

Ways of perceiving ADAD4019

Lorraine Budd - 2501182

AI ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Exhibition Imagined

Lecturer: Estéfani Bouza

I confirm that I have not used any tools in the research and creation of this assignment.

I confirm that I have copies of my draft, notes and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence,

ESOTERIC ART & THE OCCULT

INTRODUCTION

Esoteric Art & the Occult is an exhibition that seeks to showcase the symbiotic relationship between art & the occult & how both illuminate not just the physical world but the supernatural world, making the unseen, seen. By addressing themes such as romanticism, abstraction, & occultism, the exhibition brings together carefully selected artworks that reveal how esoteric belief systems have shaped artistic expression, offering new perspectives on the clandestine & the established art historical canon.

The exhibition will be chronological in its approach & draws on the works of renowned artists such as William Blake (1757-1827), John William Waterhouse (1849 -1917), Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), Barbara Hepworth (1903-1975) & Ithell Colquhoun (1906-1988). By transcending the material plane, the exhibition will engage the audience with a deeper intellectual, philosophical & spiritual dialogue, spanning historical periods of time & delving into concepts such as Gnosticism, hermeticism & the avant-guard.

THE CURATOR AS CATALYST OR CONDUIT FOR IDEAS

One important aspect of a curator's role is the potential it offers to focus on a particular subject and bring it to the public's attention at a specific moment. Through the selection of artists, through juxtaposition and their interpretation of their works of art, curators are able to generate dialogue (or more accurately trialogue) between the audience, the artist and the institution. (George, 2015, p.13).

Tate St Ives will be the venue to host the exhibition, due to the rich artistic history spanning two centuries, the gallery has reputedly become a model of cohesion for both location & community & was home to both Barbara Hepworth in 1939 until her death in 1975, where visitors can also see her Sculpture Garden & Museum. And Ithell Colquhoun in 1938 until 1947 - the main female protagonists in this retrospective exhibit.



Fig 1. *The Night of Enitharmon's Joy* (formerly called *Hecate*) c. 1795 ink and tempera watercolour on paper 43.9 x 58.1 John William Waterhouse.

The exhibition begins with the romantic period & visionary Artists William Blake (1757-1827), an important figure in the history of poetry, print making & painting who sadly, was largely unrecognised during his lifetime. The artwork featured, entitled *The Night of Enitharmon's Joy* c.1795. (See fig 1. above). Introduces the viewer to Blake's mythology & allegorical representations, *Enitharmon* is portrayed as a sorceress semi clothed in black & surrounded by creatures of the night – the male & female figures obscured behind her appearing to hide in shame, as she points to the pages of a book. "Her hand rests on a page from an open book – could this be a tome of esoteric wisdom"? (Jenkins 2022, p.31). Jenkin's demonstrates that many educated women were labelled as witches due to their intellectual or paranormal pursuits, deemed as an act of sacrilege - they were either cast out to the margins of society, or they were burned at the stake. Through astute iconography Blake, makes invisible moral & mystical states visible to the viewer. I have listed other major works to be displayed by the aforementioned artists as featured on the map of Tate St Ives Gallery plan.

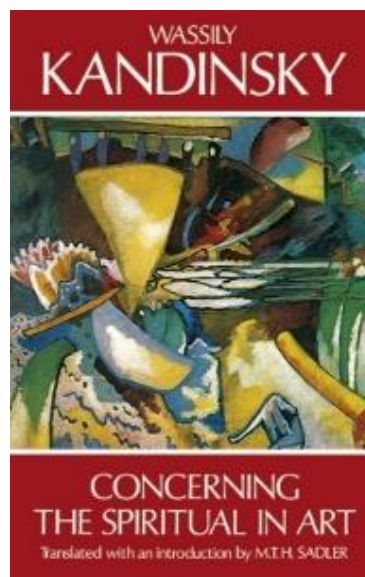
As a continuation with the Romantic period, we look at an oil painting by John William Waterhouse – entitled *Hylas and the Nymphs* (see Fig. 2 below). The artwork Exemplifies the pre-Raphaelite brotherhood, an artistic movement of the times, who sought to reject the conventions of the Royal Academy & revive the early renaissance period. The oil painting depicts the tragic mythological story of Hylas.



