

Art of the Invisible

An interdisciplinary conference at The Courtauld Institute of Art exploring art's relationship with the invisible

Friday 19 October 2018

Kenneth Clark Lecture Theatre, The Courtauld Institute of Art, Somerset House, WC2R 0RN



CALL FOR PAPERS



Guercino, *Seated Figure of St. Jerome* (detail), pen and ink on paper, 1626, The Courtauld Gallery, London.

'He even painted things that cannot be represented ...', Pliny eulogized Apelles in his *Naturalis historia*. 'How can we with mortal eyes contemplate this image whose celestial splendour the host of heaven presumes not to behold?', asks a Byzantine hymn dedicated to the celebrated *Image of Edessa*. Cennino Cennini, in the first chapter of his *Libro dell'arte*, writes that painting '...calls for imagination, and skill of hand, in order to discover things not seen, hiding themselves under the shadow of natural objects, and to fix them with the hand, presenting to plain sight what does not actually exist.' In her 1949 essay *Some memories of Pre-dada: Picabia and Duchamp*, Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia tried to summarise the art of her era: 'It would seem ... that in every field, the principal direction of the 20th century was the attempt to capture the "nonperceptible".'

Art has been preoccupied with the invisible before, between, and beyond these disparate yet kindred statements. One of artists' greatest challenges is and has been representing the invisible subject, in its many guises. Artists working in media based on perception, such as painting, drawing, sculpture, photography, and installation, must devise strategies to visualise the invisible: It is a foundational paradox of art.

Art of the Invisible aims to investigate artistic strategies for the invisible, across disciplinary, chronological, geographical, and medial boundaries. This interdisciplinary conference will bring together a variety of speakers to examine the problems and strategies for visualising the invisible, providing answers across these boundaries. We welcome explorations of objects and images addressing the invisible, as well as the discourse and historiography surrounding art and the invisible, from Pseudo-Dionysius to Maurice Merleau-Ponty. With a disciplinary grounding in the History of Art, we welcome proposals from scholars working in Theology, Philosophy (Aesthetics), Comparative Literature, Musicology, and Critical Theory, as well as practicing artists.

Proposals are welcome from postgraduate, early-career and established researchers working in all relevant disciplines. Please send a title and an abstract of no more than 300 words together with a short CV and 100-word biography to Joost Joustra (joost.joustra@courtauld.ac.uk) **by Monday 14 May 2018**. Papers should not exceed 20 minutes in length. Successful candidates will be notified by the end of May, and funding will be available to support travel.

Organised by Dr Joost Joustra (The Courtauld Institute of Art)