



Zentrum für Europäische Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften

Unglaublich - Unheimlich - Magisch

Unheilsahnung im späten Mittelalter und der frühen Neuzeit



Kolloquium im Internationalen Wissenschaftsforum der
Universität Heidelberg, Hauptstraße 242

Freitag, 27. bis Sonntag, 29. Juni 2008

Öffentlicher Abendvortrag :

Institut für Europäische Kunstgeschichte
Seminarstraße 4 / Hörsaal

Freitag, 27. Juni 2008

**19:00 Uhr Visualising Disorder :
The Power of Witchcraft in
Early Modern Europe**

Charles Zika, Melbourne

Freitag, 27. Juni 2008, 19 Uhr s.t.

Öffentlicher Abendvortrag im Rahmen des Kolloquiums

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Charles Zika, Melbourne

Visualising Disorder: The Powers of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe

From the first half of the fifteenth century theologians, preachers, lawyers, judges and physicians began to elaborate a set of beliefs about the practices and potency of people called witches. Traditionally there had always been experts in magical practices that would bring benefit as well as those which did harm. Gradually a large percentage of those who claimed such powers became tainted with the accusation of witchcraft and were transformed into members of a broad and dangerous conspiracy orchestrated by the devil and directed against the institutions of church and state. The acceptance of this new understanding concerning the practice of evil would seem to mirror an increasing anxiety and elaboration of a discourse about the incidence and scope of disorder in society and nature from the later fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The aim of this paper is to explore the relationship between the visual depiction of witches as the new perpetrators of evil and a sense of natural and societal disorder in early modern Europe. A fundamental premise underlying the paper is that while images of witchcraft were created for a range of different purposes (and often different audiences) – to advertise and embellish printed works for authors and in particular printers; to shock, entertain and even titillate viewers and readers; to promote the ingenuity and skills of the artists – they nevertheless helped disseminate and shape a particular view of witches and witchcraft. In that way they clarified the role of witches in bringing a range of different evils into the world, revealed the largely invisible and secretive powers on which they depended, and specified the particular techniques they learnt or used to bring about disaster and chaos within individual and communal lives.

Charles Zika ist Professor an der Universität Melbourne. Seine aktuelle Forschung beschäftigt sich mit der Bedeutung des Visuellen für das Verständnis der Geschichte und der Hexenverfolgung im frühneuzeitlichen Europa. Wichtige Publikationen zur Europäischen Geschichte des 15. bis 17. Jahrhunderts behandeln Humanismus und Magie, Reformation, die gesellschaftliche Konstruktion von Wissen, Sexualität und Moralvorstellungen, religiöse Praktiken und Autorität, Folklore und die Verherrlichung der Vergangenheit.