

Reflecting “Eastern spirituality” and esotericism in the research-based art exhibition

Nina Kokkinen

doi.org/10.23995/tht.136280



The article reflects on the intertwining of research and curating in relation to the *Eastern Spirituality* exhibition and presents its main themes and theoretical starting points. The research-based exhibition, which ran at the Museum Villa Gyllenberg from April to August 2023, explored how artists in Finland imagined and depicted “Eastern spirituality” from the late nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth century. The project brings forth artists’ conceptions of Asian religions and the more vaguely defined “East” as a positive “Other”, marked by a particular aura of spirituality. Discourses on Eastern spirituality contain many challenging and problematic dimensions, such as those intertwined with colonialism. Additionally, “Eastern spirituality” is closely intertwined with esotericism, the role of which has recently been actively discussed in relation to modern art.

Keywords: *research-based curating, research-based exhibition, Asian religions, Buddhism, Hinduism, Esotericism, Occultism, Theosophy, Spiritualism, collecting, colonialism, modern art*





Image 1. General view of the *Eastern Spirituality* exhibition at Villa Gyllenberg. Photo: Nina Kokkinen, all rights reserved.

The exhibition *Eastern Spirituality* ran at the museum Villa Gyllenberg in Helsinki from April to August 2023. I curated the exhibition as part of my ongoing research on how artists in Finland imagined and depicted “Eastern spirituality” from the late nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth century. In this project, I continue to reflect on the role that religiosity – and especially more individualistic spirituality – has played in modern art. It was one of the central themes in my doctoral thesis, where I studied the connections between art and esotericism at the turn of twentieth-century Finland.¹ My

current research brings forth artists’ conceptions of Asian religions and the more vaguely defined “East” as a positive “Other”, marked by a particular aura of spirituality. Discourses on Eastern spirituality contain many challenging and problematic dimensions, such as those intertwined with colonialism, which I aim to highlight in my research, too.

Additionally, “Eastern spirituality” is closely intertwined with esotericism, the role of which has recently been actively discussed in relation to modern art. Many artists who have been interested in esotericism have also been fascinated by Asian religions. In Finland, many artists were introduced to Buddhism and Hinduism from the late nineteenth century onwards through texts written or translated by Theosophists. Artists also participated in different communities rooted in esotericism and Eastern religions. In this project, I am investigating how “Eastern

1 Nina Kokkinen, *Totuudenetsijät: Vuosisadanvaihteen okkulttuuri ja moderni henkisyys Akseli Gallen-Kallelan, Pekka Halosen ja Hugo Simbergin taiteessa* (Turku: University of Turku, 2019), <https://urn.fi/URN:IS-BN:978-951-29-7607-2>; Nina Kokkinen, “Artists as truth-seekers: Focusing on agency and seekership in the study of art and occulture,” *Approaching Religion* 11, no. 1 (March 2021): 4–27, <https://doi.org/10.30664/ar.98310>.

spirituality” and esotericism are intertwined in Finnish art, and writing a book on the subject.

Curating the art exhibition is part of my research process. I have curated research-based exhibitions before, for example, on the basis of my doctoral thesis on esotericism in Finnish art. This time, however, the exhibition opened before the publication of my research, and influenced the process in a slightly different way.² For example, when I was selecting the works for the exhibition, I came across an important theme, Oriental dance, that I might have missed if I had not examined a significant number of early twentieth-century works of art. In this article, I shed light on the theoretical notions behind the title of the exhibition, introduce its main themes, and reflect on some of the challenges and insights involved in curating a research-based exhibition.

“Eastern spirituality”

The title of the exhibition, *Eastern spirituality*, was chosen consciously. It is an ambivalent notion, which has been constructed in the European and North American context over a long period, and with particular intensity since the nineteenth century. Not only nineteenth century Orientalists but also Theosophists have played a central role in this process of imagining. In his book *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and “The Mystic East”*, Richard King has highlighted how “the East” (Asia, and India in particular) has been seen as a cradle of Western civilization, as a gateway to its ancient past, and as a romanticized realm of magic and mysticism. Colonial power relations, pseudo-scientific theories on human races, and problematic

2 I have reflected on curating the *Eastern spirituality* exhibition in my recent blog post; see Nina Kokkinen, “Utställningen Österländsk andlighet – en forskande kurators tankar”, 19 April 2023.

notions of the “Other” are essential elements in the discourses of Eastern spirituality.³

The title of the exhibition refers to these imaginative processes. The second term, “spirituality”, is particularly well suited to the study of religiosity in the context of art. Many artists have approached religiosity in a way that emphasizes individuality, selecting the beliefs and practices that seem best suited to their own spirituality. Artists typically do not commit to any religious or esoteric communities, which is why I have defined them as “seekers”. The concept of a seeker has been used in sociology of religion since the 1950s.⁴ In this exhibition and research project, my aim has been to highlight the interest of such artist-seekers not only in Asian religions but also in Theosophy, psychical research and spiritualism.

