unconventional life; they link her to a group of Australian women artists analysed in Jenny McFarlane's *Concerning the Spiritual* (2012). Like the works of Australian TS artists Jane Price and Florence Fuller, the works of Haynes Le Freimann belong to a subtly spiritual, feminine, and thus alternative, version of modernism.

Jenny McFarlane (Independent Scholar, Canberra), 'Centre and Periphery; Leadbeater in Sydney'

At the turn of the last century Sydney was a significant hub in a debate about the nature of reality and its relationship with the visible. The Theosophical charismatic CW Leadbeater had arrived in Sydney in 1914 and by the 1920s the city had become 'the spiritual forcing house of the western world'. Many from Hollywood, London, Europe and Asia came to enhance their spiritual prospects. From his earliest arrival Leadbeater attracted artists to his alternative visuality and engaged the local arts community in a debate about the nature of the real.

Gustave Kollerstrom, AE Warner and Judith Fletcher (jeweller, printmaker and photographer respectively) have been previously figured as conservative and parochial exponents in their chosen fields. Yet in collaboration with Leadbeater their work blossoms into expressions of radical

modernism in ways which offer unique insights into broader contemporary practice. These three artists shared a conviction that the visible and invisible worlds were interlinked, that the transcendental was immanent and active in the visible world. In their work the separation of the disciplines of science, religion and art promoted by the Enlightenment was explicitly and programmatically ignored.

The distinct and unusual work produced by these artists can be understood as the result of their intimate relationship with Leadbeater. All were bound to him by an utter conviction of his superior psychic vision and by close physical proximity. Only in Sydney was Leadbeater's theory backed by the full weight of his dominant personality and experienced relatively unmediated by others in the Theosophical leadership. At close quarters Leadbeater's impact was mesmeric. While artists at a distance (see Piet Mondrian and Wassily Kandinsky in Europe, and Australians Grace Cossington Smith and Roi de Maistre) were able to explore the implications of his ideas with greater licence, those close to him were tied to his expectations by their very acknowledgment of his superior visual authority. The artists most closely associated with Leadbeater felt highly privileged to be permitted to document this supreme artist's visions. The compromise they made with their personal style was part of their general subsumption to his goals.

This paper will explore Leadbeater's unique relationships with artists in Sydney and the unique characteristics of this encounter between Theosophy, modernity and visual artists in a city that was both centre and periphery.

Gillian McCann (Nipissing University), "'Spirit as Transforming Power": Theosophy and the Arts in Canadian Perspective'

Canadian Theosophists were closely involved with avant-garde movements in both politics and the arts in the period from 1891-1945. For many like Lawren Harris, Arthur Lismer and Roy Mitchell who were struggling to create a cultural space for the arts within a largely colonial context the Theosophical ideas of Blavatsky, Besant, and Yeats proved to be an anodyne. Looking back on this earlier period Harris wrote of his fellow artists, 'They did not know their own country. They did not know its spirit as a transforming power'. Inspired by Blavatsky's concept of the occult role of nations these pioneers set about creating a distinctly Canadian style of art. They were also instrumental in fostering a milieu that allowed for the creation of original art that moved beyond European influence.

While focusing on the Canadian case this paper will locate the Canadian project within the larger Utopian *weltanschauung* of the Theosophical movement. As idealists Theosophists tended to be highly critical of the increasing control of business over the art world. This critique will be engaged through the writing of Theosophists such as James Cousins, Wassily Kandinsky and Annie Besant. Viewing issues related to art from a wider perspective Theosophists had much to say about the creation, production and selling of art. They developed a variety of programmes aimed at facilitating a space for visionary creative artists many of which had social and political implications. Just as modern art is often believed to be irreligious it is usually understood as being apolitical. However, for painters like Harris and Lismer, art and politics were both handmaids of the New Age that would herald a world order typified by co-operation, creativity and justice.

Susana Pliego Quijano (Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico), 'Creation, generation, transmutation and rebirth in the work of Mexican artists Diego Rivera, Xavier Guerrero and José Clemente Orozco'

Some of the major artists of the so called 'Mexican mural Renaissance'—a plastic movement that emanated from the Mexican Revolution, but that was very much influenced by European thought—filled their works with spirituality and transcendence. Inspired in several esoteric theories, these artists appropriated ideas and symbols that came from a variety of traditions and schools of thought, including Theosophy, as they built a language that has been underestimated, in part because it contradicts with the popular conception that muralism was a public art with social meaning. This

paper will explore the Theosophical representations in the work of four artists produced in the twenties and thirties of the xx century.

Diego Rivera's early murals are filled with theosophical conceptions. In the National Preparatory School, painted in 1921, Diego Rivera depicted the creation of the world inspired in Pythagorean and theosophical theories, including the numbers one and two as basic elements of the creation, the correspondence between macrocosm (stars and constellations) and microcosm (humans) and the separation of the universal androgyne in the two principles: masculine and female. His next work, the murals produced in the Ministry of Education depict some of the national heroes resurrected surrounded by orange *mandorlas*, expressing the transmutation of the soul as well as an initiation process.

In the frescoes at Chapingo, the National Agricultural School, some images show the four seasons, the four elements and a beautiful ceiling—painted by Rivera's assistant, Xavier Guerrero—which the transit of the Earth around the sun as well as the transit of the moon around the Earth showing the universal law of periodicity through cyclic change. The decoration of the chapel shows a dialectic composition that embraces the parallel development of social and natural orders that lead to a balance between nature, technology, modernity and the human race, depicting cosmic unity. The correspondence extends to initiation rites (symbolic death, detachment of material possessions, emerging from a cave and rebirth) and agricultural cycles as containing also a symbolic death (sowing) followed by a rebirth (germination), and thus, forming the cycle of generation, creation and destruction showing harmony in all the processes of the Universe. The theosophical rainbow appears in the ceiling in a complex image of growth and the power of women (and nature) to nurture. Finally, the chapel represents the fecundation of mother earth (the spectator being the one penetrating the symbolic body of the chapel), and the main figure in the altar wall is a pregnant woman, thus symbolizing duality in balance, generation and rebirth. Xavier Guerrero decorated the staircase and director's house at the National Agricultural School with theosophical symbols such as lightning, sun, triangle, scale and clouds.

In 1928, José Clemente Orozco arrived to New York, where, by conduct of Alma Reed, a Theosophist who became his dealer, he met Annie Besant in Eva and Angelo Sikelianos' Ashram in New York, where he became part of the Delphic circle. Orozco represented the 'table of universal brotherhood' in his frescoes and used the dynamic symmetry system proposed by Jay Hambidge. In this cycle of murals appear Felipe Carrillo Puerto, a socialist leader and a theosophist who was Reed's couple and was murdered in January 1924.

I will also speak about the work of other Mexican artists such as David Alfaro Siqueiros and Dr. Atl, who also included theosophical imagery in their work.

4B: Eastern and Southern Europe

Victoria Ferentinou (University of Ioannina), 'Theosophy, Occultism and Greek Symbolism: the Case of Frixos Aristeus'

The interrelation between Symbolism and occultism was often articulated in the work of Symbolist poets, artists and critics in the turn-of-the-century Greece. Theosophy, in particular, is documented as one of their primary interests. Theosophical ideas were popularized and disseminated in Greece as early as the 1890s through periodicals that sought to acquaint the Greek readership with the cultural developments in France, Germany and other European countries. Moreover, in 1894 the socialist politician, author and academic Plato Drakoulis (1858-1934), who knew Helena P. Blavatsky personally, published *Light from Within*, the first book in Greek to elaborate on the main ideas of Theosophy as expounded by Blavatsky and Anna B. Kingsford. Drakoulis's work had an impact upon Greek Symbolists who became intrigued by Theosophical ideas. Yet their interest was usually disguised, infiltrated through or sidelined by other belief systems and forms of religiosity, specific to

the Greek milieu of the time, so that Theosophical concepts were not organically embedded in the dominant artistic discourse in Greece.

Within this context there were few visual artists associated with Symbolism, who were more receptive to occultism and used ideas drawn from Theosophy and other occult currents for their purposes. An illustrative example is the painter and illustrator Frixos Aristeus (1879-1951). Aristeus developed a friendship with the Greek author Polyvios T. Dimitrakopoulos (1864-1922), *alias* Paul Arcas, who was interested, *inter alia*, in spiritualism and Theosophy. Aristeus himself openly admitted that he believed in a pantheistic world, that he often communicated with 'supernatural' entities, and that his images were inspired by his 'otherworldly' visions, thus pointing to the supersensible origin of his Symbolist art. The first objective of this paper is to sketch out the peculiarities and complexities of the dissemination and appropriation of Theosophy in Greece at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries and briefly discuss its interaction specifically with the visual arts. The second aim is to trace the Theosophical ideas permeated in the work of Aristeus and explore the ways he revised and integrated his often superficial and eclectic understanding of Theosophy and occultism into his oeuvre.

Spyros Petritakis (University of Crete), "Through the light, the love": The late religious work of Nikolaos Gyzis (1842-1901) under the light of the theosophical doctrine in Munich in the 1890s'

In the context of redefinition of European Symbolism many researchers have concentrated on the ideological presuppositions that paved the way for the emergence of abstract art, pinpointing the significance of theosophical ideas to the artistic practice (Bax 2006, Tuchman 1999, Loers 1995, Ringbom 1970). Nikolaos Gyzis' oeuvre – a Greek painter who from 1880 onward held a professorship at the Munich academy – has been conspicuously absent from this discourse due to reasons rooted in the peripheral role that Greek art has had during the turn of the century. The late religious work of Nikolaos Gyzis in the 1890s – *The Triumph of the Religion, Here's the Bridegroom, The New Eon* – imbued with eschatological traits, has heretofore often been considered by art historians to reflect passages from the Book of Revelation of Saint John, and thus has been construed as a manifestation of the Greek Orthodox tradition. In 1910, nine years after the painter's death in Munich, Rudolf Steiner, at that time a proponent of Edouard Schuré's mystical play *Die Kinder Luzifers*, held a series of lectures in the same city on the secrets of the Bible story of Creation and on the 25th of August gave, as an interlude, a short speech on the profound meanings of Gyzis' painting *Here's the bridegroom*. In that hitherto unnoticed and unpublished announcement, entitled 'Through the light, the love', the renowned anthroposophist read Gyzis' painting under the light of his theosophical evolutionary theory and praised the proto-abstract qualities evinced by Gyzis' technique. Given the fact that seldom did Rudolf Steiner express his admiration for artists, it is important to bring to light this short public intervention of his, in which Gyzis' painting is being analyzed in terms of pure colours and shapes and is being juxtaposed to the eschatological program of Cappella Sistina.