Fig.2. *Hylas and the Nymphs* by John William Waterhouse 1896 oil on canvass 98.2cm x 163.3cm (38.7 in x 64.3in) Manchester Art Gallery

Waterhouse captures a scene that is both ethereal & ominous, as alluring, naked & pubescent nymphs tempt Hylas to a watery grave. Metaphorically, the painting is a warning of the dangers of female sexuality. Waterhouse's beautiful rendition of myth & legend exemplifies temptation & fate as a reality. Further research has revealed that in 2018, Manchester Art Gallery removed the painting by Waterhouse – as instructed by the curator Clare Gannaway, in a bid to provoke debate when the #MeToo social movement & awareness campaign against sexual abuse & rape culture came into fruition (Brown, 2018). The decision sparked controversy & ignited debate about the contextualisation of art in modern society. The second part of the exhibition will be housed in the round section of the gallery on level 1. I have been influenced particularly by the insights of the prominent French philosopher Gaston Bachelard – although written in 1958, Bachelard posits that the phenomenology of roundness (Bachelard, 2014) evokes an emotional & psychological effect on the perception of the viewer. This concept could enhance the viewer's experience creating a sense of intimacy & calmness, in which to engage with the abstract art of

Wassily Kandinsky, Kandinsky was viewed as an active animator within the avant-garde movement & follower of Theosophy (Kandinsky, 1999) founded by Helena Blavatsky in 1875, Theosophy was a term derived from the Greek Theos (“god”) & Sophia (“wisdom”), a mystical experience combining an eclectic mix of religions - that bridges human consciousness towards a “divine wisdom. “To see the geometric colourful & biomorphic work of Kandinsky (see works selected below) displayed on the round walls, will emphasise his importance as a pioneer of abstract art & one of the 20th century’s most exemplary art theorists. The light & view within this space holds a very important aspect to this exhibit, as the viewer will be able to see a Cornish seascape, adding to the emotive resonance. “The spirit of art” a seminal work by Kandinsky (pictured below) will also be showcased within the exhibit. Published in 1911, when the old-world order was changing, emergent movements raised questions about the fabric of society (Kandinsky 1999).



The book called for a move from the materialist era, to a spiritually enlightened one.

(SuperSummary Editorial Team)



Fig. 3.

"Composition IV" by Wassily Kandinsky, 1911 oil on canvas 62.8x98.6" (159.5x250.5cm) (Photo: Wikimedia Commons [Public domain])

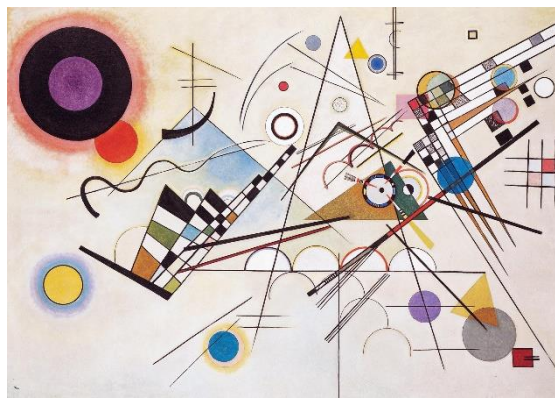


Fig 4.

Composition VIII by Vassily Kandinsky, 1923 oil on canvas 55.1x79.1" (140.0x201.0cm)

Kandinsky's art theory centres around conveying the spiritual in art, where use of colour is psychologically linked & form operates like a musical composition, evoking emotion (Kandinsky 1999) within the compositions, form is eliminated & a stream-of-consciousness is revealed through automatism. "Form itself, even if completely abstract...has its own inner sound (Kandinsky 1999).

