

## Call for papers

### **Art as Philosophy? The reception of classical German philosophy by artists, from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day**

International conference co-organised by the University of Strasbourg Institute of Advanced Studies (USIAS), the EUR Translitterae (ENS-PSL) and the UMR Pays Germaniques, as part of the research programme *The visionary drawing and its knowledge. From the study and valorization of the archives of Théophile Bra* (USIAS).

4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of April 2024, Paris (location to be confirmed)



René Magritte, *Hegel's Holiday*, 1958, oil on canvas, 60 x 50 cm, Paris, Centre Pompidou

While the reception of classical German philosophy by French philosophers has been the subject of a number of studies, thanks in particular to the development of studies on cultural transfers, research has so far given little attention to the question of its knowledge and use by artists. The aim of the conference is to open up a space for interdisciplinary dialogue, informed by case studies, on the role of the discovery of German Idealist and Romantic philosophies among European and American artists (visual, performing and scenic arts), from the early nineteenth century to contemporary art.

Classical German philosophy (*Klassische deutsche Philosophie*) is the name now given to the philosophies of Kant, German idealism (Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, but also A. Schopenhauer) and early German romanticism (above all Novalis, Tieck, A.W. and F. Schlegel, as well as F. Schleiermacher and K. Solger), to whom should be added the figure of Hölderlin and various authors who contributed to the development of post-Kantian philosophies, such as F. H. Jacobi. The

attention that this philosophical corpus very soon attracted in the field of art was the result of direct exchanges, shared interests or even a form of emulation; it concerns various aspects, in particular the role of art for the access to the Absolute or the connection between aesthetics and ethics.

Runge claimed to have read Schelling on the recommendation of Heinrich Steffens (Leinkauf 1987, Dumont 2016), both artists also gravitating towards the journal *Atheneum* and the Jena Circle, whose key figures Runge knew well, such as the brothers August Wilhelm and Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis and Ludwig Tieck. Because of Carl Gustav Carus's double activity as a painter and natural philosopher, his relationship with Schelling's philosophy has been studied (Müller-Tamm 1995 and 2005). In the field of architecture, Petra Lohmann has examined the reception of Fichte's philosophy by Karl Friedrich Schinkel and that of Schelling by Friedrich Ludwig Catel and Leo von Klenze (Lohmann 2017 and 2020).

Nevertheless, the field to be explored is broader, both chronologically and geographically: what about a more distant or more diffuse knowledge of these philosophers? The aim is to broaden this field of reflection by looking at the processes by which classical German philosophy has nourished artistic practices, both contemporaneously and over time, in Germany, but also in the rest of Europe and the United States. This theme is an opportunity to open up a space for dialogue between art historians and philosophers in order to shed light on the phenomena of transfers, not only from philosophy to art, but also between different linguistic areas: German-speaking, French-speaking and English-speaking. Through historical as well as philosophical investigation, the goal is to focus on the study of documented receptions, as well as on the mediators and intermediaries of classical German philosophy that have enabled artists to assimilate it, to divert from it, and even to question it in their projects and practices.

A number of studies have already been conducted on the reception of the thinkers of classical German philosophy in Europe and the United States. Marc A. Cheetham describes the multifaceted reception of Kant in art, art history and art criticism as "plasmatic", studying in particular the political and artistic use that Jakob Asmus Carstens made of the philosopher's thought in Rome around 1800, via the lessons of Karl Ludwig Fernow (Cheetham 2001-1), and the use of the Kantian reference in the defence of Cubism, via the readings of Kant and the neo-Kantians by the critics Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, Léonce Rosenberg, Pierre Reverdy and Maurice Raynal (Cheetham 2001-2, see also Bois 1987, O'Brien 2018). In early nineteenth-century France, Victor Cousin's dissemination of German philosophers (Janicaud 1984, Azar 1986, Cotten 1994) can be found, for example, in the written and drawn archives of the sculptor and drawer Théophile Bra from the 1830s onwards (Ramos 2022). These include the names of Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, sometimes in the margins of drawings showing non-figurative forms. In a completely different context, Antje von Graevenitz has devoted an article to Joseph Beuys's reception of Schelling (Graevenitz 2012). Other researchers show that Hegel was read by artists whose works and contexts are very diverse, from Paul Chenavard (Schlesser 2009) via the Surrealists (Rubio 2011, Sebbag 2012, Bloess/Gabriel 2020) to Guy Debord (Russell 2020, Debord 2021) and the contemporary artists Broomberg and Chanarin, who refer to his vision of physiognomy in the portrait series *Spirit is a bone* (2013). Contemporary artist Maria Bussmann quotes Kant and Hegel (Carrier 2022).