One of the aims of the exhibition and the related panel discussions was to highlight the ambivalent nature of “Eastern spirituality” to the wider audience.⁵ Although discourses on Eastern spirituality often approach India and other Asian countries as positive “Others”, they also reproduce, for instance, stereotypical dichotomies such as the “mystical East” versus the “rational West”. It is important to recognize that “Eastern spirituality” has not been imagined and

3 Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion. Postcolonial theory, India and “The Mystic East”* (London: Routledge, 1999).

4 Nina Kokkinen, “Artists as truth-seekers,” 4–27; “Re-thinking ‘new age’ as a popular religious habitus: a review essay on the spiritual revolution,” *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 18, no. 3 (2006): 294–314.

5 The exhibition was accompanied by two panel discussions: the “Idän henkisyys” panel discussion (in Finnish) with Nina Kokkinen, Silvia Hosseini, Ville Husgafvel and Leila Koivunen (6.5.2023, Villa Gyllenberg, Helsinki) and the panel discussion “‘Eastern Spirituality’ in Arts: Inspiration, Appropriation, Conversation” as part of the *Religion and Spirituality as Sites of Learning* conference with Nina Kokkinen, Ville Husgafvel, Måns Broo, Linda Annunen and Ruth Illman (15.5.2023, Åbo Akademi, Turku).

constructed only by Europeans and Americans. Recent studies have highlighted how modern yoga and perceptions of Tantra, for instance, have emerged in complex dialogues between “Eastern” and “Western” agents.⁶ While my own research focuses on Finnish artists, I also bring forth how their discourses on Eastern spirituality were influenced, for example, by Indian and Persian dancers, who performed in Finland during the first half of the twentieth century.

In the exhibition, I expressed these issues through the visual material on display (the artworks). I also had the possibility to highlight in the short exhibition texts the insights that emerged in my research. Communicating these complex themes in the exhibition context has obvious limitations, but an exhibition also has great potential to address a wide variety of audiences. One of the challenges of the exhibition concerned the way in which theoretical concepts could be explained to them in a meaningful way. In the exhibition texts and while presenting the exhibition, I prominently highlighted the imaginative processes behind “Eastern spirituality” and the problematic conceptions and contexts associated with it. Yet, it is possible that the exhibition reinforced some visitors’ (already strong) perceptions of the East as an enchanting haven of spirituality, as my colleague Linda Annunen noted in our joint panel discussion.⁷ The forthcoming publication will allow me to reflect on similar themes in depth and in a more detailed manner.

The exhibition also aimed to shed some light on the diverse, fragmented nature of the history of

art in Finland. Beneath the nationalist and modernist avant-garde narratives, there are also other sorts of historical threads in which religiosity has played an important role. I will now present some of the themes that have emerged during my research process, which were also highlighted in the *Eastern spirituality* exhibition.

Oriental objects as sites of eternal wisdom

One of the main themes in the *Eastern spirituality* exhibition was the phenomenon of collecting. Akseli Gallen-Kallela (1865–1931) is one of the best-known Finnish artists. The exhibition draws attention to his and other contemporaries’ practice of collecting Oriental objects, which played an important role in discourses on Eastern spirituality in Finland from the nineteenth century onwards. The exhibition includes the so-called *Fakir statue* (or *Prayer sculpture*, Gallen-Kallela Museum) and a Japanese altar cabinet (Gallen-Kallela Museum) acquired by Gallen-Kallela in the 1880s, as well as paintings in which these Oriental artefacts appear. Both pieces can be spotted in a painting by Gallen-Kallela depicting the room in which he lived while studying in Paris in the late nineteenth century (*Axel Gallén’s work table in Paris*, 1889, Gallen-Kallela Museum). Oriental objects were important to the artist, and he kept them in a central place in his home.