I would like it to be noted that throughout the exhibition there will be strategically placed Sigils & Sacred Symbols to subconsciously stimulate the viewer.

The third part of the exhibition will blend seamlessly into the surrealistic realm of Ithell Colquhoun, "One cannot truly understand Colquhoun's corpus without understanding the Golden Dawn". (Jenkins 2022, p.125).

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn – was a British society focused on the study & practice of the occult, active from 1817 until 1903 Colquhoun's undoubted preoccupation with esoterica & the inner spiritual world was lifelong. In Fig. 5 *Landscape with Antiquities* (featured below) we view an imagined representation of Lamorna, a painting inspired by the coves, cliffs & Stone Age megaliths of the west Cornish coast.



Fig 5. Ithell Colquhoun 1950 *Landscape with Antiquities (Lamorna)* Oil on canvas 921x612mm

Colquhoun was considered a queer artist, who championed the female principle & a feminist, whose personal encounters both with nature & the landscape informed her practice & spiritual beliefs. In fig. 5. (above) Colquhoun describes the standing stones, barrow circles & crosses within the Pagan landscape as holding anthropomorphic qualities 'anciently magnetised' & 'full of psychic life' (Jenkins 2022 p. 110) Automatism was the impetus in Colquhoun's work, linking surrealism with hermeticism, when the artist begins to paint, there is a unity with nature & spiritual forces, the process reveals the connection to the self & the mystical universe. Some of the artists major works within the exhibition - are featured below as follows.

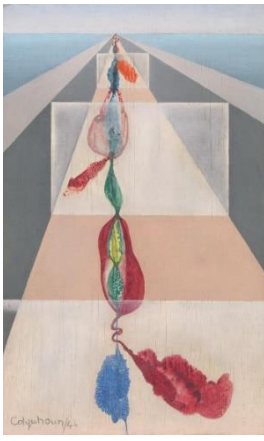


Fig. 6 Ithell Colquhoun

Ages of Man 1944

Oil paint on wood panel 295x191mm



Fig. 7 Ithell Colquhoun

Attributes to the Moon 1947

Oil paint on wood 981x455 x 43mm



Fig. 8 Scyll

Fig. 8 Ithell Colquhoun, *Scylla*

Oil paint on board 914 x 610m

The finale of the exhibition will lead viewers to the chambers that are submerged in the lower gallery, to marvel at the sculptures of Barbara Hepworth in situ “Sculpture to me is primitive, religious, passionate & magical, always always affirmative.

Barbara Hepworth (APA, Direct quote, Illuminations, 2003).

Dame Barbara Hepworth relocated to St Ives following the outbreak of the second world war in 1939, famous for her modernist abstract sculptures & use of natural materials such as wood, stone & metal, she took inspiration from the landscape surrounding her & her beloved St Ives. Hepworth pioneered a technique of creating voids within the materials, making space dynamic (see selected images below).



Fig 9. Barbara Hepworth



Fig.10 Barbara Hepworth



Fig 11. Barbara Hepworth

Talisman II, White Marble, 1960, *Forms in Movement* (Galliard) Two forms with white (Greek), 1963

Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

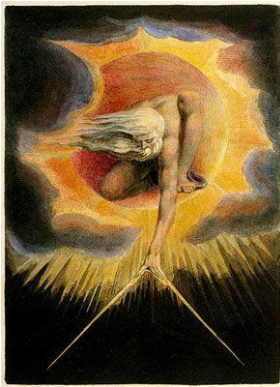
Copper, 1956

The Hepworth Wakefield

Based upon the theories of the eminent human geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, in his celebrated book *Space & Place*, he argues the concept of “mythical place & space” (Tuan, 2018, pp. 247-255). And that human beings are intrinsically linked to the cosmos. Tuan’s theoretical concept of “topophilia” an emotional & spiritual connection to place, mirrors Hepworth’s artistic expression - of how place significantly influences an artist’s work, transcending the physical.