As we recently came to know from Gyzis' descendants, the painter has shown keen interest in theosophical books, although no research has been made in that direction. On the other hand his obsession with the realm of music and especially that of Beethoven should also be interpreted in this discourse. Taking these different strands together my announcement will map out anew the canvas on which these late paintings of Gyzis have heretofore been read, and place them in the context of theosophical networks in Munich in the 1890s. Some years before the first abstract compositions of Kandinsky, Gyzis has shared the same spiritual anxieties with other symbolists such as Albert Keller and Gabriel von Max in Munich. Emanating from Gyzis' reception by Rudolf Steiner, my paper will therefore examine Gyzis' late oeuvre as a manifestation of theosophical origins, and trace the links between the painter and the theosophical networks, in which the fermentation process of abstraction took place.

Yuri Stoyanov (SOAS, University of London), 'Theosophy and Orientalism in the Artistic Legacy of Nikolay Raynov (1889-1954) - a Belated Polymath and Theosophic "Heresiarch"'

The paper explores the theosophical dimension of the artistic legacy of one of the main and most influential figures of the Theosophical movement in South-East Europe in the early twentieth century and the interwar period, Nikolay Raynov (1889-1954), widely seen regionally as a Renaissance-like polymath, even a 'heresiarch', who was eventually excommunicated from the Orthodox Church. Apart from serving in the 1930s as a chairman of Bulgarian Theosophical Society and editor of its theosophical journals, Raynov was also a Professor at the National Academy of Art, Sofia, Bulgaria, as well as a major representative of the contemporaneous regional literature of modernism (some of his works were translated, for instance, in the principal journal of German literary Expressionism, *Die Aktion*). Much of Raynov's artistic and literary production was underpinned by his pursuits in the spheres of Theosophy and contemporaneous esotericism but it was especially these areas of his legacy which have been tabooed during the Cold War period. Since 1989, however, research on the theosophical notions and narratives in his literary and scholarly publications has been resumed both in Eastern and Western Europe (also in the framework of PhD dissertations). However, the artistic legacy of his paintings and works of decorative and applied arts have not been explored as yet in such context – despite Raynov's evident and regular use of artistic medium as a vehicle for the expression of ideas and imagery current and cultivated in contemporaneous theosophical and Theosophy-based or -oriented discourses.

As in the case of Nicholas Roerich, a preoccupation with Orientalism and quest for the mystical/esoteric East forms a dominant strand in Raynov literary and artistic legacy, thus providing a significant South-East European parallel to the Roerich phenomenon (with whose esoteric and artistic networks Raynov was anyway associated). Raynov was also able to use his expertise in the history and techniques of art as well as in palaeography and medieval illustrated manuscripts while experimenting with the artistic practices of Expressionism and Art Nouveau.

Apart from drawing on Nikolay Raynov's own works and known paintings as well as the various studies of his literary and artistic production, the paper will also use a variety of unpublished documents (including relevant Theosophical Society correspondence and material) from the rich and multi-lingual family archives of the Raynov family as well as a number of unknown paintings, both made available to me by his descendants.

Małgorzata A. Dulcka (Jagiellonian University) and Karolina M. Kotkowska (Jagiellonian University), 'The idea of womanhood in the paintings of Kazimierz Stabrowski and its Theosophical inspiration'

The aim of this paper is to show the theosophical inspirations that shaped the idea of womanhood in the works of Kazimierz Stabrowski (1869-1929). The theosophical movement started to develop in Poland at the turn of the 20th century. Kazimierz Stabrowski was the leader of the first Polish lodge of the Theosophical Society called 'Alba' which was established in 1905.

His paintings belong to Art Nouveau and modernist symbolism forming the artistic movement known as Young Poland (Młoda Polska). Stabrowski developed his own, unique style that can be recognised in his portraits, visionary-symbolic compositions and landscapes. In those works the fascinations of occultism, theosophy and anthroposophy can be clearly seen.

Above all Stabrowski wanted to evolve and emphasize the spiritual element of his works of art. He was fascinated with the idea of 'express with painting techniques those hidden forces in nature and in man which will induce always greater passion in the painter as he will deepen his interest in occultism'. Nature was for him the purest manifestation of womanhood. Stabrowski's women are synonymous with beauty. They are full of inner light, power and possessors of uncountable mysteries. This way of portraying womanhood, which relates to the works of Michał Wrubel (one of Stabrowski's teachers in the Academy of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg), is a contrast to the visions of

Gustav Klimt (1862-1918) who depicted women in their demonical and dark aspects. In Stabrowski's works it is the man who is a personification of the dark side of mankind. Stabrowski's vision of womanhood comes from his personal interpretation of theosophical ideas and is typical of the reception of theosophical ideas in Poland.

DAY 2

Session 5

5A: The Baltic region

Massimo Introvigne (CESNUR, Turin), 'Čiurlionis' Theosophy. Myth or Reality?'

The exhibition organized at the Royal Palace in Milan in 2010-2011 about the Lithuanian painter and composer Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875-1911) emphasized the connections between his art, Theosophy and esotericism. This reflected the artist's interpretation advanced by Italian scholar Gabriella Di Milia, one of the two curators of the exhibition. But this interpretation remains quite controversial. After Čiurlionis' premature death, his wife Sofija Kymantaitė (1886–1958) insisted that he had no relations with the Theosophical Society. This discussion was complicated by controversies about Čiurlionis' influence on Vasilij Kandinskij (1866-1944) and their respective roles in the birth of abstraction, and by how Čiurlionis was presented in Soviet times. The paper argues that, although there is no evidence that Čiurlionis was a member of the Theosophical Society, he knew its basic ideas - particularly through his mentor Kazimieras Stabrauskas (Kazimierz Stabrowski, 1867-1929), a Theosophist and painter who served as director of the Warsaw School of Fine Arts when Čiurlionis studied there - and esoteric and 'theosophical' themes are indeed both present and important in his works.

Tessel M. Bauduin (University of Amsterdam), 'Hilma af Klint, metaphysical empiricism, and the iconography of Theosophy'

The Modern Swedish trance artist Hilma af Klint (1862-1944) created a large body of unique, partly abstract, very colourful and quite enigmatic work. Her oeuvre has been unavailable for many years, and it is only in this year (2013) that a great retrospective of her work has been organised. In both her life and artistic practice, Af Klint combined Spiritualism with Theosophy; she was a practicing Spiritualist since early adulthood and started painting and drawing mediumistically in 1903, even as she was familiar with many of the key Theosophical texts, as well as personally acquainted with Rudolf Steiner. In this paper I will discuss a selection of Af Klint's drawings and paintings, arguing that we should read at least part of her oeuvre within the light of the semi-scientific metaphysical empiricism practiced within both Spiritualism and Theosophy at the time.

Caroline Levander (University of Gothenburg), 'The theosophical ideas of Hilma af Klint: : A reading of the system of symbols in her paintings'

The paintings of Hilma af Klint (1862-1944) has recently gained much attention but less have been said about their spiritual content, apart from mentioning her mediumistic approach as a form of outsider art, with little further interpretation. This paper proposes that a study of the symbols, and how they are related to each other in the series of paintings, should reveal af Klimt's spiritual ideas and their relationship to theosophy as well as showing how theosophical ideas is represented in her art.

Af Klint started taking part in spiritist meetings in 1879. Later on she joined a group of women who met regularly for work with automatic drawing and writing. She started taking an interest in

theosophy; in 1908 she attended a lecture with Rudolf Steiner, in Stockholm, and in 1913 she took part in the theosophical conference in Sweden. She visited Rudolf Steiner in Dornach in 1920 and from then on she was more influenced by anthroposophy.

In light of the circumstances of the earliest abstract paintings (from 1906-1908, the result of automatic painting) art historians seem to have treated all of af Klint's work as mediumistic paintings, void of any other influence, and not taking into account her knowledge of theosophy. The esoteric context, however, can hardly be ignored. A review of her library shows that she was well read in theosophy and other esoteric traditions.

From af Klint's notebooks we can see that one idea, in particular, was important to her: the dualism between matter and spirit, earth and heaven, and man and woman. This duality, she thought, implied that individuals should search out and unite with their complementaries, or soul mates, in order to become complete and it originated from the angel that 'gave birth' to both man and woman. If they could reunite as one they could once more become angelic. In this she seems to be particularly inspired by Annie Besant's thoughts on the subject. In af Klint's Swedish translation of Besant's book *Esoteric Christianity* she has underlined the part that describes Besant's ideas about marriage as a symbol for the union of earth and heaven, God and humans, spirit and matter, trinity and universe, as two undividable parts of a greater whole, with man and woman being one entity with two faces.

Af Klint's idea of duality is frequently expressed in her art of the years 1912-1920. She envisioned a diagram with man, woman and angel creating a triangle. This is often hidden in the pictures through a combination of symbols, which proposes an analytical method for interpreting the paintings that are closer to those of the hidden symbols of the 15th century iconographic paintings than the pictorial interpretation of colours and shapes that is usually used in connection with abstract art.

