

Call for Proposals

The Occult in the History of Science, Art, and Religion

PhD Thesis Workshop

We invite applications for a PhD Workshop in January, 2022, Ascona, Switzerland. Since the early twentieth century, Ascona has inspired and fostered a variety of alternative cultures of knowledge, art, and living, such as Monte Verità and the Eranos Circle.

Aim of the Workshop

This workshop is an interdisciplinary event that brings together graduate students from the fields of history of science and technology, anthropology, history of religions, and art history. The workshop seeks to explore scientific and aesthetic approaches to the occult through manifold lenses, working against familiar disenchantment narratives that scientific reasoning and Enlightenment worldviews alienated modernity from occult practices, the natural world and the divine. For this workshop, the terms “occultism” or “the occult” are viewed in an expanded manner, as an effort to produce and interrogate knowledge of “invisible” realities. Analyses of occultism are thus not restricted to religious traditions, practices and phenomena; they also concern the wider aesthetic and scientific formation and transformation of modernity.

Proposals by PhD students are encouraged to investigate the epistemic tensions and uncertainties arising from scientific and aesthetic explorations of such invisible realities. We also welcome extra-European, global perspectives, and approaches that consider occultism in relation to the gendered nature of scientific and artistic practices in previous centuries.

During the workshop, participants will have the opportunity to discuss these issues with renowned senior scholars. Ex-

cursions to Monte Verità and the Eranos Foundation will also be included in the workshop.

Application

Proposals (approx. 300 words) and a CV must be submitted by October 31, 2021 to: zgw@ethz.ch.

We will accept up to 20 proposals. Accommodation, including breakfast, lunch and coffee breaks will be financed. Participants must fund their own travel expenses to Ascona and dinners (resp. their universities).

Please note that there is an option to apply for travel bursaries provided by ESSWE (<https://www.esswe.org/Bursaries>).

The following keynote speakers will be present:

Professor Christine Ferguson, Chair in English Studies, University of Stirling

Professor Beate Fricke, Chair of Pre-Modern Art History, Institute of Art History, University of Bern

Professor Yossef Schwartz, Professor of Medieval and Early Modern Intellectual History, Tel Aviv University; currently Visiting Professor, LMU München

The workshop is organized by:

ESSWE – The European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism

ZGW – Center “History of Knowledge” (ETH / UZH)

Chair for Literature and Cultural Studies of ETH Zurich as part of the SNSF project «Scientification and Aestheticization of «Esotericism» in the long 19th century».

Date: January 20 – 23, 2022
Venue: Conference and Cultur Center Monte Verità, Ascona, Switzerland
Contact: zgw@ethz.ch (ETH Zürich)
Organisation: Andreas Kilcher, Jonas Stähelin and Chloe Sugden