

Call for Papers

The Aesthetics of Esoteric Practices: Materialities, Performances, Senses



Natasha V. Moody, Logos VI, Ph(y)toforms, photograph 8x10", 2021

Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice, 12-13-14 November 2024

This conference focuses on the *aesthetics* of esoteric practices through *materialities*, *performances*, and the *senses*. It aims to explore the extent to which esoteric practices are socially and culturally constructed and effective because they are practiced, performed, sensorily perceived and embodied by participants as practitioners as well as spectators. The conference evolves around aesthetics as the relations between esoteric practices and the practicing individual and their social and cultural environment. The concept of aesthetics draws attention to (1) the *senses*, as the interface between practices and practitioners and the possible site of efficacy of esoteric practices, but also to (2) the aesthetic significance of *materialities* and their central role in the context of esoteric practices and (3) *performances* as enactments and bodily actions and interactions in the context of esoteric practices that evoke sensory responses, bodily transformations and culturally and socially kindled experience effects.

For this conference we are looking for contributions that

- address the role of materialities and in particular the aesthetic connection materialities–practitioner/practice participant in the context of specific esoteric practices;
- analyze esoteric practices as (social and cultural) performances, highlight the dynamic nature of the aesthetics of esoteric practices and relate the enactment and the effect of the enactment of esoteric practices to the social and cultural contexts in which they are performed;
- approach the (embodied) impact of sensations of esoteric practices on practitioners/practice participants, the kindling of sensations and the interpretation of sensations in the context of esoteric practices, the mediation of esoteric concepts of senses and sensation in practice, and the interrelation of processes taking place in the context of esoteric practices with socially and culturally shaped processes of sensing and sensations.
- discuss the representations of esotericism in art and popular culture, highlighting the tension between religious and secular practices.

We invite contributions that address aesthetics of esoteric practices through materialities, performances and senses, from a theoretical, empirical research-based and/or practical perspective — we also encourage performative contributions that are dedicated to mediating the aesthetics of esoteric practices by making them observable and tangible. The conference will serve as a forum for exchange on whether and how aesthetics play a key role in the success and omnipresence of esoteric practices in contemporary (oc)culture.

Organizers

The conference is organized jointly by the Giorgio Cini Foundation (the [Centre for Comparative Studies of Civilisations and Spiritualities](#)), the DFG-funded [Center for Advanced Studies “Alternative Rationalities and Esoteric Practices from a Global Perspective”](#) (CAS-E) at the Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, the [Center for the History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents](#) at the University of Amsterdam, and the Research Network for the Study of Esoteric Practices ([RENSEP](#)).

Abstracts and Texts

Abstracts up to 300 words, accompanied by a short CV, should be submitted in English by the 1st of May to civilta.comparate@cini.it. A notification of acceptance will be forwarded by the 1st of June.

Timetable

1. The call for papers is open – 1 March 2024.
2. Abstracts (300 words maximum) and CVs to be received by 1 May 2024.
3. Notifications of acceptance will be given by 1 June 2024.
4. The conference will be held 12-13-14 November 2024.

Practicalities and Funding

The organizers will provide accommodation on San Giorgio Island, coffee breaks and lunches for all participants. Participants will arrange and pay for their own transportation. Extra funding may be available to cover the travel expenses of a limited number of scholars who cannot obtain funding from their own institutions. If extra funding is needed, please indicate this in the email with which you submit your abstract. The Library of the Centre for Comparative Studies of Civilizations and Spiritualities will appreciate it if participants can bring and donate one book they authored or in which they have participated.

CONTACT: civilta.comparate@cini.it