

# MUSÉE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN DE MONTRÉAL CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

**Max and Iris Stern International Symposium 4**  
April 15-17, 2010

## ART + RELIGION

### CALL FOR PAPERS

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The Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, in collaboration with Concordia University, is pleased to present the fourth Max and Iris Stern International Symposium, a three-day conference which will take place April 15-17, 2010.

Following the increasing media attention given to the issue of religion within the current social context and the anxiety over its alleged "return," as well as an expanding "post-secular debate" in the field of contemporary philosophy and social and cultural theory, a number of efforts towards cross-disciplinary exchange in the academic world have recently come to the fore. Yet to a great degree, and despite the important role of theology within post-modern philosophy—see, for instance, the work of Derrida, Levinas and Ricœur— the world of contemporary art seems to have preserved a form of discursive inhibition vis-à-vis the issue of religion. There have been some efforts aimed at addressing the situation, which have mostly originated from art institutions and museums, but the issue has found little echo within the fields of art theory and history. In fact, the methodological difficulties that were recently encountered in one particular instance generated such pessimism that the dialogue between contemporary art and religion was deemed by some a near impossibility (see James Elkins and David Morgan, eds., *Re-Enchantment*, Routledge, 2009).

This symposium seeks to expand on previous groundwork by bringing together eminent international specialists belonging to a variety of disciplines—artists, art historians, curators, anthropologists, educators, historians, media scholars, philosophers, psychoanalysts, political analysts, religious scholars, social scientists, theologians—to pursue the charting of theoretical points of contact between the worlds of contemporary art and religion. Although participants should feel free to see this event as an experimental ground, we do suggest that "contemporary art" be understood from an institutional standpoint, meaning that which is referred to/labelled as "contemporary art" by its agents, specific networks, objects, institutions, and so on. It is therefore not the totality of "visual/material culture" which is being addressed here.

#### **Possible areas of inquiry include:**

- Typologies of historical interactions between art and religion; hermeneutics
- Post-modern philosophy and contemporary theology; resonances in art practice/theory
- Religious foundations of modern political systems as theoretical subtexts in contemporary art
- Polity, pedagogy and denominationally based university fine arts/media arts programs
- Relevance of the "return of religion" and the "post-secular debate" for contemporary art institutions; questions of inclusion/exclusion
- Aspects of iconoclasm, blasphemy and censorship; recent crises and litigations
- Private/public spheres; religious/artistic experience and institutional mediation
- Eschatological narratives in modern or contemporary art/theory
- Psychoanalytical readings, symbolic economies
- Specificity of religious traditions, history of media, techniques and models of representation
- Regimes of visibility, Western pictocentrism and the fate of the image in modern times
- Religion, contemporary art and the spectacle
- Art and religion in Québec and Canada

A one-page (maximum 300-word) abstract, the title of the paper, a biography of three to four sentences and contact information are due **August 1, 2009**. Please send documents in .doc or .rtf format to [loren.lerner@sympatico.ca](mailto:loren.lerner@sympatico.ca)