Many similar artefacts related to Asian religions were brought to Europe in the nineteenth century as their influence expanded in the shadow of colonialism. This is how objects originally related to religious practice ended up in private and public collections in Europe, America and elsewhere. In recent discussions, the problematic nature of such collections has been raised and the possibilities of repatriation have been considered. In Finland, repatriation issues have been raised especially in relation to the cultural heritage of the Sámi people, but artefacts have also been returned to Namibia and the indige-

6 See, for example, Anya P. Foxen, *Inhaling Spirit: Harmonialism, Orientalism, and the Western Roots of Modern Yoga* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020); Julian Strube, *Global Tantra: Religion, Science, and Nationalism in Colonial Modernity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022).

7 “‘Eastern Spirituality’ in Arts: Inspiration, Appropriation, Conversation,” (panel discussion at *Religion and Spirituality as Sites of Learning*, Turku, May 2023).



Image 2. The exhibition *Eastern Spirituality* explored, among other things, the collecting habit of Oriental objects and its expression in art. Shown in the background is the *Fakir statue* (Gallen-Kallela Museum), acquired by Akseli Gallen-Kallela, and paintings depicting the sculpture. Photo: Nina Kokkinen, all rights reserved.

nous peoples in America, for example. As far as I know, repatriation in relation to Asian cultures and artefacts has not been discussed. Indeed, discussions of repatriation and cultural appropriation frequently appear to concern specific areas of discomfort, which are always rooted in the cultural and historical context in question. As Leila Koivunen noted in a panel discussion at Villa Gyllenberg, the attitude towards Asian cultures in Finland has been mostly positive, and consequently there have not been the same kinds of discussions about power relations and negative images as there have been about African cultures, for example.⁸

Nevertheless, it is essential that objects from Asia and other cultures are treated with the same

respect and appreciation as Western art and cultural heritage. Finding answers to ethical questions and making ethical choices are complicated tasks. In the context of the *Eastern spirituality* exhibition, one of the issues that the exhibition team had to consider was related to the attribution of Buddhist sculptures and *thangkas* – and what would be the proper way to refer to them. In most cases, the artist cannot be identified, and information about the work's origins can be very limited. The question also arose as to whether such religious objects should even be addressed in the same way as artworks in the context of modern Western art, where the role of artists is often more strongly emphasized.

In the case of the *Eastern Spirituality* exhibition, I also realized that recovering the correct names and origins of the works is not a simple or easy process. Some of the Buddhist sculptures that

8 "Idän henkisyys," (panel discussion related to the *Eastern Spirituality* exhibition, Helsinki, May 2023).

were chosen for the exhibition had previously been named incorrectly. With the generous assistance of two researchers, the accurate titles for the artworks were identified. It was not possible to include the correct titles in the labels shown in the exhibition, however.⁹ Visitors saw the incorrect titles, and the cultural context or meaning of the works was not properly presented. The bureaucratic wheels of the museum world sometimes turn more slowly than researchers may hope.

In Akseli Gallen-Kallela's case, the purpose of the Oriental objects in his studio was to create an enchanting atmosphere, thus reflecting the owner's fascinating bohemian personality. On the other hand, Oriental artefacts were also linked to Gallen-Kallela's efforts to explore and discover "authentic religiosity", whose roots Orientalists had sought during the nineteenth century in India (and in the culture of the ancient Aryans, in particular). Gallen-Kallela pursued this "true spirituality" by collecting various exotic objects, which included, among other things, a large golden Buddha sculpture, a rune stone, a Tibetan temple lantern and a Mexican god carved out of stone.¹⁰

The underlying theme behind Gallen-Kallela's collecting practices was the idea of *philosophia perennis* – the idea that at the heart of all religions there is one universal wisdom. Theosophy played an important role in popularizing this notion from the late nineteenth century

9 I would like to thank Dr Ville Husgafvel and Dr Christian Luczanits for their insight into the issues surrounding the attribution of the works. Although we were unable to obtain the correct titles for the labels during the exhibition, our work was met with an open and positive attitude both at Villa Gyllenberg and at the Didrichsen Museum, which owns the artworks in question.

