

Call for Papers

'Twice Upon a Time: Magic, Alchemy and the Transubstantiation of the Senses'

26 – 27 June, 2014

To be held at CFAR, The School of Art, Margaret Street, Birmingham



Under the illusive cloak of magic, the curiosity of alchemists introduced a means for experimentation into the innate properties of materials. The transformation of raw matter into precious metals, the combination of hot sulphur and wet cold mercury to birth the philosophers stone; to bring the inanimate to life, to miraculously vanish and conjure the body as well as providing a basis for the laws of substance based on sensory interaction and its potentiality. The scientific practices of today echo this inherent desire for material transformation, yet Western tradition remains cautious of unreasoned sensorial data, treating it with illusory trepidation. While this paradigm has proven an efficient methodology, it has installed a

discriminatory partition between that which can be rationalised or mathematized and that which is 'only' sensory. These energised and sensate transformations mark the beginning of a new challenge against tradition, returning to curiosity, experimentation and the intensity of the senses away from conventional modes of thought.

The Centre for Fine Art Research (CFAR) and the Research Centre for Creative Making (S.T.U.F.F.) based at the Birmingham Institute of Art and Design (BIAD), have joined forces to welcome papers/performances/exhibition installations that respond to magical and alchemical practices, in all their forms; including but not limited to the origins of alchemy and its contemporary relevance in science, magical performance, illusion, automata, the sensory in artificial intelligence and radical thinking in relation to concepts of time. We invite artists, scientists and philosophers to explore *again* the threshold between these paradigms, dwelling on curiosity and the tradition of scientific questing. By re-visiting the alchemist's vision, we are looking for a renegotiation of the very boundary that separates the shifting representational referents in the traditional image of magic; seeking a way to extend the concept of transformation of the same (metamorphosis), rather than re-defining a realm that is allegedly beyond rationality and linguistic articulation.

Please send abstracts of no longer than 500 words to Grace.Williams@bcu.ac.uk along with a short bio.

Abstract Deadline: 25th April 2014

Speakers will be invited to have their papers peer-reviewed/ published in the forthcoming issue of the research journal *Zētēsis*, due out in September 2014.

Image by the Artist: Clare Strand