Through an iconographical study of the symbols, based on the context of theosophy, we will see how Hilma af Klint used her paintings to convey her theosophical ideas. For her, the abstract art became diagrams that revealed abstract ideas, and this paper suggests that we should look at her paintings from that perspective to understand their content.

5B: Music 2

Olga Panteleeva (University of California, Berkeley), 'Exorcising Scholarship: Sabaneyev's Scriabin and Conflicting Epistemologies of the Russian Silver Age'

The pre-revolutionary decade was crucial for the nascent discipline of musicology in Russia. Various conceptions of knowledge, scholarly knowledge in particular, were emerging in the midst of several conflicting intellectual traditions – those that had a long history in Russia (such as realism) and those that were in the process of appropriation from abroad (such as French and German positivism). One important current was the idea of irrational, unmediated and holistic knowledge that was preached by Scriabin and his circle and stemmed from their involvement with theosophy.

This paper will examine the controversy sparked by the publication of Leonid Sabaneyev's book *Scriabin* in the spring of 1916, shortly after the composer's death. In 1917, the Petrograd Scriabin Society responded with a collection of short articles and letters that rubbished Sabaneyev's book with remarkable unanimity. Close reading of these criticisms makes it clear what research methods were deemed unacceptable in relation to Scriabin's music.

Sabaneyev's analyses threatened to undermine a central modernist tenet. The very fact of analytical inquiry challenged the inscrutability of Scriabin's music: its supposed resistance to rational understanding. Philosopher Vyacheslav Ivanov's contribution to the collection ridicules Sabaneyev's 'obstinate intention to examine the sanctuary of human soul and measure its depths ... in exact numbers.' Furthermore, what the readers perceived as an attempt to accuse Scriabin of Satanism allowed them to view Sabaneyev's research methods as morally bankrupt, and turn the accusation against the author himself. These repetitive retaliations, one after another adding Christ-like

characteristics to Scriabin's image and appealing to his otherworldly, messianic figure give a sense that Sabaneyev's readers engaged in exorcism, trying to enchant away the inappropriate way of knowing.

This case study is a part of a larger project on the history of ideas in Russian music criticism from the 1890s to the 1910s that lead to the institutionalization of musicology and its establishment as a scholarly discipline. The debate around Sabaneyev's book occurred two years before the foundation of the first Russian musicological research institution in 1919: the music department at the Russian Institute for the History of the Arts. Its echo resounded in scholarship on Scriabin's music long after.

Luciano Chessa (San Francisco Conservatory), "Music the Dead can Hear": Thought/ sound forms in Luigi Russolo's Art of Noises'

Recently, there has been a growing interest in the work of the Italian futurist painter, composer, and builder of musical instruments, Luigi Russolo (1885-1947). As the author of the first systematic aesthetics of noise and the alleged creator of the first mechanical sound synthesizer (he first build it in 1913 and called it *intonarumori*), Russolo is coming to be regarded as a crucial figure in the evolution of twentieth-century music.

In my research, I uncovered the life-long admiration of Russolo for the alchemical implications and metaphysical aims of Leonardo da Vinci's scientific work, maintaining that Leonardo's mechanical noisemakers were possibly the most important model for Russolo's own *intonarumori*.

In the present paper I demonstrate that Besant and Leadbeater's theory of Thought Forms was the foundation upon which the superstructure of Russolo's Art of Noises was erected, and I show that both Russolo's noise aesthetics and its practical manifestation—the *intonarumori*—were for him and his associates elements of a multi-leveled experiment to reach higher states of spiritual consciousness.

I am well aware that these ideas are in open conflict with the common perception of Italian Futurism as an artistic movement concerned merely with exterior reproduction of motion and blind exaltation of the machine. Likewise, these ideas are in open conflict with the current reading of Russolo's work. Since traditional discussion of the Art of Noises is based on such a reductive view of Futurism, the understanding of Russolo's *intonarumori* project have in fact up to now focused on engineering aspects.

A new critical approach has demonstrated that Futurism has been *ab initio* a movement that vehemently criticizes materialism, positivism and mere scientific rationality, opposing to them an anti-bourgeois worship of the irrational inspired by the occult sciences. Capitalizing on this view, my scholarship has successfully mapped these beliefs in Russolo's entire life, from his symbolist paintings of the early 1910s to his noise-harmonium soundtracks for Jean Epstein and Jean Painlevé's silent movies of his 1920s Parisian years, to his late 1930s Theosophical phase.

In this paper I carry this new critical reading even further, by uncovering and systematically describing the occult plan of the Art of Noises. This view is supported by a variety of documents that have largely fallen under Futurist scholars' radar. Chief among these is the coeval occult interpretation of the Art of Noises as presented by the futurist writer Paolo Buzzi in a poem, in a wartime account and, rather disturbingly, in an obscure novel featuring none other than Luigi Russolo as the metempsychotic, biomechanical protagonist.

Deniz Ertan (Independent Scholar), 'Junctures of Theosophy, Modernism and American Music, 1918-1923'

This paper will assess the relationship between musical modernism and theosophy in North America during 1918-1923, and consider each domain as a complex interdisciplinary and transnational juncture. As exemplified by several cultural movements, artists, and intellectuals of the early decades of twentieth century, these years witnessed a heightened interconnectivity between concepts, disciplines, and peoples. At a time when the Zeitgeist was marked by a quasi-utopian wish

for universal co-operation and harmony across individuals and cultures, theosophy became a significant force for modernist artists. This paper will pay special attention to the multicultural, transdisciplinary, and interpersonal positions and philosophical outlook of select American composers. Examples and illustrations of music, paintings, and poetry will be used to illustrate a syncretic vision that was heightened by an aesthetic and philosophical sensibility.

Christopher Scheer (Utah State University) , 'Locating Music in Theosophical Thought: Maude MacCarthy, John Foulds and Music from "Beyond the Veil"'

Music holds a liminal position in modern Theosophical thought, as defined by the works of Helena Blavatsky and her immediate successors (especially Annie Besant and Charles Leadbeater). The root of this situation, pace Derrida as interpreted by Joshua Gunn regarding occult rhetoric, lies in the conflict between two incompatible esoteric languages: the occult and music. This has led Theosophical writers to attempt to fold the discussion of music into that of the visual arts, as in Leadbeater and Besant's *Thought Forms* (1901), and later Geoffrey Hodson's *Music Forms* (1976). In both, discussion of the aural effect of music is translated into a visual representation. The esoteric and occult significance of the image is then described in words. In this process of transformation and dislocation, a hermeneutic space is opened for those who can claim occult and clairvoyant agency through the performance of (specifically instrumental) music, without recourse to visual imagery or verbal language.

The relationship between music and Theosophical thought has broad cultural implications. It can shape the understanding of how a composer attempts to use Theosophical beliefs to structure compositions, like Alexander Scriabin (1872–1915) or Jonathan Harvey (1939–), and takes on an especial significance for a performer like the violinist Maud MacCarthy (1882–1967) who claimed to communicate with higher entities wordlessly through the medium of music. This posed a challenge not only to the verbal rhetoric of Theosophical thought, but also to those leaders of the Theosophical Society, Adyar, who claimed superiority in occult agency through the traditional and controlled medium of language.

Session 6

6A: India and Japan

Helena Čapková (Waseda University, Tokyo), 'Mystical Spirit of Japan: Stefan Lubienski and transnational artistic networks in the 1920s Japan'

In April 1923, the Shiseidō Gallery in Tokyo opened the exhibition *Pōrando Bijutsu Seisakuten* (Polish Artistic Production) showcasing the spiritually charged work of Zina and Stefan Lubienski (1893-1976). Among the works were woodblock prints: *Power that created the World*, *Resurrection* and *Female Ghost*.

Stefan Lubienski, composer, fine artist and educator, was a Polish nobleman from the Warsaw area. He left Poland to study composition at the Music academy in Vienna, where he was inspired by Schönberg and Debussy. As a child he was taught about Anthroposophy by his mother and as a youth he became involved with Theosophy. This set of esoteric teachings became a lifelong inspiration to him. He was in Japan from 1921-1926 where he studied Japanese culture, mainly Noh theatre, and taught music to support his stay. Upon his arrival back in Poland he published the book *Między Wschodem a Zachodem: Japonja na straży Azji. Dusza mistyczna Nipponu, etc.* (Between the East and the West: Japan as a guardian of Asia. Mystical Spirit of Japan, etc.) in 1927. He went on to work as a founding member of Cracow's conservatoire and then in the foreign service in Scotland and Holland. He died as a respected Polish mystic, in Driebergen, Holland in 1976.

This paper aims to shed some light on the yet unexplored period of Lubienski's life while he was in Japan and to put it within the context, like a missing piece from the mosaic, of the transnational cultural landscape of 1920s Japan. Furthermore, the presentation will explore the role Theosophy played among artists, foreign and Japanese alike, as a network for meeting and exchanging ideas, with a particular focus on foreign artists coming from Central Europe.

Yorimitsu Hashimoto (Osaka University), 'A Medium for New India and New Japan? James H. Cousins' Appreciation of Tami Koume and Gurcharan Singh'

In May 1919, James H. Cousins, Irish Theosophist and editor of *New India*, was invited by Yone Noguchi to teach English poetry at Keio University in Tokyo, Japan. He planned to stay there at least two years and ask his wife Margaret to come to Japan after the first year. In spite of this plan, Cousins was suddenly asked to come back to India and quit his contract. His stay was rather short; however, during the ten months from May 1919 to March 1920, he worked for and contributed several articles to the *Asian Review*, the English journal of the well-known Pan-Asian association, Black Dragon Society, and established the Tokyo Lodge of the Theosophical Society in February 1920. These complex and contradictory activities were recorded in his diary-like travelogue, *New Japan* (1923).

