



Divine Art: Iconography, Ekphrasis and Archaeology

20-21 May 2023

Birkbeck, University of London

Organised by:

London Arts-Based Research Centre



Conference Programme and Abstracts

Schedule

Saturday, 20 May, 2023

9:00-9:30 Registration

9:30-9:45 Opening Words (Dr. Roula-Maria Dib)

9:45-10:45 First Session:

Session 1—Icons and Traditions: Elevation of Power

Moderator: Roula-Maria Dib

Margaret Holda, University of Lodz, Poland

“*Passio Christi* in Painting: The Hermeneutics of Divine Vulnerability and Potency”

Hanzel Gapayao, De La Salle University, Philippines

“An Icon of Sorrow, A Devotion with Trembling Joy: The 18th-century colonial painting of *Nuestra Señora de los Dolores de Turumba of Pakil* and the longest religious festival in the Philippines”

Patryck Jadczyk, University of Lodz, Poland

“Iconographic methods of creating an image of a monarch as exemplified by artistic celebrations of the Cracow coronations of Michal Korybut Wisniowiecki (1669)”

10:45-11:00 coffee break

11:00-11:45 Second Session

Session 2—Ekphrastic Poetry: Jesus and Mary

Moderator: Lawrence Buttigieg

Roy Beckemeyer, Independent Creative, USA

“Two Ekphrastic Poems After Icons: ‘Postscript’ (after Rublev’s ‘Trinity’), and ‘Theotokos’ (after ‘Our Lady of Perpetual Help’)”

Annaliisa Ollila Gison, Ontario College of art and Design, Canada

"Faith & Art in the Public Square: Social Justice & St. John's Gospel in Mark Wallinger's *Ecce Homo*"

11:45-12:30 Third Session

Session 3—Orthodox Christian Art and Jungian Archetypal Reflections:

Moderator: Margaret Holda

Byron Gaist, Independent Scholar, Cyprus

Viktar Niachayeu, University of Göttingen, Germany

“Orthodox Hesychastic Spirituality and Jungian Active Imagination: Psychological and Theological Approaches to Self-Transcendence”

Roula-Maria Dib, London Arts-Based Research Centre

“The Icon of Agia Thekla: Mantle, Turban and a Post-Jungian Interpretation”

12:30-1:30 Lunch

1:30-2:30 Fourth Session

Session 4—Between Poetry and Spirituality, Folk Art and Prayer:

Moderator: Roula-Maria Dib

Glenda Cimino, Independent Academic and Poet, Ireland

“Working Backward from the Poem: The Perception of the Sacred”

Lorette C. Luzajic, *The Ekphrastic Review*, Canada

“Mexican Ex-Votos: Ekphrasis and Prayer”

2:30-3:15 Fifth Session

Session 5—Psychology and the Spiritual/Material Identity of Sacred Art:

Moderator: Viktar Niachayeu

Claude Barbre, The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, USA

“Orpha and The Feminine Orpheus: Sandor Ferenczi, Elizabeth Severn, and the Healing of Childhood Trauma”

3:15-3:30 Coffee/Tea Break

3:30-4:15 Sixth Session

Session 6—Calligraphy and the Visual Word:

Moderator: Hanzel Gapayao

Katia Al Hage, Elyssar Press, USA

“Divine Script”

Ananya Ghoshal, Indian Institute of Technology Indore, India

“The Divine Image and Ekphrasis in William Blake’s Songs of Innocence and of Experience”

Sunday, 21 May, 2023

9:30-10:15 First Session

Session 7—Contemporary Iconography: Integration and Digitization

Moderator: Roula-Maria Dib

Pamela Chrabieh, Dar Al Kalima NGO, Lebanon

“The Eyes Have It: Iconography and War Memory”

Lawrence Buttigieg, Independent Artist and Researcher, UK

“Prosthesis, Ekphrasis, SACRUM”

10:15-11:15 Second Session

Session 8—Gods, Primordialism and Adaptability in Art:

Moderator: Glenda Cimino

Subhasree Biswas, Goldsmiths, University of London, Denmark

“Mother Goddess: the Gorgeous and the Grotesque Primordial Shakti”

Bayveen O’Connell, University College Cork, Ireland

“The Elusive Sile na Gig”

Priyam Saikia, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India

“Viṣṇu and Śiva: From Vedic to the Purānic Times”

11:15-12:00 Conference summary and closing words

Suggested Walking Tour:

FREE 2-hour London Walking Tour by [Footprints](#) (available at 10am and 2pm)

Booking is recommended

Abstracts and Biographies

Session 1—Icons and Traditions: Elevation of Power

Margaret Holda, University of Lodz

“*Passio Christi* in Painting: The Hermeneutics of Divine Vulnerability and Potency”

Abstract:

This paper aims to explore Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio’s and Hieronymus Bosch’s inimitable ways of depicting Christ’s passion. Capturing scenes of extreme violence, the two artists explore the possibilities of rendering brash inhumanness and callousness, drawing us, at the same time, into the contemplative space of devotion to *Passio Christi*. The focus of my analysis is Bosch’s *Christ Mocked* (1510) and Caravaggio’s *Flagellation of Christ* (1607). While making us dwell in their salvific message, the two pictures, in their compelling force, invite us to interpret the ambiguities of divine vulnerability and potency. Using Hans-Georg Gadamer’s phenomenology of art as play and Paul Ricoeur’s hermeneutics of the self (with its focus on the interweaving of capability and vulnerability) as a theoretical backdrop, I will investigate art’s potential for depicting the dynamics of power and powerlessness. Following Gadamer’s precept of the concealment and unconcealment (*Verbergung/Entbergung*) of truth in an aesthetic encounter, I will show how the meaning of weakness and mightiness is continually negotiated in the act of our contemplation of Christ’s passion depicted in those two paintings. The interplay of power and powerlessness stands at the center of Bosch’s and Caravaggio’s capacity for material meticulousness, on the one hand, and their art of evoking the transcendent and the immaterial, on the other.

