

Doomed to a constant oscillation between the realms of the Unknown and the illusion of meaning, we advance regressing. Echoing various other scholars, the American philosopher William James marked “the recesses of feeling the darker, blinder strata of character” as the only places in the world in which “we catch real fact in the making.” Yet, instead of curiously exploring what cannot be known, we push it further away, enveloped with fear and anxiousness. The “darker strata” regularly produce angst, aversion, or awe. In this one day symposium, acclaimed scholars and artists will shed “light” on what has been relegated to the sphere of unreason: magic, the irrational, spectrality, the daemonic. Who is afraid of the irrational? What is “magic philosophy” and who needs it? How much reason is reasonable? The symposium ends with a keynote by the distinguished anthropologist Michael Taussig who will share with the audience his own private fear of the ir-rational.

Organized by Sladja Blazan and the ICI Berlin Institute for Cultural Inquiry

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Symposium How dangerous is the Ir-rational?

Friday
30 October 2009

2 – 9 pm

In English

Programme:

Photography inspired by the concept of the irrational by Cara Judea Alhadeff

14.00

Welcome

Christoph Holzhey (Director ICI Berlin)

14.10

Reasonable Ghosts:

The Dream of Reason and Magic Philosophy in the 1790s
Sladja Blazan
(Humboldt Universität zu Berlin)

14.50

Non timebis a daemonio meridiano:

Greek Irrational and the Construction of Modernity
Fabio Camilletti (ICI Berlin)

15.30

Coffee Break

16.00

Artist Presentation

Visual Languages and Observable Planets
Jesse Bransford (New York University)

16.40

Beyond Cognition?

Emily Dickinson,
Poetry, and the Brain
Sabine Sielke (Universität Bonn)

17.20

Facing up to Magic:

Fascination and Illusion in Bergman's ANSIKTET (The Magician/The Face, 1958)
Brigitte Weingart (Universität Bonn)

18.00

Coffee Break

18.30

Keynote

My Fear of the Rational
Michael Taussig (Columbia University)

19.30

Reception