Romantic philosophy is also an important resource for artists, from the Bauhaus (Kropfnger 1993, Reinhardt/Sparagni 2009) to American art (Graulich 2014). As for Schopenhauer, Wieland Schmied has studied his role in the development of Giorgio de Chirico's metaphysical painting (Schmied 1982) and Shehira Doss-Davezac has raised the question of the readings Symbolist artists made of him through the translations of Théodule Ribot and Jean Bourdeau in the 1870s-1880s (Doss-Davezac 1996). A first major collective work on its reception by Max Klinger, Max Beckmann, Chirico, Kasimir Malevitch and Bruce Nauman was published in 2005 (Baum/Birnbacher 2005). These investigations have been continued for German art (Gatzmeier 2010, Busch 2010, Konieczek 2012, Lenz 2020) and the work of Odilon Redon (Zimmermann 2020).

As these few examples show, the aim of the colloquium is not to examine philosophers' knowledge

of the arts of their time (Hollein 2005, Franke 2007, Zerbst 2011), nor to draw simple parallels between artistic projects and philosophical theories (Carter 2011, Grosos 2016). Nor will the aim be to uncover the resonance between art and philosophy in the same period (see, for example, Schefer 2005, Cahen-Maurel 2017) or, although the method is fruitful, to use philosophy as a tool for interpreting or criticising works and practices (De Duve 1993, Mèredieu 2000). Instead, the aim of the symposium is to focus on explicit and attested receptions, as well as investigations into the mediators and intermediaries of classical German philosophy, which have enabled artists to assimilate it or question it in their practices and theories. Emblematic of this phenomenon is the subtitle of Friedrich Grillo's long article "On art according to Monsieur Kant", which opens the period that the symposium will address: "Pour artistes pensants, qui ne lisent pas la *Critique de la faculté de Juger*" ("For thinking artists who don't read the *Critique of the Faculty of Judgement*") (Grillo 1797). We will be looking at the role played by translations (in volumes or in the form of articles), essays and press articles (see Espagne 2004).

Consequently, the approach we would like to develop cannot be limited to assessing the accuracy or 'truth' of artists' philosophical knowledge: rather, we would like to contribute to an understanding of the dynamic processes reciprocally shaping artistic projects and practices, on the one hand, and the understanding of philosophical content and procedures, on the other. In short, it is a question of considering, in a necessarily interdisciplinary approach, the works and writings of artists as spaces for the reception and reconfiguration of philosophical thought, likely to reveal its creative potential.

## More details

International conference to be held in Paris (location to be confirmed)  
4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of April 2024

Proposals for papers, consisting of a title, an abstract of approx. 3,000 characters including spaces and a biographical note of around 1,000 characters including spaces, should be sent before October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023 to the following address: [dessin.visionnaire.usias@gmail.com](mailto:dessin.visionnaire.usias@gmail.com)

## Languages

French, English, German

## Selection Committee

Christoph Binkelmann, Project Coordinator of the scientific edition of Schelling (Munich), president of the Internationale Schelling-Gesellschaft.

Mildred Galland-Szymkowiak, directrice de recherche CNRS, professeur attachée ENS-PSL, département de philosophie.

Johannes Grave, Professor of Contemporary Art History, Friedrich-Schiller Universität Jena.

Isabelle Kalinowski, Director of Research, CNRS.

Rémi Labrusse, Director of Studies, EHESS, CRAL, CEHTA.

Angela Lampe, Curator of modern art collections, Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou.

Julie Ramos, Professor of Contemporary Art History, Université de Strasbourg, ARCHE, USIAS-Fellow.

Olivier Schefer, Professor of Aesthetics, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, École des arts de la Sorbonne.

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