Bio:

Małgorzata Hołda. Assistant Professor at the Department of British Literature and Culture, University of Lodz, Poland. Her published work explores topics within modern and postmodern novel, philological and philosophical hermeneutics (with special emphasis on Paul Ricoeur’s hermeneutics of the self as *l’homme capable* and Hans-Georg Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics), aesthetics, phenomenology, and postmodern philosophy. The author of *On Beauty and Being: Hans-Georg Gadamer’s and Virginia Woolf’s Hermeneutics of the Beautiful* (2021) and *Paul Ricoeur’s Concept of Subjectivity and the Postmodern Claim of the Death of the Subject* (2018). She is a Senior Associate Fellow of the International Institute for Hermeneutics and the member of Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain. She is a thematic editor of *Text Matters: A Journal of Literature, Theory and Culture*.

Hanzel Gapayao, De La Salle University

“An Icon of Sorrow, A Devotion with Trembling Joy: The 18th-century colonial painting of *Nuestra Señora de los Dolores de Turumba of Pakil* and the longest religious festival in the Philippines”

Abstract:

In 1788, when the Philippines was still under the Spanish colonial period, a group of fishermen, in the middle of Laguna Lake, in the province of Laguna, discovered an oil-on-metal painting of the Our Lady of Sorrows floating, said to be brought and was lost by a missionary traveling along the lake. According to the town’s oral tradition, the fishermen sought to bring the painting to a nearby lakeside town. However, gusts of wind impeded them. When the winds and waves favored a direction towards the town of Pakil, they quickly came ashore and left the painting at the lakeside. The following morning, a group of fisher wives saw the painting, but it was mysteriously heavy to be lifted. They called upon a local parish priest, who miraculously lifted and carried the painting of the Blessed Virgin. The townsfolk, who witnessed the event, leaped, sang, and danced joyfully as they returned to the parish (Vito 1997). The people of Pakil started to venerate the Blessed Virgin through the mysterious Icon, eventually giving her the title, *Our Lady of Turumba* (“leap in joy”). Centuries later, to this day, this narrative of the Finding of the Icon still serves as one of the essential parts of the collective memory of the townsfolk of Pakil, manifested in a long-held devotion to the *Our Lady of Turumba*, materialized in a religious practice of several *Lupi* (part of a series of feasts days) from Holy Week to September, which became the longest religious festival in the Philippines. This paper sought to present the rich church cultural heritage of the town of Pakil centered on the *Turumba* devotion, the relationship between the material (religious art) with townsfolk and pilgrim’s deep faith, and the community’s shared pastoral curatorship over this sacred icon and other religious art.

Bio:

Mr. Hanzel Gapayao is the Academic Coordinator for Art Management and Arts Research for Senior High School at the De La Salle University. He has also taught Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences subjects at St. Scholastica's College Manila and Malayan Colleges Laguna under their senior high school programs and at the De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde, handling courses on art appreciation, aesthetics, and art history. Aside from teaching, most of his engagements are with museums and cultural agencies in the Philippines, such as the Archdiocesan Museum of Manila as a curatorial and research staff, the National Museum of the Philippines - Fine Arts Division as a senior museum researcher, Silang Church Museum as a collection documenter, Metropolitan Museum of Manila, Ayala Museum, and Cultural Center of the Philippines, as a volunteer. He was recently involved with a research project managed by De La Salle University, with a grant from the National Commission on Culture and Arts, which conducted a national cultural mapping and road-mapping of the country’s selected creative industries. He is a member of the *Kilusan Cuartel de Santo Domingo*, a Culture and Heritage NGO based in Santa Rosa City, Laguna, and the International Council of Museums (ICOM), an international network of museum professionals and scholars. He earned his Master's Degree in Art Studies (major in Curatorial Studies) at the University of

the Philippines Diliman. His current research interest dwells on church cultural heritage, church museums, heritage activism, and art education.

Patryck Jadczyk, University of Lodz

“Iconographic methods of creating an image of a monarch as exemplified by artistic celebrations of the Cracow coronations of Michal Korybut Wisniowiecki (1669)”

Abstract:

During the 1670s, under the influence of other royal courts and its practices, a new element of royal celebrations in Cracow appeared: a triumphal royal entry, or intrada. Triumphal arches, as a part of ephemeral architecture, constituted a crucial part in creating a solemn atmosphere. Taking inspiration from ancient triumphs, the arches were located along the royal route and constituted a demonstration of a royal authority.

Such artistic setting, with its ephemeral architecture displayed along the royal route and on the Main Square, highly impressed both the residents and the numerous guests. Although each intrada was a considerable expense within the Cracow city budget, it was still profitable for the government to build these spectacular architectural decorations, with various elements such as fireworks, to greet a new monarch with dignity. In fact, such celebrations were also a great way to gain royal favourableness.

The city put a particular emphasis on intricately designed inscription-based decorations that were placed on the ephemeral arches- its motivation was to express happiness and admiration for the new king, as well as high hopes for the future under his reign.

Such complex programme was also a crucial part of creating an image of a new monarch. It is therefore no surprise that the artistic celebrations of Cracow coronation contained propaganda.