This paper focuses on two aspects of Cousins' stay in Japan. The first is a general outline of his activities and their influence on Japanese society. The Black Dragon Society had harboured Indian revolutionaries and Cousins was, therefore, marked by British and Indian agents because of his potential threat to the Anglo-Japanese alliance and British India. Using Japanese materials and British Foreign Office documents, I would like to consider why and how he committed to the *Asian Review* even though he was disappointed at the Westernised and modernised sides of the new Japan. Unlike his admirer, Rabindranath Tagore, Cousins considered the modern authentic Japanese paintings to be spiritless and criticised the culture's modern works of music as well, because they were superficial imitations of Western composers such as Scriabin. Ironically and interestingly, he realised the 'cultural unity of Asia' on his way back to India. Calling at Kobe, he travelled around Nara, an old Japanese city, guided by Gurcharan Singh. After seeing the mural painting from the old temple of Horyuji, he recognised that it was from Ajanta, India, via China and Korea, just as Kakuzo Okakura suggested in the *Ideals of the East* (1903).

The second aspect of the paper focuses on Cousins' relationships with the artists. Gurcharan Singh, the founder of Indian studio pottery, came to Japan to study industrial ceramics in Tokyo and happened to know Cousins and a famous potter, Bernard Leach. Joining the Tokyo Lodge as one of the first members, he supported Cousins and Cousins also found in his 'Indo-Japo-Chinese' pottery the promising unity of new India and new Japan. On the other hand, Cousins especially appreciated a Japanese modern painter, Tami Koume, because of his spiritual abstract expression. It is not certain if Koume became a member, but after Cousins left for India, Koume described his paintings as a medium that used an aura or ether, with a reference to Annie Besant's *Thought Forms* (1901). By showing examples of their works, I would like to illustrate how Cousins influenced them or what he wanted to see in them.

Janhavi Dhamankar (Oxford Brookes University), 'Exploring the Theosophical Impulse of Bharatnatyam: A dialogue between modernist aesthetics and classical traditions'

Rukmini Devi Arundale (work period 1920 - 1986) was the wife of theosophist George Arundale. However, in India, she is known and revered as the woman responsible for codifying the classical dance style called *Bharatanatyam* and extending its reach from the temples onto stage performances. (Perhaps, a 'performative turn' for dance in India!) Inspired by the work of danseuse Anna Pavlova, Rukmini Devi was thus, a dynamic and influential personality - socially, artistically as well as politically.

For the purpose of this conference, I wish to focus on her theosophical background and highlight the connections between her theosophical ideas and her monumental work as an artist and educationist. These include the founding of a cultural abode, *Kalakshetra*: a centre for all-round training and performance of arts (both traditional/ classical and folk) and crafts (such as textile weaving, design and dyeing), as well as the Besant Arundale Senior Secondary School and Besant Theosophical School, at Dr. Annie Besant's request, which forms part of the *Kalakshetra* foundation even today.

This paper can be seen as a case study of an Indian artist and her close connection to the Theosophical Society in Adyar. Mysticism forms a subtle, yet integral part of the dance traditions in India. Hence, in keeping with the conference's aim of exploring the interconnections between art and mysticism, I wish to trace the mystic trends in Rukmini Devi's work.

Further, it seems only fitting to scrutinise 'modernist aesthetics' - the relation between modernity and art in this time frame, since Rukmini Devi's work was highly controversial in the beginning. *Bharatnatyam* was seen as the art of *devadasis* (servants of the gods) and therefore raised a question, even wrath, regarding the appropriateness of *Brahmin* women learning dance. However, this was the beginning, in a way, of a long standing tradition of a classical dance practiced till date in India and the world over. This raises a further question about the distinction between 'traditional' and 'classical' in art, especially in the Indian context.

Thus, in this paper, I wish to outline the theosophical influences of Dr. Annie Besant, George Arundale, among others on Rukmini Devi's life and work, as also to delve deeper into the mystic origins of the path paved by Rukmini Devi for Indian arts coupled with her modernist insights.

6B: Performing arts

Fae Brauer (University of East London and University of New South Wales), 'Hypnotic Dancing: Performing Art, Parapsychology and Psychic Theosophy'

That Loïe Fuller's *Danse du fer*, *Danse du Radium* and *Danse Serpentine* at the Folies-Bergère were transfused with hypnosis and the occult sciences has been established, as have her relationships with Camille Flammarion, Hyppolite Baraduc, and Marie and Pierre Curie. Yet what has not been examined are the numerous French alienists and neurologists, as well as scholars of télékinésies, émanations magnétiques, spirit photography and parapsychology, who deployed hypnosis concurrently to create art, particularly dance, in order to reach a state of psychic theosophy. What has not been exposed is how this state, regarded as impossible to achieve in 'modern and oppressive civilization', was considered to be created, according to Jules Bois, 'by hypnosis, by that artificial sleep that dips the soul into delicious oblivion and brings back the natural being, magnetic and rhythmically responsive'. How this state was seen to be attained by the hypnotic dancing of Lina and Magdeleine G., performed during hypnotic seances conducted by Colonel Albert de Rochas (with Bois) and Emile Magnin, is the subject of this paper.

Author of *Les États profonds de l'hypnose*, in its fourth edition by 1896, de Rochas was esteemed as France's leading parapsychologist when he began researching the 'externalisation of sensibility' and the affect of perfume, poetry, plays and music in hypnotic states on his model, Mademoiselle Lina [de Ferkel]. While Professor at the École de Magnetism, Magnin induced his patient, Magdeleine G. to dance under hypnosis. Seeking to study her performance in an environment that reconciled occultism and Hellenism in its supposedly 'pure' state, Magnin travelled with Magdeleine G. and the photographer, Fred Boissoneau, to the Parthenon. While Lina was hypnotized and photographed in Paris for Rochas' book, *Les sentiments, la musique et le geste*, so was Magdeleine G. in Athens for Magnin's 1905 book, *L'Art et l'hypnose. Interprétation plastique d'œuvres littéraires et musicales*. Far from being secluded, both danced in front of live audiences in private seances and at Sâr Peladan's Salon des Rose-Croix, Magdeleine being lauded by Rodin and Albert Besnard and becoming as sensationalized in her tours of Europe as Fuller. By focusing upon these little known performances of art through hypnotic dancing, this paper will reveal why they received as much

acclaim, if not more esteem than those by Fuller for achieving, rather than simulating, authentic states of psychic theosophy.

Johanna J. M. Petsche (University of Sydney), 'The Sacred Dance of the Enneagram: G. I. Gurdjieff's Movements and their Esoteric Meaning'

This paper will examine the diverse body of 'Movements' or sacred dances choreographed by Armenian-Greek esoteric teacher George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff (c.1866-1949), with focus on his Enneagram Movements.

Gurdjieff's teaching in its entirety can be described as a synthesis of Hindu, Buddhist, Judeo-Christian, and Islamic ideas, while drawing particularly strongly from Western esoteric, Sufi, and Theosophical discourses. Gurdjieff's revival of esoteric traditions and his blending of Eastern spiritual ideas with Western thought share commonalities with Helena Petrovna Blavatsky's (1831-1891) Theosophical mission. Gurdjieff and Blavatsky were pioneers of the New Age movement, bridging the gap between nineteenth and twentieth century modes of thought (Heelas, *The New Age Movement*, 1996, 48). Counter-culture historian Theodore Roszak identifies Gurdjieff as one of three 'occult evolutionists' along with Blavatsky and Steiner (Roszak, *Unfinished Animal*, 1976, 115-151).

Gurdjieff's 'Movements' are dances and exercises characterised by unusual and symbolic gestures of the body that are intended to highlight to the practitioner the body's mechanical nature, and promote a harmonisation of the three 'centres' of the individual: physical, mental, and emotional. Gurdjieff taught that the three 'centres' are closely bound to each other so that if one's mechanical forms of moving are altered through Movements, changes in one's mechanical forms of thinking and feeling will follow. In an advertisement for his Paris Movements demonstrations of 1923, Gurdjieff claimed that his Movements came from hidden Monasteries located in Chinese Turkestan, Kafiristan, and Afghanistan. These Monasteries have never been located, and no contemporary Central Asian geographer or anthropologist has reported any dances structured like Gurdjieff's Movements (Moore, *Gurdjieff The Anatomy of a Myth A Biography*, 1993, 351). After his death in 1949, Gurdjieff's pupils endeavoured to preserve many of the Movements through a process of choreographic transmission that continues today. In the network of orthodox Gurdjieff 'Foundation' groups, formed by chief pupil Jeanne de Salzmann after Gurdjieff's death, Movements are guarded scrupulously; long-term members are often taught only fragments of Movements.

This paper will first critically assess the Movements in relation to Gurdjieff's esoteric teaching, and will then concentrate on Gurdjieff's Enneagram Movements. Gurdjieff used the symbol of the enneagram in his teaching to demonstrate the perpetual motion of the Laws of Three and Seven, which govern his cosmological system. The enneagram symbol is composed of a circle encompassing a triangle representing the numbers 3, 6, and 9 (the Law of Three), and a six-sided figure representing the numbers 1, 4, 2, 8, 5, 7 (the Law of Seven). Gurdjieff choreographed Enneagram Movements that enact the motion of this symbol. These Movements and their purpose will be examined.

This paper attempts to fill a significant lacuna by establishing basic academic groundwork on the Movements. The author aims to give a critical account, while drawing from her firsthand experience of the Movements, which she has studied in classes in Sydney, India and Germany for four years. As reliable footage of the Movements is scarce, footage made by the author in Movements classes in Sydney will be shown.

