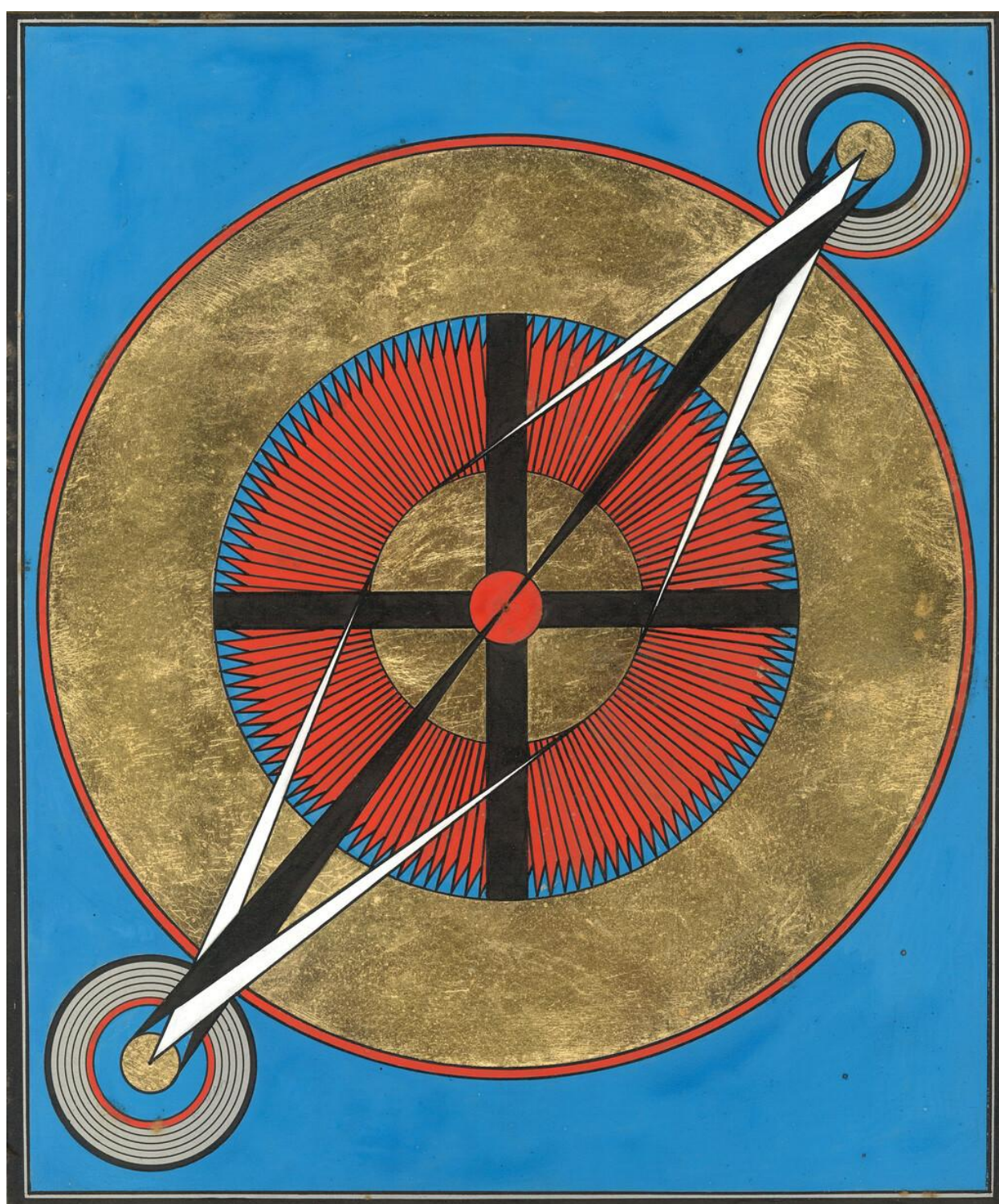


e-flux Announcements

Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn: Deep Knowledge

Kunsthalle Mainz



Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn, *Polarity*, c. 1926–1934. Mixed technique on paper. © Eranos Foundation, Ascona.

