

6th CEENASWE Conference, Rijeka, 2026

5–6 June 2026

Department of Art History, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Rijeka,
Croatia

Call for Papers deadline: 15 February 2026

**Transcription of Visuality: From the Tradition of Esotericism to Traditional and
Contemporary Artistic Practices**



Damir Stojnić, *No title*, 35x50, tempera, watercolour, paper, lightbox, 2010.

Art and culture are traditionally connected with the field of esotericism, the religious, mythical, mystical, and ritual, from the symbolic traces of prehistoric cultures, through depictions of ancient and Oriental cults, iconographic solutions of different religious systems, complex symbolism and symbolic geometry, concepts of emptiness and consciousness, cosmological systems, to the spirituality of modern, postmodern, and contemporary society. In recent practices, the semantic and symbolic structures of esotericism are integrated into popular media culture. Films, series, music videos, animated films for children, computer games, and various related content use imagery “borrowed” from the traditions of

esotericism, created through digital media and moving images and shaped into contemporary fiction.

The conference focuses on several key aspects concerning the role of esotericism in traditional and contemporary artistic practices. (1) Visuality will be considered as an epistemological medium within various traditions of esotericism. (2) Specific aspects of visual language related to esotericism will be discussed in their application to experiential practices within various artistic traditions, cultures, and forms of sociality. (3) Specific signs, symbols, diagrams, mandalas, emblems, images, and ritual-performative practices will be examined in their function as transmitters of spiritual experiences, often with initiatory significance. (4) Different forms of the practices of esotericism will be interpreted depending on the frameworks of the cultural paradigms in which they emerge and their influence on visual art throughout history, including points of contact and intersection across diverse cultures in the domain of visibility. (5) The relationship between fixed and immutable visual signs and symbols and fluid codes in the transcultural transfer of ideas will be discussed, including procedures of sublimation and the transmission of transcendental experiences through the static or moving images.

In conclusion, acknowledging the dynamics and scope of recent scientific research, particularly the growing presence of transdisciplinary research approaches, the conference aims to open up new insights from various discursive and disciplinary perspectives, especially within the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences.

Scientific committee: György Endre Szőnyi, Kamila Dworniczak, Justyna Balisz-Schmelz, Victoria Ferentinou, Noel Putnik, Nemanja Radulović, Peter Lanchidi, Nadežda Elezović, Valentina Sablić

Proposed thematic sections include, but are not limited to:

Esotericism and Visual Art: Transformational Processes in Art

- Visual representations of esotericism in art, popular culture, and mass media
- Practices of spiritual and meta-spiritual art: examples from modern, contemporary, and recent art practices

- Ritual-performative practices
- Iconography and traditions of esotericism: alchemy, astrology, Hermeticism, Kabbalah
- Aesthetics of the mystical and the invisible
- Aesthetics of esotericism in cinematography

Virtual Reality and Contemporary Fiction

- Esotericism, popular culture, and media; esotericism in film, comics, animation, and video games
- Digital esotericism: recontextualization and remediation in the digital era
- Digital esotericism: new forms of symbolic production within digital culture

Semiotics and esotericism

- Genealogy of symbols: continuities and discontinuities of signs from the traditions of esotericism, from ancient to contemporary visual cultures
- Imagery and knowledge: diagrams, mandalas, schemes, and maps as visualizations of spiritual and hidden knowledge
- Semiotics of space: sacred architecture, urbanism, and spatial codes
- Intercultural exchanges of symbols: syncretism and hybridization in the visual languages of esotericism

Neopaganism and Contemporary Contexts

- Visual languages of neopaganism and the reinterpretation of symbols: from pre-Christian European paganism to New Age forms, Wicca, Celtic Druidry, Slavic neopaganism, and neo-shamanism
- Geomancy and the cultural memory of toponyms
- Rituals and neopaganism: ritual-performative enactment in neopagan practices

Architecture and Space

- Rituals and environments: symbolism of space
- Urban concepts, sacred geometry, and spatial structures from temples to contemporary art installations

Literature, Language, and Textuality

- Secret languages, cryptography, and enigmatic texts as carriers of the thoughts and ideas of esotericism

- Literature and esotericism: visual motifs, signs, illuminations, symbols, and typography

Social Sciences

- Sociological studies of esotericism and culture
- Anthropological perspectives: ritual, initiation, and visual means of mediating knowledge
- Esotericism, politics, and power: symbolic systems as instruments of social organization
- Aesthetics of the body: tattoos, design, and fashion

Submission guidelines:

Please send an abstract (paper or panel proposal, up to 300 words) and a short biographical note (up to 150 words) by 15 February 2026 to the address:

ceenaswe2026rijeka@gmail.com

Paper presentations should be 20 minutes long, followed by 10 minutes for discussion. The conference language is English.

Key Dates

Activity	Date
Call for Papers deadline	15 February 2026
Notification of Acceptance	15 March 2026
CEENASWE Conference	5–6 June 2026