Robin Veder (Pennsylvania State University), 'A Dreier Lithograph: Modernist choreography for the neuro-muscular "new race"'

In 1929, Katherine S. Dreier, founder of the transatlantic modernist Société Anonyme, painted an 'Abstract Psychological Portrait' of her friend, American modern-dance pioneer Ted Shawn. In response, six years later Shawn choreographed 'A Dreier Lithograph,' based on her lithographic series *40 Variations*. All depicted geometric shapes in primary colors, moving through space. Other historians have previously

argued that Dreier's colors and forms, including the Shawn portrait, can be interpreted according to theosophical semiotics. The responses that Shawn danced and other artists such as Lazlo Moholy-Nagy wrote about Dreier's lithographic series shows they believed theosophy's goals would be achieved according to neuro-muscular processes of 'physiological aesthetics' derived from German nineteenth-century experimental psychology. It is my contention that Dreier's imagery and Shawn's choreography provided abstract representations of the theosophical 'sixth root race' in artistic formats that they believed would bring this new race into being.

Session 7

Keynote Address: Linda Dalrymple Henderson (University of Texas, Austin) 'Rethinking Theosophy in its early 20th-century context'

One factor that made Theosophy appealing to many individuals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was that some of its doctrines seemed to align quite closely with contemporary science as it was understood by the general public. In the public sphere it was not until the early 1920s that Relativity Theory began to displace the reigning model of late Victorian ether physics with its suggestion of a meta-reality beyond the reach of human vision. In the years from the 1890s through the 1910s discoveries like the X-ray and radioactivity as well as the hypothesis of a space-filling ether, highlighted already by Madame Blavatsky in *Isis Unveiled* in 1877, complemented interest in higher unseen dimensions of space. Theosophists C. W. Leadbeater and Rudolf Steiner, for example, wrote or lectured extensively on the fourth dimension and the ether. Artists such as Wassily Kandinsky, Johannes Itten, and many others found critical inspiration in such writings, and their works are highly creative responses to this early twentieth-century milieu. This talk addresses these themes with the goal of recovering the context of both early twentieth-century science and the Theosophical interest in it that was central for a number of modern artists.

DAY 3

Session 8

8A: The influence of Rudolf Steiner

Benedikt Hjartarson (University of Iceland), 'Modern Esotericism, Aesthetic Lamarckism and the Historical Avant-garde'

In a programmatic statement published in 1921, the Serbian artist and leader of the Zenithist movement Ljubomir Micić declared: 'The form of biological man is not determined in any way, so much less is the form of spiritual man'. Micić's declaration expresses a profound sense of anti-determinism that is often to be found in the writings of those progressive art movements of the early 20th century that are usually referred to as 'European' or 'historical avant-garde'. It further refers to notions of biological and spiritual evolution that played a crucial role in the rhetoric of those movements. The paper will concentrate on the idea of the 'new man', which was a central figure in the utopian visions of such different avant-garde movements as Italian and Russian futurism, Zenithism, Dada and Constructivism, and its relation to evolutionary concepts rooted in the discourse of modern esotericism, biology, and philosophical vitalism. The figure of the 'new man' in

avant-garde aesthetics has traditionally been discussed as a response to Darwin's theory of evolution or the manifestation of a specific form of 'cultural Darwinism' (Raymond Williams). The paper will contest this narrow reading of the figure of the 'new man' in terms of Darwinism and plead for a more open understanding of the evolutionary concepts of the avant-garde by focusing on its links to ideas rooted in vitalist philosophy, neo-Lamarckism and modern esotericism, with a special focus on theosophy and Steiner's Anthroposophical writings. The paper aims at describing the specific form of aesthetic syncretism that emerged in the activities of the historical avant-garde, as it merged esoteric, vitalist and biological notions of evolution in a programmatic attempt to construct a utopian project of total cultural and spiritual renewal. Modern esoteric notions of spiritual evolution played an important role in this context as a counter-model to biological models that the artists and authors saw as strictly determinist in their 'materialist' scope. The paper will thus sketch out the different conceptions of the evolutionary process that dominated the discourse of modern irrationalism in the early 20th century, in order to reconstruct the inherent complexity of the idea of evolution in the aesthetic discourse of the historical avant-garde.

Wolfgang Zumdick (Oxford Brookes University), 'Concerning the influence of Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy on the early work of Joseph Beuys'

A close look at Beuys' drawings from the late 40's to the end 50's enables one to experience the strong impact anthroposophy had on Beuys in these early times. Beuys first had contact with Anthroposophical literature during the war. This continued from 1947 when he began his art studies at the Düsseldorf Art academy, throughout which time he had a close connection to the Düsseldorf branch of the Anthroposophical Society. His library clearly reflects this, containing almost a hundred of Steiner's writings (one third have drawings and notes in the margins from Beuys' hand), as well as many others on theosophy and closely related areas.

One can see quite clearly how these studies influenced not only his early work, but also become the basis and foundation of his 'expanded concept of art', that he developed in the 60's. His early drawings such as *In der Strahlenwelt*, *Hüterin des Schlafes* or *Kadmon* show the direct influence of theosophical and anthroposophical thinking. In the catalogue essay of the Energieplan-exhibition of Museum Schloss Moyland I have depicted these drawings as attempts to come closer to the sphere that Steiner talks about in his writings and lectures 'Beuys' drawings demonstrate his grasp of the core of Steiner's 'vision'. The latter's engagement with the so-called extrasensory was certainly part of Beuys' own experiential world. Beuys does not reproduce any specific content of Steiner's writings but renders experiences corresponding with Steiner's or at least similar to them. He works in the same 'laboratory' – to use an expression appreciated equally by both Beuys and Steiner – in the same research field, with the same objectives. And through his experiments, aimed at coming close to this lived information, he arrives at graphic forms and depictive means without precedence in art history.'

However, it is not only Beuys' drawing that can be seen as an epistemological exploration of the visible and non-visible world. His early writing also that shows the extent to which theosophical and Anthroposophical thinking permeated his way of seeing and describing the world.

My paper will therefore focus on this early period, illuminating the close connection to Steiner, anthroposophy and theosophy and how it influenced Beuys' ongoing work.

Reinhold J. Fäth (Hochschule für Künste im Sozialen Ottersberg), 'Artists within and around the group AENIGMA (1918 - ca. 1928)'

The artist who drew Wassily Kandinsky's attention to Theosophy (especially to Rudolf Steiner's writings) around 1908 was quite likely the painter Maria Strakosch-Giesler (née Giesler, 1877-1970), a student of Kandinsky and member of his artists' group Phalanx in Munich and a lifelong friend of Kandinsky. Instead of accompanying Kandinsky towards the Blauer Reiter she followed the Theosophical path and exhibited paintings at the Theosophical Congress 1911 in Munich. Around

1917/18 Maria Strakosch-Giesler and artist friends inspired by Anthroposophy founded an artists' group named AENIGMA. The group started exhibiting paintings and sculptures in Munich in the Kunsthaus Das Reich from February 5th to March 15th 1918. The catalogue of this exhibition lists twelve artists, eight of them women, which is an unusually high female participation for that time. Among them was Irma von Duczynska, who established one of the first painting-schools for women and children in Europe, 1909 in Vienna. In the time between 1918 and 1928 AENIGMA went through many changes and the circle of artists inspired by Anthroposophy had grown, but still the remarkable high number of women drew attention, as a reviewer of the exhibition Junge Anthroposophische Kunst in the newspaper *Jenaische Zeitung* noted. But what made the difference between the 'normal' modern art Avant-garde in search for the spiritual in art and the Anthroposophical Avant-garde?

The paper will list and discuss some specific aspects of Anthroposophical art theory, especially concerning the aim of creating a *Gesamtkunstwerk* – as realized in the artists' colony in Dornach, Switzerland. In addition objectives of specific subjects in painting and the intentions of enlivening sculpture. The theoretical discussion will be underpinned and illustrated by showing many examples of art works (lecture with beamer). My contribution for the conference will also include an exhibition of some small original art works by Maria Strakosch-Giesler, Irma von Duczynska and other group members, to be held at the Ritman Library.

8B: Occultist symbolism

Pádraic E. Moore (Motherstankstation, Dublin) 'A.E. and the Theosophical Society in Edwardian Dublin'

Although it is often overlooked, The Theosophical Society was in fact a vital catalyst for cultural and political progress in late 19th century Ireland. The Dublin Lodge was a locus for several prominent intellectuals who sought holistic solutions to the precarious impasse precipitated by English colonisation and Catholic domination. At the centre of the Dublin set who sought intellectual liberation via the T.S. was George Russell (1867 - 1935) a remarkable figure of recent Irish history. The paper I will present focuses upon this underappreciated poet, painter, editor, critic and proponent of Irish nationalist politics and investigates how he interpreted and adapted Theosophical tenets to conceive a utopian ideal for what would become a new independent Ireland. In 1884 Russell (known also as A.E.) began attending Dublin's Metropolitan School of Art where he met W.B. Yeats, who became a close friend and later rival. That same year Russell experienced the first of many vivid Blakean visions, which would remain an important source of knowledge and insight throughout his life. A compulsion to understand and share these waking visions aroused Russell's latent interest in the occult and eventually led him to the Theosophical Society, the Dublin branch of which was established in 1886. Russell rapidly became a central figure in the movement and was an active proponent of its ideals in the various aspects of his personal and professional life. This is exemplified most explicitly in A.E.'s paintings in which can be seen a visual vocabulary combining the iconography of Theosophy with images of a Celtic spirit race he believed inhabited Ireland. These paintings -several of which I will discuss in detail in my presentation- are evocative of works by European Symbolists and are unique in the canon of Irish visual art, which remained fundamentally conservative throughout the 20th century.