June 20, 2023

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Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn: Deep Knowledge

June 30–September 17, 2023

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Opening: June 29, 7pm, with a performance for and with Sriwhana Spong: *Instrument I (Sevgi and Bengisu)*

Artist talk with Monia Ben Hamouda: June 30, 6pm, with Yasmin Afschar, Interim Director, Kunsthalle Mainz

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We live in a time in which new directions are being defined: Thinkers, activists, art producers, and researchers are questioning given dogmas and generating new knowledge—knowledge that recognises the boundaries of academic disciplines and Western epistemologies; knowledge that is oriented towards holistic worldviews or knowledge systems of diverse cultures. What is also key is to cast a glance back in time and unearth what has been forgotten, overlooked, or erased from history. In the field of art we are discovering positions that, owing to their socio-cultural context, their gender, or their ethnicity, were excluded for a very long time. As outsider art, arts-&-crafts, ritual artefacts, or research practices, they could find no place in the general art discourse.

Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn (born 1881, London, Great Britain; died 1962, Ascona, Switzerland) is precisely such a figure. Her life as a woman, a researcher, a mystic, and an artist is fascinating. In the culturally and politically difficult years prior to World War II, she immersed herself in theosophy and East Asian philosophy, assembled a huge image archive, and promoted interaction between different disciplines many years before the word transdisciplinary was on everyone's lips. Her visual oeuvre, the powerful geometric *Meditation Panels* and the *Visions*, which draw from her discussions with psychologist Carl Gustav Jung, are part of her encompassing artistic practice. On the basis of a highly varied pictorial system, Fröbe-Kapteyn sought to find answers to the order of the world and, starting from the notion that forms do have psycho-affective meanings, endeavored to achieve specific effects.

"The most profound things in human life," she is said to have commented, "can only...be expressed in images." In the exhibition, five contemporary artists and artist duos forge a link to the present day. The works by Monia Ben Hamouda, Kerstin Brätsch, Hylozoic/Desires (Himali Singh Soin & David Soin Tappeser), Mountain River Jump!, and Sriwhana Spong explore concepts that counter knowledge shaped by rationality, whiteness, the patriarchy, and colonialism. In their works they create spaces and narratives in which they invite us to encounter such alternative forms of knowledge—knowledge that is subconscious, physical, natural, spiritual, etc. Knowledge that usually is not produced and conveyed using words, language, and concepts. The artists often take ritual practices in history and the present as their starting point. Like Fröbe-Kapteyn for her part, they underscore that art is a tool for research, healing, or communication, while in the process adopting anti-colonial positions critical of the power status quo. It becomes clear that instead of the principle of *l'art pour l'art*, the emphasis is on the impact that art (and with it images in general) can have.

We would like to thank the Eranos Foundation for supporting the presentation of Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn's works. The exhibition scenography was developed in collaboration with Belle Santos.

Participating artists

Monia Ben Hamouda (b. 1991 in Milan, lives and works between al-Qayrawan and Milan), **Kerstin Brätsch** (b. 1979 in Hamburg, lives in New York), **Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn** (b. 1881, London; d. 1962, Ascona), **Hylozoic/Desires** (Himali Singh Soin, b. 1987 in Delhi, & David Soin Tappeser, b. 1985 in Germany, lives in London and New Delhi), **Mountain River Jump!** (Huang Shan & Huang He, both b. 1985, live in Foshan, Guangdong), and **Sriwhana Spong** (b. 1979 in Auckland, lives in London)

Curated by Yasmin Afschar, Interim Director, Kunsthalle Mainz.

The exhibition is being realized with the kind support of the Ministry for Family, Women, Culture and Integration and the Mainzer Volksbank.

Kunsthalle Mainz