These specially created ephemeral architectural constructions were based on a very rich decorative programme which included inscriptions, iconography (both painted and sculpted), and emblems. Emblems, an imminent part of ephemeral architecture, with its rich and complicated Baroque metaphor, constituted the main element of an effective propaganda spectacle.

The aim of this speech is to present iconographic ways of creating the image of a monarch on the example of the coronation of Michal Korybut Wisniowiecki (1669) and Jan III Sobieski.

Bio:

Born in 1992, an Art Historian from 2016. In 2018 he graduated from the Church Music Institute of the Diocese of Lodz and specialised in Church Music. Patryk conducts lectures at the Grazyna and Kiejstut Bacewicz University of Music in Lodz and works at the Publishing House of said institution. Currently a PhD student at the Doctoral School of Humanities of the University of Lodz, Patryk works on his doctoral dissertation under the supervision of prof. dr hab. Tadeusz Bernatowicz. Patryk conducts his research in Medieval and Early

Modern reception of the culture of Ancient Greece and Rome, artistic setting of the Royal celebrations in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, as well as the influence of the religious mysticism of women on Art.

Session 2—Ekphrastic Poetry: Jesus and Mary

Roy Beckemeyer, Independent Creative, USA

“Two Ekphrastic Poems After Icons: ‘Postscript’ (after Rublev’s ‘Trinity’), and ‘Theotokos’ (after ‘Our Lady of Perpetual Help’)”

Abstract:

Roy Beckemeyer has written ekphrastic poems addressing art ranging from impressionist works of [Monet](#) and [Van Gogh](#) to modern and surrealist artists’ images of angels (“[Jacob’s Angels](#),” “[Pink Angels](#),” “[Angel Ordering Exiles from Paradise](#).”). He will read two ekphrastic poems (both of which have previously appeared only on his blog) which feature icons: “[Postscript](#),” (featuring Rublev’s “Holy Trinity” icon, which he and his wife saw in the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow in 2007), and “[Theotokos](#),” (featuring the much-reproduced image of the 15th Century icon “Our Lady of Perpetual Help,” which the author saw daily in his childhood home. Interestingly, neither poem was written by direct contemplation of the featured icon, but the icons’ imagery, their grace and meaning was so thoroughly a part of the author’s visual lexicon that they sprang to mind from totally unrelated triggers: lines from a poem commemorating the Spanish poet Federico Garcia Lorca in the case of “Theotokos,” and azure salvia blooming in a field of golden prairie grass in the case of “Postscript.”

Bio:

Roy Beckemeyer has written five books of poetry, and his work has been widely published in print and online. His degrees are in aeronautical engineering (B.S. St. Louis University, M.S. Wichita State University, Ph.D. University of Kansas). He is a retired Boeing Company executive who has served as a scientific journal editor. He is also an authority on Paleozoic insect fossils of Kansas, Oklahoma, and Alabama, and has described nearly two-dozen species of fossil insects. He and his wife of 61 years live in Wichita, Kansas.

Annaliisa Ollila Gison, Ontario College of art and Design, Canada

"Faith & Art in the Public Square: Social Justice & St. John’s Gospel in Mark Wallinger’s *Ecce Homo*"

Abstract:

A lone figure, hands bound, stands on the precipice of a monumental plinth in central London. As the world anticipated the coming of the new millennium, Jesus Christ, pale and vulnerable, awaited his judgement in Trafalgar Square. Artist Mark Wallinger presented this

piece in 1999 at the end of a decade that witnessed strong opposition toward religion. Heated debates over the place of religion transpired in the West, with Richard Rorty promoting its ban from the public square. The same year that Rorty published “Religion As Conversation-stopper,” advocating for religion’s privatization, atheist-turned-agnostic Mark Wallinger erected this image of Christ, titled *Ecce Homo*, in London’s most public square. *Ecce Homo* marks the center of Wallinger’s investigation into religious faith. The Latin title translates to “Behold the Man,”—the words Pontius Pilate uttered as he presented Christ to the mob preceding the crucifixion. Wallinger’s unconventional interpretation of this passage resonates in his unique depiction of Christ as a political prisoner and threat to imperialism. He juxtaposes the sculpture with the grand equestrian statues of Trafalgar Square, which dwarf the humble, life-sized figure. The statue’s later appearance on the steps of St. Paul’s Cathedral (a collaboration with Amnesty International) further emphasized this anti-imperialist critique. Set in the midst of an energetic debate between Rorty on one hand and Cornel West on the other, *Ecce Homo* draws attention to social injustice and oppression, inspiring hope and further dialogue, as Wallinger positions himself as Pilate, presenting Christ to the public and stating, “Behold the man.”

Bio:

AnnaLiisa Gison (Anna-lee-sa Ghee-Son) is an art history instructor at Redeemer University in Ontario, Canada. She is currently finalizing her Master of Arts at OCAD (Oh-Cad) University in the Contemporary Art, Design and New Media Art Histories program in Toronto. She holds an honours specialist Bachelor of Arts degree with distinction in Art & Art History from University of Toronto as well as an advanced diploma in art history from Sheridan Collage. Her research focuses on the intersection between contemporary art and religion and draws attention to the under-interpretation of religious faith in works by artists such as Andy Warhol, Andres Serrano, Chris Ofili, and Mark Wallinger. In March 2023, AnnaLiisa orchestrated a conference at OCAD University titled, Practicing Resilience: Redefining Spirituality through Contemporary Art, which examined spiritual practice in contemporary art.