While extremely prolific as a writer and painter, Russell also devoted considerable time and energy to working for the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society (I.A.O.S) a socialist movement that advocated agricultural co-operation. Evidently, this role necessitated considerable practical and logistical acumen. Ostensibly these facets of Russell's life might seem almost incompatible and contradictory; there is the intellectual mystic author and painter who believed in the reality and importance of invisible realms and then there is the radical affiliated with anarchism, labour movements and Sinn Féin who succeeded in merging culture with politics and revolution. However, I

would argue that it was ultimately Russell's devotion to the tenets of Theosophy that enabled him to negotiate the seemingly disparate elements of his polymathic existence into a cohesive whole.

In this paper I will explore through the rich legacy of Russell how Theosophy, which proposed the essential oneness of religions through the omnipresence of a divine spirit, once held great potential in the context of Ireland. In so doing I will underscore how Theosophy was a significant agent for change, not only with the cultural realm of early Modernism but also within the social and political spheres of that time.

Jan Stottmeister (Independent Scholar, Berlin), 'Theosophical Symbolism: Melchior Lechter (1865-1937)'

Melchior Lechter was a German painter, designer and book illustrator who had considerable critical and commercial success in the early 1900s. Influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement, French Symbolism, the Pre-Raphaelites, German neo-Gothic romanticism and art nouveau, he held onto his idiosyncratic fin de siècle style throughout his life. Cast aside by the movements towards abstract art and expressionism in the 1910s, he quickly fell out of fashion and was all but forgotten by the time of his death. Although there has been renewed interest in his work – mainly because he designed numerous books for Stefan George, one of the most celebrated German poets of his time – Lechter is virtually unknown outside Germany.

Lechter's work is a case study for the influence of Theosophy on the visual arts. In 1901, after reading a German translation of Helena Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine*, Lechter, a lapsed Catholic, became a passionate Theosophist; in 1910, he went on a journey to India where he visited the Adyar headquarters of the Theosophical Society and met Annie Besant and Charles Leadbeater. While his conversion to Theosophy did not change the formal aspects of his paintings and book designs, it had an immediate impact on their iconography. My paper traces this impact from his conversion to his later years. It shows how the Catholic imagery that evokes the divine in his pre-Theosophical work is supplemented with and finally replaced by Buddhist and Hinduist symbols, and how the angels in his earlier glass paintings and book illustrations are transformed without too many alterations into 'Mahatma' figures of Theosophical lore. The syncretism of his book graphics, in which he mixes Indian, Christian, alchemical and astrological signs with Sanskrit, Latin, and Hebrew inscriptions, visualises one of the central tenets of Theosophy: the doctrine of a *prisca theologia* that connects all religions and esoteric traditions.

The most prominent link between Theosophy and the visual arts is the theory of coloured 'auras' or 'thought forms' and its connection with the emergence of early abstract painting. Lechter, who was adamantly opposed to abstract art, was an earlier proponent of this theory, although he adapted it to the rigid framework of his own Symbolist style. His altarpiece *Panis Angelorum* (1906) fuses an apparently Catholic subject, the Holy Communion, with a dogmatic adherence to Theosophical 'aura' teachings. In a written guide to his own painting, Lechter explained the esoteric meaning of its exoteric Catholicism with unmarked quotations from Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine* and Besant/Leadbeater's *Thought-Forms*. Like Lechter's work in general, this specific example shows that the impact of Theosophy on artistic creativity in the early 20th century was more diverse than the current focus on the avant-garde movements of the 1910s and 1920s suggests. Avant-garde protagonists like Kandinsky and Mondrian, whose abstract turn was accompanied by Theosophical studies, contributed to the demise of Lechter's aesthetic. And yet, Lechter's and Mondrian's studios were overseen by the same patron saint, a portrait of Helena Blavatsky.

Session 9

9A: Visual arts: Germany and France

Ryan Kurt Johnson (University of Alaska), 'Anatomy of an Icon: Fidus' *Lichtgebet*, Experiments in Modern Spiritualities, and the Aesthetics of the Body in Fin-de-Siècle German Culture'

When the artist Fidus (Hugo Höppener) attended the *Erste Freideutscher Jugendtag* on Hohe Meißner, on October 11 and 12, 1913, he had little sense that one of his most beloved images, the *Lichtgebet*, was about to become a kind of religious image for the German *Jugendbewegung*. In fact, Fidus had been producing various renditions of the *Lichtgebet* and publishing them in a variety of outlets since the early 1890s without any real acclaim. However, once sold as a cheap postcard at the *Jugendtag*, the *Lichtgebet* became, in the words of Rolf-Peter Janz and Marina Schuster, an icon for thousands of Germans not only actively engaged in the *Jugendbewegung*, but across the assorted *Lebensreformbewegungen*. However, beyond Janz's rather dismissive examination into the supposedly cultic effect of Fidus' image, something that he concluded resulted from the celebration of an empty ceremonialism, an historical investigation into the religious aura of the *Lichtgebet* remains wanting. I argue that the religious reception enjoyed by Fidus' creation was actually a consequence of his ability to capture in picture a more widespread experimentation with natural forms of spirituality rooted in the evolutionary human body in Germany around the fin de siècle. Indeed, Fidus himself was well known as an enthusiastic supporter of a wide-array of new and emerging forms of spirituality around the turn of the century that blended science, naturalism, and mysticism in various ways; and two of the most compelling of these novel forms of spirituality for Fidus were in fact Theosophy and Anthroposophy, both of which were introduced to him by Rudolf Steiner after the two men had met and become friends in Berlin just before 1900. While Fidus' own spirituality remained ever eclectic, Steiner's ideas did have a profound impact upon the artist and he incorporated important symbols of Theosophy and Anthroposophy into successive versions of the *Lichtgebet* until it took its most iconic form at the Hohe Meißner. Situating the Theosophical and Anthroposophical movements within a larger context of spiritual experimentation in Germany before the First World War, I argue that the widespread popularity of Fidus' *Lichtgebet* and more importantly the religious reverence that it enjoyed in some quarters was due to the fact that the image perfectly captured a newfound sense of natural spirituality about the human body at a time when the natural sciences and especially evolutionary theory were challenging traditional understandings of the ultimate meaning of human existence. In this volatile, but creative atmosphere of spiritual destabilization, experiments in novel forms of spirituality like Theosophy and Anthroposophy that blended the science of evolution, a belief in humanity's numinous connection with nature, and elements of mysticism took root across German society. I contend that the popularity of Fidus' *Lichtgebet* and the religious aura that it exerted upon contemporaries can be traced to the fact that the androgynous, naked figure in the image literally 'embodied' the spiritual potential of the natural human body in an open-ended fashion that allowed people to project their own spiritual experiences into the work. Indeed, Fidus ingeniously incorporated a formal devise into the artwork, leaving the figure in three-quarter profile toward the numinous embrace of nature, whereby the onlooker would be forced to project him or herself and his or her own spiritual experiences into the work in order to complete its cultic effect.

Susan Bagust (Royal Musical Association), 'The Theosophical World View and the Collapse of Form and Content in Early Twentieth-Century Expressionism'

This paper addresses the connection between early modernism and the Theosophical world view by examining the monist concept of artistic/musical material expounded in the essays of the *Blaue Reiter Almanac* of 1912. In this collection of essays by artists, painters and musicians there is a remarkably consistent view that the material of art – whether it be sound, line, colour or word – is the expression of the soul of the artist, an expression which is also regarded as being the expression

of the cosmos, since the soul of the prophet-artist is seen as being in unity with the world. This emerging belief in the spiritual status of artistic material enabled a relationship between the arts that could only exist within a monist theological framework in which matter and spirit were aspects of the same unity. Although, as was demonstrated by Sixten Ringbom in *The Sounding Cosmos*, this expressionist aesthetic was profoundly influenced by Theosophical ideas that were propounded by the editor of the Almanac, Wassily Kandinsky, there is a spiritual and aesthetic unity between the writers of the articles that cannot entirely be accounted for by an actual knowledge of Theosophical doctrine. Rather, it seems to be the case that there is a common attitude to the expressive material of the art work that dissolves the barrier between form and content. The result is a mode of reception that parallels the kind of meditation advocated by Theosophy.

In this paper I examine the connections between the monist viewpoints expressed in the theoretical articles in the almanac and the artistic practice that resulted from these beliefs, with particular emphasis on how the development of expressive material in music and painting resulted in abstraction and atonality. By analysing the connections between monist theology and artistic expression, I discuss the remarkable consistency of both theory and practice among the artists of early Expressionism with regard to the concept of artistic material. The unity between the theology and aesthetics on the one hand, and the commonality of artistic practice on the other, poses questions of influence and derivation. In conclusion I make comparisons between the aesthetic out-workings of a Theosophical world view and the theological implications of the anti-representationalist aesthetic that grew out of late nineteenth-century Symbolism.

Boaz Huss (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev), 'Ideal Reality: Esotericism, Artistic culture and Jewish Identity in the Cosmic Movement and the *Idéal et Réalité* circle'

Esotericism and the Arts were the center of the activities of the Cosmic Movement which stood in competition - but also in close relations – with the Theosophical Society. The Cosmic Movement, which was founded by Max Theon (born Eliezer Biemstein) and his wife, Theona (born Mary Ware), was active, especially during the first three decades of the 20th century in Paris. Most of the leaders of the Movement were Jewish – Theon himself, as well as his main disciples, Mirra Alfassa (which later was affiliated with Sri Aurobindo and became known as the Mother) Louis David Themanlys (born as David Moyse), and his son, Pascal Themanlys. The members of the group were active as esotericists as well as Artists. Theona herself wrote fiction and drama, apart from the vast esoteric literature which she received in states of trance. Mirra Alfassa and her first husband, André Morisset, were artists, as was Jacques Blot, the son of the famous art collector, Eugene Blot (who was also interested in the group activities). Eugene's daughter, Claire, who married Louis Themanlys wrote several plays, which were staged in Paris in the 1920's. In 1921, members of the cosmic movement founded an artistic-esoteric circle, which they called *Idéal et Réalité*, and published, for several years, a journal bearing the same name.