10 On Gallen-Kallela's collecting and especially his Africa collection, see, for example, Leila Koivunen, "Decoration, Curious, Evidence. Home Museums and the Artist as Collector," in *Fill Your Soul! Paths of Research into the Art of Akseli Gallen-Kallela*, ed. The Gallen-Kallela Museum (Espoo: The Gallen-Kallela Museum, 2011), 96–107.

onwards, and Gallen-Kallela was well-versed in Theosophical thought. From the mid-1890s onwards, he also endeavoured to develop his own extrasensory abilities, such as clairvoyance and telepathy.¹¹

In my understanding, one of the primary reasons why Gallen-Kallela became so fascinated with the *Fakir statue* he acquired during the 1880s was his interest in clairvoyance and psychical research. At the time, Finnish newspapers were writing about Indian fakirs, ascetics and yogis who had extraordinary abilities, including levitation and resurrection. Similar phenomena were studied in the context of spiritualist séances and psychical research all over Europe and America. In Gallen-Kallela's case, exotic artefacts were part of the question that continued to fascinate him: What is the origin of religion and the wisdom that unites different traditions? And what are the invisible forces that guide humans, nature and the universe? Esotericism played an important role in addressing such questions.

"Eastern masters" and spirit guides

Similar topics also interested the artist Meri Genetz (1885–1943), who was praised as a highly skilled colourist in the early twentieth century. During the 1930s, she made several still life paintings with obvious connections to her occult studies. In *Head, Heart and Desire* (1937, oil on canvas, private collection), the idea of *philosophia perennis* is depicted in an easily perceptible way. A Buddha statue is painted side by side with an African-styled sculpture and an icon of Christ. Meri Genetz's ideas about Eastern spirituality were similar to Gallen-Kallela's. The notion of the Aryans as the source of Western civilization

11 Nina Kokkinen, "The Artist as Initiated Master. Themes of Fin-de-Siècle Occulture in the Art of Akseli Gallen-Kallela," in *Fill Your Soul! Paths of Research into the Art of Akseli Gallen-Kallela*, ed. The Gallen-Kallela Museum (Espoo: The Gallen-Kallela Museum, 2011), 51–55; Kokkinen, *Totuudenetsijät*, 165–192.



Image 3. A general view of the exhibition, which also highlighted the importance of Oriental dance in constructing ideas about Eastern spirituality. Photo: Nina Kokkinen, all rights reserved.

and spirituality inspired her, as did the masters – or Mahatmas, in Theosophical terms – living in the Himalayas. She was eager to meet her own spiritual teacher, whom she thought would come from Tibet and take her along.¹²

“Eastern masters” were equally important to the artist Ilona Harima (1911–1986), who in the 1930s caused a minor commotion in the Nordic press because of the Oriental miniatures she painted in a supposed state of trance. The artist had several spiritual guides, whom she depicted in her art as “Oriental types”. One of the ways Harima communicated with her spirit guides was through automatic writing. For Harima, painting Oriental miniatures signified spiritual development. Spirit guides instructed Harima in her artistic work, but they also taught her how to

live her life and organize her daily routine. She needed, for example, to read, get enough rest, and do yoga. There is no doubt that Harima’s ideas about Eastern spirituality were informed by her interest in esotericism, as she was known to be a Theosophist and a member of the Co-Masonic order of *Le Droit Humain*.¹³

Meri Genetz’s circle of friends included the artist Ester Helenius (1875–1955), who was also interested in Theosophy and race-related theories.¹⁴

12 See Sanna Rynnänen, *Meri Genetz: Levoton sielu* (Helsinki: Avain, 2019).

13 Nina Kokkinen, “Ilona Harima and Mediumistic Art,” in *Spiritual Treasures. Esotericism in the Finnish Art World 1890–1950*, eds. Nina Kokkinen & Lotta Nylund (Helsinki: Parvs, 2020): 92–99; Erkki Anttonen, “Läpi indigonsinisen avaruuden – Ilona Hariman mystisiä maalauksia,” teoksessa *Ilona Harima. Valaistumisen tiellä*, toim. Helena Hätönen & Riitta Ojanperä (Helsinki: Valtion taidemuseo / Kuvataiteen keskusarkisto, 2011): 7–47.

14 Tutta Palin, *Ester Helenius — Värihurmion palvoja* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2016).



Image 4. The *Eastern Spirituality* exhibition also highlighted the influence of Indian dancers Uday Shankar and Ram Gopal on the art of Esther Helenius. Above the texts and photographs hangs Helenius' work *Madonna* (1929, Ateneum Art Museum.) Photo: Nina Kokkinen, all rights reserved.