Session 3—Orthodox Christian Art and Jungian Archetypal Reflections:

Byron Gaist, Independent Scholar, Cyprus

Viktar Niachayeu, University of Göttingen, Germany

“Orthodox Hesychastic Spirituality and Jungian Active Imagination: Psychological and Theological Approaches to Self-Transcendence”

Abstract

Might the vision of God in ancient Hesychast spirituality and the vision of Self as described in Jungian psychology be essentially the same experience? The Orthodox Christian practice of Hesychast spirituality leads to theoria, a vision of God which constitutes union with God (theosis); the parallels we draw imply that this is also what happens on the psychological

level, through encountering the true Self on the journey of individuation. In both approaches via three stages of catharsis, contemplation/illumination and ultimate union – or in alchemical language the nigredo, albedo and rubedo, spiritual or psychological development takes place. Therefore, neither Jungian psychology nor Eastern Orthodox spirituality view themselves as closed conceptual systems; they both take pride in engaging lived experiences in approaching the real. Our presentation will focus on the experience of reality and the way it is accessed by these methods – one, an ancient technique of prayer dating back to the early centuries of Christian practice, known as Hesychasm; the other, a psychotherapeutic method suggested by Jung in the 20th century, which he termed active imagination. More specifically we will suggest, compare and contrast ways in which these different approaches to the vision of the Divine may reach their goal. Common analyses of the ancient lived Hesychast spirituality combined with modern studies in analytical psychology elaborates a dual-perspective comprehensive approach to human development.

Bios:

Viktar Niachayeu: After having obtained grades in mathematics, financial studies, and Orthodox theology, Viktar studied in Göttingen with a master thesis in intercultural theology. He continued his studies in theology, especially implicit and lived religion, in Oslo on an Erasmus scholarship in 2020 and at the Initial Graduate School PThU located in Amsterdam and Groningen in 2021. Currently, he is in the second year of his doctorate in Religious Studies at the University of Göttingen where his research focuses on the contemporary Western perception of Hesychast spirituality.

Byron Gaist: lives in Cyprus, and is of both English and Greek - Cypriot heritage. He studied psychology at undergraduate and postgraduate level in England in the 1990s and has been a practicing counselling psychologist and psychotherapist for nearly three decades now. He has worked in the areas of gerontology, family violence, addictions and in general private practice with a diversity of clients. Currently he is head of the Policy Department at the Cyprus National Addictions Authority, and he also continues to work with clients in private practice, both in person and online. He has pretty much always been drawn to Jungian ideas. My first book about Jung was *Man and His Symbols*, which he read as a teenager. In 2009 he completed my PhD in Psychoanalytic Studies at the University of Essex, which focused on the relationship between Analytical Psychology, Orthodox Christianity and the archetype of the Wounded Healer. His thesis was published as a book by the Orthodox Research Institute in 2010.

Roula-Maria Dib, London Arts-Based Research Centre

“The Icon of Agia Thekla: Mantle, Turban and a Post-Jungian Interpretation”

Abstract:

The turban and the mantle that appear in Orthodox icons of Agia Thekla have much to say about the struggles of being a female saint. The role of katabasis, or ‘descent’ in the development of the spiritual psyche is a topic that has been relatively unexplored in hagiographic literature, particularly in the stories of the Byzantine Greek Orthodox matericon, or ‘mothers of the church’. These female saints have, in one way or another,

escaped patriarchy, embarking on journeys of ascension towards spirituality, but through the routes of descending into various circumstances of self-destitution. A post-Jungian revisiting of this literature will show how, in addition to eliding a patriarchic social system, female saints like Thekla have achieved spiritual development, or individuation, by seeking refuge in maternal landscapes; they fled to camouflaging natural environments, katabatic womb-like abysses such as dark settings, cavernous spaces, and forests, which were sites of an inner coniunctio. Synthesizing these post-Jungian perspectives, and revisiting this hagiographic literature and iconography through the lens of this fusion allows for a new reading. The latter type focuses on the ascension and reflects a challenge of ‘worldly’ patriarchy.

Bio:

Roula-Maria Dib (PhD, Leeds) is the founding director of the London Arts-Based Research Centre, the founding editor of literary and arts journal, *Indelible*, and creative producer of literary event series, *Indelible Evenings*, as well as *Psychreative*, a virtual salon for researchers and creatives with a background in Jungian psychology. She is a holder of the UK Global Talent Visa as an award-winning literary scholar, poet, educator and editor and a recipient of the British Council’s Alumni Awards 2021-2022 for the Culture and Creativity category in the UAE; her book, *Jungian Metaphor in Modernist Literature* (Routledge, 2020) was shortlisted as a finalist for the IAJS book awards, and poems from her collection, *Simply Being* (Chiron, 2021) were nominated for the Pushcart Prize. Her MOOC, “Why Online Creative Communities Matter”, is featured on Academia.edu. Formerly (until June 2022), she was a professor of English at the American University in Dubai.

Session 4—Between Poetry and Spirituality, Folk Art and Prayer:

Glenda Cimino, Independent Academic and Poet, Ireland

“Working Backward from the Poem: The Perception of the Sacred”

Abstract:

Join Glenda on a journey to consider the question, does religious or spiritual belief inspire poems, or do poets write poems to discover what they believe? Does a desire for redemption and restoration to wholeness underlie all religious feeling? Excerpts from several poems with religious themes from different traditions are explored, including some of the presenter’s own poems, to determine how the poems construct or suggest the poet’s perception of religion and the sacred.

The Australian poet, Les Murray, argues in his poem, ‘Poetry and Religion,’ that “Religions are poems. They concert our daylight and dreaming mind, our emotions, instinct, breath and native gesture into the whole thinking: poetry.”