The lecture will describe the activities of the cosmic movements and the Ideal and reality group. It will examine the nexus between Arts and Occultism in the activities and doctrines of the group and discuss the question of their Jewish identity and attitude to Kabbalah.

9B: Music 3

Nick Attfield (Christ Church College, University of Oxford), 'Modernism, Anthroposophy, and the Symphony: Anton Bruckner in the Writings of Erich Schwab'

The early 1920s present a high watermark in the reception of the Austrian composer Anton Bruckner and his symphonies. A century after Bruckner's birth, and 25 years on from his death, innumerable societies were rapidly formed all over German-speaking countries, dedicated to the dissemination of his music. Simultaneously, these groups laid emphasis on the revision of Brucknerian biography and hermeneutics, a process guided by a collection of distinctive, and closely related, tropes: Bruckner as

a medieval German mystic and educator akin to Meister Eckhart and his successors, and thus as a key site for the elaboration of Rudolf Steiner's new 'spiritual science' of anthroposophy.

My paper investigates these revisions, with specific reference to the 1920s writings of Erich Schwebsch (1889-1953). Schwebsch, an established author on Bach, Goethe, and Wagner, first proclaimed himself a 'musical anthroposophist' in his 1921 monograph *Anton Bruckner: Ein Beitrag zur Erkenntnis von Entwicklungen in der Musik* ('A Contribution to Awareness of Developments in Music'); following on from Steiner's work – which he believed could educate mankind to 'win back the cosmic bond it has lost' – he argues for a radical re-engagement with Bruckner's symphonies as mystical experience of the divine: a new 're-ligio', as he puts it, literally a 're-connection'. This argument was complemented by the proposition of 'meditative' approaches to symphonic listening and, in the writings of similar authors of the period, a performance practice that promoted the symphony as 'acousmatic' experience – that is, played in a fully or partially darkened concert hall.

My central claim is that, while such approaches drawn from mysticism and anthroposophy are usually relegated to the status of 'reactionary flight' from the challenges of the modern world, they actually represent just the opposite. As an analysis of Schwebsch's texts reveals, the language of Steiner's anthroposophy, through its particular emphasis on unity and transcendence, permits an engagement with and resolution of what he sees as the 'fragmented' state of the modern condition. As a cultural approach, then, it is best described as a kind of modernism, and by the same token – not least when the word 'deutsch' is suddenly forced into a succession of esoteric speculations – a kind of nationalism. This last point, as I will suggest in closing, became ever more significant as the 1920s progressed, and underpinned Bruckner's continued ascent to popularity and political exploitation in the 1930s and 40s.

Marco Pasi (University of Amsterdam), "'Natura renovatur": Giacinto Scelsi's music and the esoteric milieu of his time'

Giacinto Scelsi (1905-1988) is undoubtedly one of the most enigmatic composers of the last century. Since the 1980s, there has been a growing interest in his work, especially in Italy and in France, which has led to a number of significant publications related to him and to the systematic release of recordings of his musical compositions. Yet, several aspects of his multifaceted personality and of his artistic work remain to be explored in depth. Some peculiar aspects of his biography and of his eccentric personality have created a sort of mythical, iconic aura around his name, and have sometimes led to radically opposing opinions about his work. Both Scelsi's musical compositions and literary texts show a deep interest in and influence of modern esotericism, particularly of Theosophical and Anthroposophical ideas. He was certainly not the only Italian 20th-century composer who had such interests. Other relevant names that could be mentioned, in spite of the significant differences in their respective personalities and musical style, are those of Lamberto Caffarelli (1880-1963), Roberto Lupi (1908-1971), Renato de Grandis (1927-2008), and, more recently, Luca Lombardi (b. 1945). But Scelsi offers an interesting case because of the international reputation he has achieved since his death, the radicalism of his aesthetic choices, and the way in which he theorises the relationship between esoteric thought and musical composition in his writings. In this paper, I would like to focus on these aspects, discussing also the biographical relevance of Scelsi's contacts with the esoteric milieu of this time.

James Mansell (University of Nottingham), 'Theosophical Music in the "Age of Noise"'

The early twentieth century was frequently identified by contemporaries as an 'age of noise'. In everyday life, the noise-sensitive were caught between the muffled sounds of their neighbour's gramophone and the hum of an ever-rising tide of road traffic. The terrible noises of two world wars only served to confirm that peace and quiet had become rare commodities in this brave new world. Theosophists agreed with medical professionals in the 1920s and 30s that noise was a significant threat to physical and mental wellbeing. British composer, Cyril Scott, for example, wrote that 'we

are much troubled by the nerve-shattering noise to which in all large towns we are subjected...The jarring sounds of motor-horns, whistles, grinding brakes and so forth exercise a cumulative and deleterious effect upon the entire organism.' However, in contrast to the prominent noise abatement campaigns spearheaded by mainstream medical practitioners, Theosophists such as Scott took a different approach. Rather than striving to restore an idealised golden age of quiet as organisations such as the Anti-Noise League attempted to do, Scott suggested instead that 'certain composers will be used to evolve a type of music calculated to heal where those discordant noises have destroyed. Such men, consciously aware of their responsibility towards humanity, will indeed be as faithful custodians of the sacred two-edged sword of Sound.' This paper will explore Theosophical theories of sound in order to explain why certain sounds, labelled noise, were considered to be harmful and a hindrance to self-realisation, while others, especially those composed by Theosophical initiates, could be among the most powerful vibrational agents in the quest for true spiritual selfhood.

Session 10

10A: Rationalism, mysticism and surrealism

Walter Kugler (Oxford Brookes University), 'Between Rationalism and Mysticism: Andrej Belyj, 1880-1934'

Whether poets, scientists, Symbolist, Theosophist or Anthroposophist Andrej Belyj was basically everything - at the same time, one after the other, through each other and against each other. He was, as Alexander Blok once laconically noted, 'the same as always: brilliant, weird'. Like his father, the professor of mathematics and dean of the University of Moscow Nicolaj V. Bugajev, Andrej Belyj studied natural sciences and laid off its 1903 state exam.

In 1902 he published his first important work *Symphony (second, dramatic)*. It was followed by other works: In 1907, the novel *The Silver Dove*, 1910 *Symbolism* and 1916 his opus magnum *Petersburg*. The peculiarities in the language of Belyj, the nature of its syntax and the use of neologisms, which dominated his later works as well, critics and fellow writers likewise rave about. When Vladimir Nabokov in an interview in 1965 was asked about the most important masterpieces of the 20th century, he answered: 'Besides Joyce's *Ulysses*, Kafka's *Transformation* and Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* Belyj's *Petersburg*'.

Belyj had in the course of his literary work very early to recognize that a true work of art must be created in the future outside the defined reason in the meaning of Immanuel Kant, that means 'out of irrational knowledge'. Considerations as these were welcomed by writers and artists such as Malevich and Chlebnikov like a new revelation/manifestation. But even more they were touched by the concept of 'abstraction' (*bespredmednost*) Belyj talked about in a speech on *The future of art* in a meeting of a trade society in Kiev in 1907: 'If the 'abstraction' will be introduced to the art, the method of create something will be a "subject matter for itself" which means an extreme individualization. To find their own way is the goal of artistic creation [...] We must make everything anew. To this end, we have to create ourselves'.

Shortly after the turn of the century Belyj started – like many other Moscow writers – studying the writings of Blavatsky and soon he was a frequent guest in Moscow theosophical circles, introduced by Anna Sergeevna Goncharova. In Anna Minzlova he found his great teacher who will lead him to an even more important teacher: Rudolf Steiner. Three years, 1914 - 1916, he was staying in the next radius Steiner in Dornach. An impressive example of these turbulent times, are his meditation drawings that represent a visualization of Steiner's meditation exercises and content of his lectures regarding human being, nature and cosmos. In the course of numerous meetings Bely showed his pictures to "the doctor" (Steiner) and his comments are recorded in some drawings. The drawings

slumbered in the Rudolf Steiner Archive in Dornach for many years, and in 1999 a selection was shown at the Kunsthau Zurich, in 2005 at the Pushkin Museum in Moscow and in 2008 at the Centre Pompidou, Paris, in the exhibition *Traces du Sacré*. They bear witness, from the inside path of a man who was able to move with extreme concentration between the “poles of our time”, “rationalism and mysticism” (Robert Musil).

My paper will focus on a selection of these drawings explaining Belyj’s relationship to a spiritual world based on Theosophy and Anthroposophy.

Anita Stasulane (Daugavpils University), ‘The Messianic Art of Nicholas Roerich: Engagement of Youth in Theosophy’

In Latvia, like elsewhere in the post-soviet space, after persecutions for people’s religious views a great number of new religious movements have appeared; among them theosophists are especially active. They are rooted in the new variation of Theosophy – Agni Yoga or Living Ethics elaborated by Nicholas Roerich (1874–1947) and his wife Helena Roerich (1879–1955).

The Russian painter Nicholas Roerich who was strongly affected by Blavatsky’s works *The Stanzas of Dzyan* and *The Voice of the Silence* has created more than 7000 paintings. He claimed to be an envoy of those powers that preside over the life and evolution of humanity, and already from 1912 signed his pictures by a monograph of Christ.

The first part of the paper deals with the messianic figures of the Roerichs and their understanding of the messianic function of art, as well as the Theosophical iconography promoted by the Russian artist. The second part of the paper tries to highlight youth involvement in Theosophy today and the artistic activity of young people in Theosophical groups which plays fundamental albeit not obligatory role in the integrative processes within Theosophical community. By activities in which the young can express themselves through the art, Theosophy provides an effective mechanism to ensure that the Theosophical teaching is revealed, enhanced, and maintained over time. Since these activities are limited mainly to the copying the Roerich’s pictures, it may be suggested that the engagement of youth in Theosophy follows the traditional method of the Orthodox iconographic school.