In conclusion, all these eminent artists, share a lineage of “visionary art” where the internal world of the mind, is deemed more important than the physical world. They were highly influential figures, intrinsically linked through their contributions to the history & theory of art, recurrent themes of mythology, occultism & spirituality was a shared language, one that I hope the viewer to this exhibit can decipher for themselves the depth & mysticism of what they have seen.

Bibliography of Further Artworks displayed within the Exhibition



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The Great Red Dragon and The Woman Clothed in Sun, William Blake, 1805

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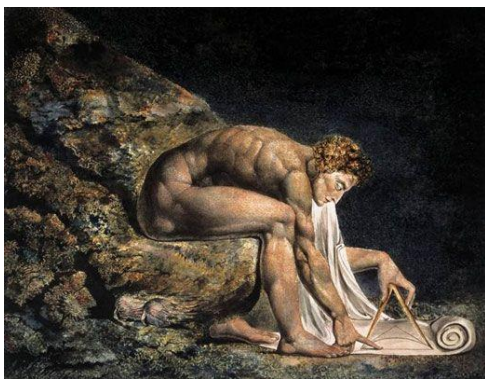
The Angels Hovering Over the Body of Christ in the Sepulchre, William Blake, 1805

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Pity, William Blake, 1795

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Consulting the Oracle, John William Waterhouse, 1884

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The Siren, John William Waterhouse, 1900

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Blue Circle, Wassily Kandinsky, 1922,

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Three Sounds, Wassily Kandinsky 1926

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Complex Simple, Wassily Kandinsky 1939

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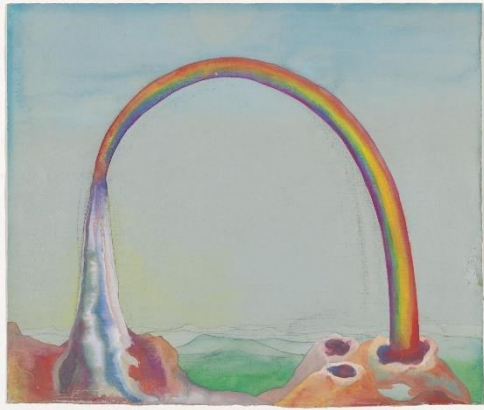
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E.L.A.S., Ithell Colquhoun, 1945

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Volcanic Landscape, Ithell Colquhoun, 1941

Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/collection?q=ithell+colquhoun>



Ball, Plane, and Hole, Teak. 1936 Barbara Hepworth, 1936

Available at: <https://barbarahepworth.org.uk/>



Oval with Two Forms, polished Bronze, 1972 Barbara Hepworth

Available at: <https://barbarahepworth.org.uk/>

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Fig 1.

(*The Night of Enitharmon's Joy*), (1795), (John Willam Waterhouse). Tate, (provenance).

Fig 2.

Photograph: Manchester City Galleries.

Fig 3.

“*Composition IV*” by Wassily Kandinsky, 1911. (Photo: Wikimedia Commons [Public domain])

Fig 4.

Composition VIII by Vassily Kandinsky, 1923 oil on canvas 55.1x79.1” (140.0x201.0cm) Kandinsky.net 2008-2026 Amazon Associate.

Fig 5.

Ithell Colquhoun 1950 *Landscape with Antiquities* (Lamorna) Oil on canvas 921x612mm Tate (provenance).

Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/collection?q=ithell+colquhoun>

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Fig 6. *Ages of Man*, Ithell Colquhoun, 1944.

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Fig 7. *Attributes to the Moon*, Ithell Colquhoun 1947.

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Fig 8. *Scylla*, Ithell Colquhoun, 1938

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Fig 9. *Talisman II*, White Marbel, 1960, Barbara Hepworth

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Fig 10. *Forms in movement*, 1956, Barabara Hepworth

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Fig 11. *Two forms with white* (Greek), Barabara Hepworth, 1963

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Tate St Ives Gallery Plan