Patrick Kavanagh wrote in an introduction to his poetry, “There is, of course, a poetic movement which sees poetry materialistically. The writers of this school see no transcendent nature in the poet; they are practical chaps, excellent technicians. But somehow or other I have a belief in poetry as a mystical thing, and a dangerous thing.”

Bio:

Born in Atlanta, Georgia, Glenda starting writing poetry as a child, publishing her first poem at the age of 16. She has won awards for her poetry, haibun and haiku. She moved from Manhattan to Ireland in 1972, where she has had a chequered career as a social researcher, poetry publisher, journalist, editor, home carer, college disability assistant. Today she is a writer, poet, editor, actor, director, journalist, gestalt practitioner, tarot reader, traveller on this earth, and a citizen of the uni/multiverse. Her poetry has been published in numerous anthologies and literary magazines in Ireland and the US.

Lorette C. Luzajic, *The Ekphrastic Review*, Canada

“Mexican Ex-Votos: Ekphrasis and Prayer”

Abstract:

Throughout Mexico, handmade paintings and prayers on tin tell personal, family, and spiritual dramas. This rich history of divine folk art is part art, part prayer, and part tabloid. Ex-voto works were created by everyday people to thank the Virgin of Guadalupe or God for miracles or answered prayers. The artwork tells the stories of salvation from bandit shootouts, cancer, mother-in-laws, and alien abductions! The tin tableaux were left in churches, tacked to the walls, or near other sacred sites, turning walls and floors into shrines.

Traditional ex-votos were crudely painted on a piece of tin, and included a visual depiction of the scenario at hand, with a handwritten prayer in the lower third of the artwork. The prayer gave more context for the situation and praised the saint or God for intervening positively.

In recent times, artists have taken up the history and style of ex-voto retablo artworks. Some recreate found pieces to bring them into new light. Some create their own.

In this presentation, we will learn more about this unique form of divine folk art. We will discover a fascinating resource for connecting with people past and present and inspiring our own stories and poetry.

Bio:

Canada’s Lorette C. Luzajic is known for her ekphrastic prose poetry and flash fiction, which have been widely published, shortlisted, longlisted, awarded, and nominated for Best of the Net, the Pushcart Prize, Best Microfiction, and Best Small Fictions. She was awarded a creation grant by the Ontario Arts Council, resulting in her upcoming collection of ekphrastic fictions, *The Rope Artist*. Her most recent books of ekphrases are *The Neon Rosary*, *Winter in June*, and *Pretty Time Machine*. Lorette is the founding editor of *The Ekphrastic Review*, the flagship journal of ekphrastic literature since 2015. She is also an internationally known visual artist working in mixed media, with collectors in over 30 countries so far.

Session 5—Psychology and the Spiritual/Material Identity of Sacred Art:

Claude Barbre, The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, USA

“Orpha and The Feminine Orpheus: Sandor Ferenczi, Elizabeth Severn, and the Healing of Childhood Trauma”

Abstract:

Sigmund Freud found early on in the story of Don Quixote by Cervantes, and later in the myth of Oedipus “a rhythmic pulse that gave psychoanalysis its first voice...myths that throb with conflict, murderous aggression, incest, and guilt” (Smith,1999). In contrast, Sandor Ferenczi found in the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, and the voice of his traumatized American patient, Elizabeth Severn, know as R.N. in *The Clinical Diary* (1932), a phenomenon he called “Orpha”—a feminine of Orpheus—that appeared in Severn’s personality. As Ferenczi writes about the clinical experience: “the absent external help is replaced by the creation of a more ancient substitute” (1933). In essence, as Soreanu writes, “Orpha is a sort of guardian angel, a healing agent, and a principal of salvation” (2017) that appears in Severn’s trauma experience and acts in the direction of self-preservation. Reflective of the Orpheus myth, the phenomenon of Orpha “aches with separation, fragmentation, suffering from acts of violation, as well as attempts at reclamation motivated by love” (Smith, 1999). In this presentation we will explore the image and meaning of Orpha in Ferenczi’s work with the childhood trauma that emerged in Severn’s personality, noting how the Orpheus and Eurydice myth, understood by both patient and therapist in the therapeutic space, served as a primordial healing direction “filled with empathy as well as a harsh “decent” into inconsolable sorrow over losses due to trauma...where a psychic growth can only be planted alongside of the permanent ruins left by trauma” (Smith, 1999). We will see, as Donald Kalsched wrote, that Ferenczi’s speculation about the daimonic object reveals “a trans-personal immaterial reality that Orpha makes visible, and that links the patient’s ego-experience with a spiritual/material unity not ordinarily available to consciousness” (Kalsched, 2003).

Bio:

Claude Barbre, Ph.D., L.P., is Distinguished Full Professor, The Chicago School of Professional Psychology. He is Course-Lead Coordinator of the Psychodynamics Orientation, and lead faculty in Child and Adolescent Studies. He is also a Board Member and Supervisor at the Chicago Center for Psychoanalysis, Chicago IL. Dr. Barbre served for 12 years as Executive Director of The Harlem Family Institute, a New York City school-based, psychoanalytic training program. Author of prize-winning articles, books, and poetry, Dr. Barbre is a five-time recipient of the international Gradiva Award for “outstanding writing in psychoanalysis and the arts.” He is also the recipient of the 2022 Distinguished Psychoanalytic Educator Award from IFPE for “outstanding contributions to psychoanalytic education,” and the 2022 Joanna K. Tabin practice in Chicago Award for Exceptional Public Service, presented by CCP. He is in private practice in Chicago, IL.