Analysis presented in this paper is a part of a broader FP7 collaborative research project *Memory, Youth, Political Legacy and Civic Engagement* (MYPLACE) on young people’s social participation. It provides a summary of findings on Theosophically-inspired youth artistic activity and is based on 30 qualitative in-depth interviews with theosophists in Latvia and ethnographic research data on the contemporary Theosophy.

Wouter J. Hanegraaff (University of Amsterdam), ‘Leonora Carrington and the Occult’

At first sight, few surrealist artists would seem to be so obviously inspired by esotericism or the occult as Leonora Carrington (1917-2011), and yet the nature of her debt to esoteric speculation or occultist practice is very difficult to pin down. She herself refused to acknowledge any such influences on her work, insisting instead that her art ‘just happened to her’ and that she herself never knew where the purportedly esoteric themes and motives in her paintings came from. It is nevertheless possible to establish at least some avenues through which Carrington seems to have been exposed to esoteric or occultist imagery and ideas; and we have a few independent accounts, such as Alejandro Jodorowski’s ‘spiritual autobiography’, that seem to allow us a glimpse behind the façade. In my paper I would like to offer a preliminary overview of what we know about Carrington’s debt to the occult and of the scholarly interpretations that have been given about this connection so far. Having argued in my recent work that alterations of consciousness play a highly important but underestimated role in the history of Western esotericism, I will argue that Leonora Carrington’s

work is grounded in intense personal experiences that force us to reconsider conventional boundaries between 'vision' and 'hallucination'.

10B: North America

Emily Gephart (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), 'Theosophy and the Dreaming Imagination: Art, Science and Faith in the Paintings of Arthur B. Davies'

When Theosophy was founded in America, it attracted followers who sought alternate forms of engagement with spiritual matters beyond the scope of traditional religion, including modern artists who became advocates of the new faith in the 1890s and early 20th century. Yet, while Theosophy's influence on European painters has been established, its appeal amongst their American peers is less well documented. One such artist was Arthur B. Davies, described by many of his critics as a 'dreamer' whose work suggested powerful spiritual experiences. But Davies was not only defined as a visionary seer: he was also regarded as an important modern artist whose work was both transcendent and very real. In the words of one supporter, he was equally 'a realist and a mystic.'

In calling him a 'painter of dreams,' critics characterized Davies as an artist keenly attentive to the diverse power of the unconscious mind. Dreams suggested its ability to slip free of the tethers of rationality, accessing forms of perception closely attuned to magic, mystery and spiritual meaning. Davies was a devoted follower of Theosophy, interested in exploring the kinds of interior perceptual states that Helena Blavatsky argued were a crucial means of accessing higher realms of spiritual significance. But scientists such as American psychologist William James also examined dreams in their attempt to understand the human unconscious. James studied trances and dreams as he pursued the integration of spiritual and psychic processes in the 1890s. Davies's work thus spoke to viewers across an illusory boundary separating psychology from mystical belief.

In this paper I seek to enhance our understanding of how strains of mysticism were thus essential to forging modern America at the turn of the 20th century. I explore the ways in which discourses of psychological science could be powerfully linked to spiritually attuned beliefs, examining Theosophical writings alongside the work of Davies as he sought a means of bridging the parallel investigation of mind and spirit.

Anna Cannon (University of California, Santa Barbara), 'Builders of the Future: Claude Fayette Bragdon (1866–1946) and Mikhail Matiushin (1861–1934)'

It is impossible to know if P.D. Ouspensky realized how close he may have been to the literal truth when he wrote in his correspondence to Claude Fayette Bragdon: 'Your letter affirms for me a thought which appeared to me during my trip to India, that there is in the world a small number of men tied up by something, although they do not know it themselves and do not know each other, yet' (*Bragdon Family Papers*, University of Rochester Library). At the beginning of the 20th century two artists - Claude Fayette Bragdon (1866–1946), an American architect, painter, experimental stage designer and writer, and the Russian painter and composer Mikhail Matiushin (1861–1934) – independently began their quests to discover and communicate to the general public their views, understandings and philosophies concerning the metaphysical fourth dimension.

In my paper I will discuss and demonstrate how Bragdon's and Matiushin's views and discoveries on the subject of the fourth dimension and the related ideas of cosmos, consciousness, the importance and limitations of human eyesight, and the artist's eye in particular, converged in the writings of the Russian philosopher Peter Demianovich Ouspensky (1878–1947), especially in his book *Tertium Organum* (1911). Each man initiated his pursuit of higher dimensions independently; however their writings on the subject reveal not only similar approaches to the topic, but also the central role Ouspensky's view of the fourth dimension and the expansion of human consciousness played. Ostensibly both Bragdon and Matiushin recognized in Ouspensky's lucid explanations of the issues

connected to the development of space perception and the expansion of human consciousness a possible theoretical foundation for their Promethean agenda.

I intend to show that distinct parallels in Russian and American art at the beginning of the 20th century exist as exemplified by Bragdon and Matiushin, and show their likely roots in the spreading popularity and growing influence of the Theosophical Society and modern Theosophy among both Russian and Ouspensky were members of The Theosophical Society, while Matiushin gave lectures at the Moscow branch of it known as Volfila in the 1920s. Seemingly they encountered the subject of the fourth dimension through these theosophical channels, most especially in Charles Hinton's writings *A New Era of Thought* (1888) and *The Fourth Dimension* (1904). Unlike Hinton however, who focused on the mathematical nature of higher dimensions and put emphasis on the n-dimensional geometry of space perceivable by the human senses, Ouspensky linked it directly to a different state of human consciousness – 'cosmic consciousness' - a state characterized by the sensation of the 'unity of all' which became the focus of Matiushin's art and the epitome of Bragdon's writings on art, architecture and spirituality. Ouspensky's indication of the limited circle of people able to develop 'cosmic consciousness' also heightened the two artists' sense of their artistic and human Destiny, thus invisibly linking them to the special order of 'builders of the future.' (Claude Bragdon, *The New Image*).

Elizabeth L. Langhorne (Central Connecticut State University), 'The Teacher and His Student: Schwankovsky and Pollock in Search of the Golden Flower'

Jürgen Habermas, carrying the mantle of Enlightenment reason, came to recognize that the expectation that religion would give way to reasoned reflection with the promise of a golden age has proven wrong. Faith in reason has failed to meet legitimate needs that have long found expression in religion and art. Even as Habermas would look to reason to retool itself to fill this need, the return of religion invites a more searching reconsideration of its place in the modern world.

Jackson Pollock can serve as an example of spiritual thinking that still importantly feeds creative work. He was raised in a secular and left-leaning family that was, as he put it, 'violently anti-religious.' But, as he told his wife Lee Krasner, he felt a loss there, because he did have strong religious impulses. These were first nurtured by his high school art teacher in Los Angeles, Frederic John de St. Vrain Schwankovsky.

Given the way critics and art historians have emphasized the formal side of the art of Jackson Pollock, this spiritual side has until recently received scant attention. The significance of Schwankovsky for Pollock's self-understanding as an artist has thus remained unexamined. But in him Pollock found a mentor who set him on a course that he pursued to the very end. In this paper I begin such an examination, focusing on two paintings, Schwankovsky's *Modern Music* (c. 1925) and Pollock's, *Moon Woman* (1942).

In May 1929 Schwankovsky, interested in yoga and a recent convert to Theosophy, took Pollock to Ojai for a week of mass camp meetings led by Krishnamurti. We know the nature of Krishnamurti's teachings at the time, as his campfire talks were published. Their message is self-discovery and self-emancipation, the need to find a path to a higher reality. Unhappy with school, Pollock toyed with thoughts of following the master to his camps in India and Holland. His brother Charles helped convince him that art was a better choice, but the artist would not forget what he had learned from Schwankovsky and Krishnamurti.

Although later Pollock found new inspiration in Jung and shamanism, Theosophy remained significant. Especially important here is his involvement in 1941-42 with John Graham, a modern artist and mystic interested in Theosophy and yoga. But Pollock's life-long conviction that art and life are one, that 'Painting is life itself,' is rooted in his experience with Schwankovsky and Krishnamurti.

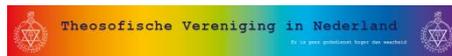
Session 11

Keynote Address: Anna Gawboy (Ohio State University, USA) 'Synesthesia Imagined, Synesthesia Revealed'

Synaesthesia is now technically defined as a neurological condition, but one hundred years ago the term described a large set of potentially overlapping scenarios involving multisensory correspondence. Theosophists and occultists viewed synaesthesia as a means to access esoteric knowledge or a higher spiritual state; artists premised their work on multisensory correspondence in order to transcend ordinary subjectivity and endow their creations with spiritual significance, aesthetes sought synaesthetic enlightenment in hallucinogens and art. I trace the clinical discovery of synaesthesia in the nineteenth century, its enchantment through the acquisition of an imaginary history, and its subsequent revelation and disenchantment in twentieth-century neurology.

These changing perspectives have distorted the reception of three notorious works of experimental multisensory theatre: Alexander Scriabin's *Prometheus, Poem of Fire*, Wassily Kandinsky's *The Yellow Sound*, and Arnold Schoenberg's *The Fortunate Hand*. Conceived around 1910, these pieces de-emphasized conventional narratives in favor of a design premised on the correspondence between coloured lights, music, and drama. Some scholars have imagined them as revelations of each author's synaesthetic experience, but their aesthetic and philosophical complexity betray a constructedness incompatible with modern notions of the syndrome. I argue that, in each case, the use of multimodal correspondence owes more to sensory theories found in theosophy, anthroposophy, and symbolist interpretations of *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Because the original productions failed to achieve multimodal synthesis, these works gained their fame through critical literary discussion instead of actual performances. The irony of early 'synaesthetic' artworks is that they were more stimulating to the imagination than to the senses.

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