Her fascination with Eastern spirituality was focused in particular on Indian dancers, such as Uday Shankar (1900–1977) and Ram Gopal (1913–2003), whose performances captivated the artist in the 1930s. Indeed, Asian dance and theatre were a major element in the discourses on Eastern spirituality in the early twentieth century. The importance of Asian dance and performing arts became apparent when I was looking for visual material and artworks for the exhibition. At this point, curating the exhibition also redirected my research, and I began to pay more attention to the intersections of Oriental dance, modern yoga and body culture.

For Helenius, Indian dancers were a kind of revelation. Watching them dance, she realized that all art flows from one and the same

spiritual source.¹⁵ Around the same time, Finnish newspapers wrote enthusiastically about the spiritual nature of Indian performers – and how they danced as if in a trance. Helenius met Ram Gopal personally and apparently discussed with him how all “true art” emanated from a divine source. In his autobiography *Rhythm in the Heavens*, published in 1957, Ram Gopal gives an interesting description of how he surrendered to the electrifying divine power while dancing.¹⁶ Helenius would certainly have found such an idea extremely fascinating.

In her art, Helenius often depicts spiritually evolved figures, such as angels, saints and all sorts of initiates. In many of her paintings and drawings, these figures are crowned with decorative headpieces symbolizing their spiritual superiority. Uday Shankar and Ram Gopal, who wore similar headpieces, served as models for the advanced initiates in Helenius' art.¹⁷ On the other hand, a figure in a painting called *Madonna* (1929, oil on canvas, Ateneum Art Museum), with her red robe and high, golden headpiece, resembles a Tibetan Buddhist lama, or teacher.

“Eastern spirituality” as a basis for artistic experimentation

It was not until after the Second World War that the first Finnish artists started to actually travel to India in order to seek gurus and spiritual teachers. Until then, communication with the Eastern masters had mainly taken place in spiritualist séances and through automatic writing and drawing. One of the first travellers was Anitra Lucander (1918–2000), a forerunner of abstract art in Finland. Lucander travelled through India already during the late 1950s. As her spiritual teacher, she chose a woman and a

15 Ester Helenius, *Omaa kertomaa* (Helsinki: Karisto, 1955): 25–26.

16 Ram Gopal, *Rhythm in the Heavens* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1957): 4–6.

17 Cf. Palin, *Ester Helenius*, 109.



Image 5. The third room of the exhibition presented the importance of “Eastern spirituality” in the second half of the twentieth century. In the background, on the right, are paintings by Anitra Lucander, among others. In the foreground, Outi Heiskanen’s *Carousel* (1968, Sara Hilden Art Museum), which relates to the artist’s memory of a stupa she saw in Afghanistan. Photo: Nina Kokkinen, all rights reserved.

saint called Anandamayi Ma (1896–1982), who, among other things, was known for her healing abilities. Memorabilia and tiny pieces of paper from Lucander’s visit to Anandamayi Ma’s ashram ended up in a collage called *Sangha* (1959, collage, private collection), based on a Sanskrit term referring to association or community.

Lucander was inspired by Paramahansa Yogananda’s *Autobiography of a Yogi* (1946), and she practised meditation and yoga.¹⁸ In her art, Lucander often depicted sacred places: temples, mosques and holy cities. Such choices of subject matter seem to be closely linked to the esoteric notion of *philosophia perennis* – the eternal wisdom tradition that unites all religions. In Lucander’s case, “Eastern spirituality” also appears to

be connected to artistic experimentation, serving as a vehicle for reinventing art.

In the second half of the twentieth century, discourses on Eastern spirituality became hugely popular in the field of art. This enthusiasm was fuelled, for example, by Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki’s (1870–1966) New York lectures and seminars on Zen Buddhism, and by the interest the Beatles showed in Maharishi Mahesh Yogi’s (1918–2008) Transcendental Meditation.¹⁹ New religious movements and communities based on Indian religions also entered the Finnish cultural scene, and artists became interested in them. Trips to India and Nepal became increasingly common.

18 Sanna Teittinen, *Kohti lyyristä abstraktismia: Anitra Lucanderin 1950-luvun modernismi* (Helsinki: Taidehistorian seura, 2009): 54–57.