Session 6—Calligraphy and the Visual Word:

Katia Al Hage, Elyssar Press, USA

“Divine Script”

Abstract:

In this presentation of artwork and practice sheets is the unfolding of a life-long relationship with calligraphy as an art, a meditation, and a link to the divine and the past generations of artist calligraphers. As a child, I was fascinated by the written word, its shape, form and versatility. The word connected me to God in the Maronite tradition through the gospel of John, and the word connected me to Allah through the Quran. This fascination and quest for a connection to the divine invited me to learn Chinese and Japanese calligraphy and its close relationship to the warrior archetype, the Sanskrit for singing sutras, till it led me in a full circle back to Syriac, a modern language of my own land. Through different use of brushes, colors, ink pens, my work pulled me away from the religious to the spiritual, from the concrete to the ineffable. For me, calligraphy is a daily practice that involves all of my senses and supports me on my journey in life. I am by no means an accomplished calligrapher but one who emulates, copies, and admires the infinite ways we, as human beings, have embellished and made letters into words into art pieces as a portal to that which we cannot understand only embrace.

Bio:

Working through the trauma of war and displacement since a tender age, I have come to observe the ravages it has left on me, and through me, on the women of my country, Lebanon. With every trip to visit my mother and the women I knew, I became aware of their need to be seen and to be acknowledged for the suffering they overcame. In the United States, in a quiet setting, I was able to reach into those parts of me desperate to be heard with the help of a few trusted guides and friends. From this journey everything exploded: colors, lines, and the need to express the exasperation living in my darkness and the darkness of the women most cherished to my heart. It is my hope that the more I tend to these lonely places, the more healing can seep to the hearts of women marked by war and resilience.

Ghoshal, Indian Institute of Technology Indore, India

“The Divine Image and Ekphrasis in William Blake’s Songs of Innocence and of Experience”

Abstract:

William Blake's illuminated books, which combine engraving with painting, are, in technique, among his most original contributions to the visual arts. In 1789 he completed *Songs of Innocence* and, in 1794, *Songs of Experience*, both printed by relief etching and each page being elaborately hand colored. In Blake's Composite Art, W.J.T. Mitchell states, "it has become superfluous to argue that Blake's poems need to be read with their accompanying illustrations." However, till the early twentieth century, analyses of Blake's illuminated books

were inclined to treat his images as less essential details of his poetry. Beginning with the studies by Mitchell, among others, the remarkable interactions of these images and texts have been increasingly documented in Blake studies and with the William Blake Archive (a University of Virginia hypermedia archive edited by Morris Eaves, Robert Essick, and Joseph Viscomi) making the high-quality scans of his illuminated books readily available, the study of Blake's image-text relations has been further revitalized. This presentation takes as its subject interactions between Blake's images and poems as a case of Ekphrasis, including Blake's use of experimental calligraphy that, according to Mitchell, "pushes the alphabetic writing toward the realm of pictorial values." The poems in focus are 'The Divine Image' and 'The Human Abstract,' a companion piece to 'The Divine Image.' Blake's artistic strategy was to create unity out of contrariety. In the *Songs*, image and text interact to form unified art to explore the close relationship Blake perceives between the identity of humans and the divine.

Bio:

Ananya Ghoshal is an Assistant Professor of English in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology Indore, India. For her Ph.D., she worked on the influence of music in literature and was a Fulbright Doctoral research scholar in the Department of English at UC Berkeley. Ananya works on the broader themes of Environmental Humanities, Visual Culture, and Performance Studies and has contributed to *An Anthropocene Primer* (<https://anthropocenepimer.com/>) - an Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) born-digital, open-access, open-peer review publication that guides learners through the concepts and debates related to the Anthropocene.

Session 7—Contemporary Iconography: Integration and Digitization

Pamela Chrabieh, Dar Al Kalima NGO, Lebanon

“The Eyes Have It: Iconography and War Memory”

Abstract:

Throughout history, theologians, art historians, and iconographers have written extensively about the symbolism of eyes in Christian iconography. St. John of Damascus believed that the eyes in icons represented the divine and human nature of Christ. Xenia Pokrovsky saw the eyes as a mirror of the soul, a source of light and life, and the symbol of the highest power of the spirit. Leonid Ouspensky emphasized the importance of the direction and color of the gaze in icons. He believed that the eyes served as a portal to the spiritual realm and conveyed the divine power and presence of the figure depicted in the icon. By using the eyes to create a personal connection with the viewer, icons became an embodiment of the divine, inviting the viewer into a direct experience of the sacred.

The eyes have been used symbolically throughout history across different disciplines and cultures. In Edward Lucie-Smith's book, *The Spiritual in Art*, he writes about how eyes are frequently used in modern art as symbols of vision, insight, or spiritual seeing. In *The Eye of the Lynx*, David Freedberg discusses how eyes are used in natural history illustrations to represent the act of looking and seeing. In his essay on Egyptian religion, Erik Hornung

writes about the symbolic importance of the eye of Horus as a source of healing power that symbolizes the light of the sun and the life-giving forces of nature. In "Pictures and Tears," James Elkins discusses the emotional power of icons and the role of the eyes in conveying that power. He argues that the eyes in icons can evoke a strong emotional response from the viewer and create a sense of engagement and connection between the viewer and the icon's subject. Overall, the symbolic significance of the eyes lies in their ability to convey both physical and spiritual seeing, to create a sense of intimacy and connection, and to evoke deep, primal emotions that are universal across time and space.

My recent collections of integrated iconography artworks depict scattered elements of women torn by the vicious cycle of physical and psychological war and give shape to the absence, the missing, the unspoken, and the disintegrated. The focus of my 'icons' is on the eyes, which represent the spiritual window or gateway to the soul, and sublimate reality while transforming immutable darkness into transitory realms.

