



CAS-E

Alternative Rationalities and
Esoteric Practices from a Global Perspective

CAS-E Calls April 2024

CONFERENCE Call for Papers



"The Aesthetics of Esoteric Practices: Materialities, Performances, Senses"

12-14 November, 2024

Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice

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.

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).

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.

Abstracts up to 300 words, accompanied by a short CV, should be submitted in English to civilta.compare@cini.it.

Deadline for application: May 1, 2024

Download the call [here](#).

WORKSHOP Call for Panel Participants

"Healing Ecologies and Medical Diversity: Ethnographic Approaches to Wellbeing"

12-15 June, 2024

Sapienza Università di Roma

It is no secret that we are experiencing troubling times. We frequently hear news of massive wildfires, disappearing glaciers, widespread flooding, dangerous heat waves, relentless superstorms, not to forget the scourge of hunger, disease and the social and economic costs of epidemics and pandemics. What's more, these events are unfolding in a climate of political dysfunction, conspiracy theories, and the incomprehensible violence of mass shootings. Given the persistent and socially destructive turbulence of our times, how can we restore our humanity, or, as Timothy Morton and Dominic Boyer put it, how can we once again become human? In these trying times, it is time for scholars, who have deep insight into the whys and wherefores of the human condition to share their slowly developed insights that can chart a course toward a future of less mastery, arrogance and domination and more collaboration, modesty, and constructive cooperation. The collective wisdom of social science and the humanities remains obscured in a thick cloud bank of disciplinary convention that honours the obfuscation of theoretical discourse. One path toward a viable social future is to extend social science insights into the practices of healing— healing one another and healing the world. We intend to invite internationally recognized scholars and practitioners who have first-hand knowledge of healing

practices. In this workshop we intend to give participants an empirically grounded understanding of how to transform illness and traumatic situations into states of wellbeing—a way to begin the process of personal and social healing. To meet this end, we propose a four-day intensive workshop that focuses on *issues of social trust* (David Napier), the *self and wellbeing* (Fiona Bowie), *medical diversity* (Elisabeth Hsu), *collaboration of scholars and practitioners* (psychiatrist Mustapha Gudaji), and *musical healing through songwriting* (Kristina Jacobsen).

The workshop is funded by the European Union and organized by HEAL Network for the Ethnography of Healing, Marie Curie Fellowship "THETRANCE-Transnational Healing: Therapeutic Trajectories in Spiritual Trance", the PhD Programme in History, Anthropology, Religions at the Sapienza University of Rome, and 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,

Panels will extend and deepen the key issues addressed by the keynotes. Therefore, we invite panelists to choose one of the main themes addressed by the keynotes and discuss it through their own ethnographic research. The registration for workshop attendance is free and keynote speakers and panelists will.

Please send your **expression of interest including a title and the panel of your choice** to emily.pierini@uniroma1.it.

Deadline for application: April 27, 2024

Find the call including a detailed program of the workshop [here](#).



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