Bio:

Dr. Pamela Chrabieh is a Lebanese-Canadian visual artist, researcher, activist, writer, program manager, and President of Dar al-Kalima NGO for Arts and Culture in Lebanon. She has over 20 years of multidisciplinary and international experience in academia, creative communication, and activism. She holds a Higher Diploma in Fine Arts and Restoration of Icons, a MA in Theology, Religions, and Cultures, and a Ph.D. in Theology-Sciences of Religions. Dr. Chrabieh is the author of numerous publications in the sciences of religions, theology, interreligious/intercultural dialogue, gender studies, youth studies, cultural studies, and arts. As a visual artist, she exhibited her work in Canada, Lebanon, the UAE, Italy, Spain, Hong Kong, China, Korea, the UK, the USA, and the metaverse. She won several prizes in Canada and Southwestern Asia. <https://pamelachrabiehblog.com>

Lawrence Buttigieg, Independent Artist and Researcher, UK

“Prosthesis, Ekphrasis, SACRUM”

Abstract:

Research film pros-thesis hinges on SACRUM, a mixed-media box-assemblage whose iconography is imbued with liturgical and profane tropes, while drawing on Irigaray's notion of the 'sensible transcendental' (Irigaray 1993: 115, 129). Acting as an ekphratic digital representation of a tangible three-dimensional object, this motion picture shows that the creation of such an artefact depends on a profound collaboration between Cesca and myself. Furthermore, it suggests that mutual affection engenders convergence and, if it is strong enough, it is also capable of nurturing an autonomous existence. Documenting parts of SACRUM's creation, pros-thesis hints at the sensations which are elicited when we engage our bodies with materials used in the creative process. The film underscores the use of silicone in the manufacture of our bodies' facsimiles; once cured, it registers the obverse of our anatomies, and makes possible the near-perfect replicas of their parts. pros-thesis shows that the manufacture of this artefact brings us ponderably closer together in a process which involves the subjective objectification of ourselves through each other. It suggests that SACRUM is our coming together to mutually enrich each other's experience of carnal embodiment. pros-thesis intimates that SACRUM is the exteriorisation of our sentient

consciousnesses and our capacity to re-invent ourselves through self-replication. It is a prosthesis of our paired bodies. Self-reflexively, this ekphrasis is also our recontextualisation since it endows us with an ancillary existence through its prosthetic attributes in the form of digitised content. Via its own reticulation, pros-thesis brings about our pluralisation whose correlation with otherness is evocative of Luce Irigaray's observation that woman as other is essentially always two rather than one, on account of her two labia which are always in contact and readily caressing each other.

Bio:

Besides pursuing a career in architecture, Lawrence Buttigieg is also an artist and freelance researcher; in 2014 he was awarded his PhD from Loughborough University. For more than twenty years, the recurrent theme of Buttigieg's studio-work and research is essentially the representation of womanhood. Consequent to his practice-led doctoral research, he creates box-assemblages—three-dimensional, body-themed, artefacts—through which his association with the female subject is taken to an acutely intense level. By means of these artworks Buttigieg examines concepts of alterity and selfhood and challenges the dominant role of male subjectivity in the western world. Furthermore, the box-assemblage not only allows him to explore the spiritual with the aim of exploiting that which is Other in the western theological tradition, namely God and the Divine, but also to draw links between the feminine and the transcendental. For the past few years Buttigieg has also been experimenting with film www.aboutlawrence.eu

Session 8—Gods, Primordialism and Adaptability in Art:

Subhasree Biswas, Goldsmiths, University of London, Denmark

“Mother Goddess: the Gorgeous and the Grotesque Primordial Shakti”

Abstract:

The paper will discuss the mother goddess and the fertility cult. Female divinity who does not appear as a virgin, an icon of purity and pristine motherhood. Contrarily, they are gruesome, grotesque, bare-breasted and naked, a primordial Shakti.

Mother goddess was present in every ancient culture but with time, patriarchal religion dematerialises her presence. Now women again, re-imagined, reclaimed, and repurposed goddess. The paper will specifically focus on the mother Goddess Kali from Hinduism and the Sheela-na-gig from the pre-Christian/early Christian era. It will inquire about how feminist, activist, academics, and artists embodied the image of the goddess in the contemporary world. Goddess worship is one of the longest traditions in Hinduism which continues today. Kali is the wild, naked, black goddess, the creator, protector, and destroyer of the universe. She is both feminine and masculine and worshipped by the saints and sinners. Today, women often conjure Kali as an emblem of resistance against the violence of women. She is even present in the witches alter for the lack of goddess. Whereas Sheela-na-gigs are the architectural grotesques. These stone carved naked women with exaggerated vulva are often found on cathedral or churches around Ireland, France, and Spain. Different theories

around Sheela-na-gigs are that she is the fertility/mother goddess, or she is the *witches on the wall* to ward off the evil spirit. She can also be a representation of a pagan goddess. For many contemporary feminists, the gesture of Sheela's remorseless sexual display is an uprising against misogyny. While the paper will discuss women's adaptation of goddess as empowerment, it will also criticise its pitfall of being the divine in a patriarchal society.

Bio:

Subhasree Biswas is a visual artist, independent researcher, educator, and designer. She is an Artist, passionate about climate change, environmental justice, equality, and gender. Her recent research interest focuses on feminism, anticapitalism, extended epistemology, spatiality and psychopower. Subhasree's background in design and visual art helps her to think out of the box and incorporate speculative fabulation, design thinking, co-design, and storytelling (visual & oral) for impact and change in the pursuit of a better world.

Bayveen O'Connell, University College Cork, Ireland

"The Elusive Sile na Gig"

Abstract:

The purpose and meaning of Sile-na-Gee (Sheela-na-Gee) stone carvings of female figures displaying their vulva is still largely unknown. These carvings, dating from the 11th to the 17th centuries, are found in Britain and France but are most numerous in Ireland. Many of them are still in situ on the outer walls of old churches, monasteries, and ruined castles. Some scholars speculate that the Siles were fertility symbols linked with conception and childbirth, while others perceive them as grotesque gargoyle-like figures that acted as warnings against promiscuity and sin. Either way, their presence on church walls specifically seems quite incongruous, and as yet no contemporary writing has been found that could further elucidate their connections with religion or religious buildings. The disappearance of Sile-na-gigs after the 17th century may suggest the influence of puritanical religious beliefs and practices after the advent of Protestantism.

I propose to read a poem I wrote, published online in *Three Drops Poetry* in 2018, about my personal connection to Sile-na-Gigs forged through going out to find and photograph them. The ones that are still in situ are often hard to locate, which turns the excursion into a little challenge and adds to the mystique of the Siles themselves. In the poem, I've projected my own feminist ideas onto the figures, portraying them as rebels, enduring cheekily in spite of patriarchal and ecclesiastical constraints, and as representations of women comfortable in their own skin, rather than sinners, deviants or the antithesis to the Virgin Mary.

Bio:

Bayveen O'Connell is a writer and creative writing facilitator. She is currently doing an MA in Museum Studies in University College Cork for which she is working on a dissertation entitled : Creativity and visitor engagement - Ekphrasis and the Public. On the 1st of April

this year, she facilitated an Object-based Creative Writing Workshop based on the Whitefield Ogham Stone in Kerry County Museum, Tralee. In her spare time, she loves nothing more than hunting for in situ Sila-na-Gees around Ireland.

Priyam Saikia, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India

“Viṣṇu and Śiva: From Vedic to the Purānic Times”

Abstract:

In India, Hinduism has never been a static practice or a luxury; It was connected to the people's essential spiritual urges and requirements. The progressions were not created overnight nor without any problems. The pantheon has always been the result of constant conflicts, not only with the Gods of other ethnic groups but also with Gods of the Aryans' own clans and families. It would appear that each family had a particular favoritism towards their own Gods. Gods who were able to represent larger portions of life and experience, mobilize greater power and significance, and later annex other Gods when their greater potentialities grew, while others withered away. This very fact of the Gods changing- growing or diminishing in significance- is a proof of the continuous influx of new ideas and a creative conflict with existing ideas. In the period, where sectarian religions were gradually replacing the older Brāhmanical religions, this new approach to the Gods remodelled their characters. The Gods which could best adapt themselves to the changing needs of the times survived. One way by which they did so was changing their Vedic characters and slipping those characteristics which were set up infelicitous. Only those Gods could acclimatize themselves who had been considered ‘minor’ in the Rigveda, who didn't have too detailed characteristics and those whose personalities had the necessary vacuum which could be filled in with suitable traits. Only Vishnu and Rudra fulfilled these conditions: they were suitably vague and indistinct with few or no definite achievements to their credit so as to allow new feats to be ascribed to them; at the same time, they had certain features in their characters indicating the direction along which they would develop.

Bio:

Priyam Saikia is currently a PhD Student at the Centre For Historical Studies (CHS), Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi, India. She had also completed her Masters from the Centre For Historical Studies, JNU in 2020 with a specialisation in Ancient Indian History and my Bachelors from Miranda House, University Of Delhi in 2018 with an Honours in History. As a student of Ancient Indian History, her research interests lie in the study of myths, memories, religious and cultural studies of Ancient India. She wishes to keep working in these areas and contribute to some exciting knowledge in these fields.

Check out some of our forthcoming LABRC conferences:

- "**The Creative Psyche and Arts-Based Research: A Transdisciplinary Conference**", keynote: **Susan Rowland** (Online and at the Association of Jungian analysts Centre, London, June 10-11). Full conference details on: <https://labrc.co.uk/2023/04/04/creative-psyche/> **Proposals window closed, but non-presenting attendees welcome to register!**
- "**Mysteries and Histories Conference**" June 24-25, keynote: **Fiona Sampson and Peter Salmon** (Online and at the Court House historic venue in Martock, Somerset, UK). Full conference details on: <https://labrc.co.uk/2023/03/04/mysteries-and-histories/> **Proposal deadline: May 22**
- "**Ecopoetics and Environmental Aesthetics Conference**" July 17-18, keynote: **Ruth Padel** (Online and at Kew Gardens, London). Full conference details on: <https://labrc.co.uk/2023/04/13/ecopoetics/> **Proposal deadline: May 26**

Check out some of our forthcoming LABRC online events:

- **Indelible book club, June 8, 7:00 p, UK:** author chat on *The Alchemy Fire Murder* by **Susan Rowland**. FREE event, register on: <https://labrc.co.uk/2023/04/13/the-alchemy-fire-murder-with-susan-rowland/>
- **Online Workshop:** "Stand and Deliver: Fearlessly Facing your Audience", by **Paula Messina, June 13, 6:00pm-8:30pm, 25 GBP. Register on: <https://labrc.co.uk/2023/05/11/stand-and-deliver/>**
- **Psychreative: "Body, Gender, and Psyche" with Marieke Cahill, June 15, 7:00 pm (UK).** FREE event, register on: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/psychreative-body-gender-and-psyche-tickets-634863954177>