19 See, for example, Jacquelynn Baas, “Nowhere from Here: Contemporary Art and Buddhism,” in *Buddha Mind in Contemporary Art*, eds. Jacquelynn Baas & Mary Jane Jacob (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004): 19–27.



Image 6. J. O. Mallander's *Wang* (1981, Amos Rex) was hung in a prominent place in the *Eastern Spirituality* exhibition (here the fourth artwork from the left). Photo: Nina Kokkinen, all rights reserved.

A journey to India in the 1970s was a life-changing experience for J.O. Mallander (b. 1944), a multifaceted avant-gardist and pioneer of conceptual art in Finland. Another significant moment was when he met the 14th Dalai Lama in the late 1980s. “Eastern spirituality” became a central part of the artist’s life. In his art, Mallander repeats a limited range of themes that he wishes to study thoroughly. For him, working on these themes constitutes a sort of spiritual practice.

One of these themes relates to the so-called *Wang* series he started during the 1980s. The name refers to a Tibetan Buddhist ritual, a kind of initiation, which in Mallander’s own words means a transmission of energy or power. The concentrated repetition of patterns is a form of meditation that opens up the possibility of spiritual insight for the artist and, ideally, for the viewer, too. The artist has told that the *Wang*

series began as a kind of light-hearted whim – with very little knowledge of Buddhism behind it, a fact that later made him a bit embarrassed, perhaps because the debate on cultural appropriation has become so heated in recent years.²⁰

Many artists at the time drew on the ideas and themes they had taken from Asian religions without delving too deeply into them. Cultural appropriation refers to borrowing from other cultures that have been subjugated by those in power. It can be distinguished from cultural exchange because of the unequal power relations involved, and the economic and other benefits

20 J. O. Mallander, interview by Nina Kokkinen, February 10, 2023.

derived from cultural appropriation.²¹ While Finnish artists have undoubtedly benefitted from borrowing ideas and themes from Asia, the power relations involved are not particularly clear or unambiguous. In Mallander's case, the exploration of Buddhist themes ultimately led to deeper engagement and learning. He became intensely involved in Tibetan Buddhism, and he owns hundreds of books on the subject. He also met important spiritual teachers, such as Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche (in 1990) and Trulshik Rinpoche (in 2000). Nowadays, Mallander regards himself as a practising Buddhist.²²

Mallander's case offers an excellent example of how "Eastern spirituality" began to take on philosophical, conceptual, and ritual dimensions in late twentieth-century Finland. It also became an essential part of artistic experimentation. Theosophical interpretations typical for the first half of the twentieth century perhaps evolved into something less obvious, but they certainly did not disappear completely. Some of the esoteric themes circulating in the discourses on Eastern spirituality already in the late 1890s – such as perennialism, longing for the Himalayas and the sages of the East – have continued to appeal to artists throughout the twentieth century. These ideas have inspired artists to search for the roots and the essence of religion – and a more "authentic spirituality", which artist-seekers could feel to be their own. On the other hand, it has also been seen as a gateway to spiritual development and artistic experimentation. For most of the artists, it has not been so much a question of delving into Buddhism or Hinduism as such but rather a more personal spiritual

quest, in which esotericism has often played a significant role.

The current project, where research and exhibition curating overlap, has demonstrated the mutually fruitful relationship between the two. Exhibitions based on extensive research possess the capability to shed light on new perspectives and popularize scientific knowledge. Conversely, the emphasis on artworks and other visual materials in curating encourages reliance on the significance and power of visual source material. Curating exhibitions presents practical challenges and provokes solutions that might otherwise be overlooked. In my project on "Eastern spirituality", research and curating are closely intertwined and interdependent.

Nina Kokkinen works as a research doctor at the Donner Institute (Åbo Akademi University Foundation). Her area of specialization is the study of art and esotericism from late nineteenth century onwards. Kokkinen has written several articles, as well as edited books and special issues on the subject. She also curates research-based exhibitions related to art and esotericism.

21 See e.g. James O. Young, *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2008); Maisha Z. Johnson, "5 Things You Don't Realize When You Defend Cultural Appropriation," *Medium*, Sep 1, 2017, <https://medium.com/@maishazj/5-things-you-dont-realize-when-you-defend-cultural-appropriation-98a700cc5d33>

22 J. O. Mallander, interview by Nina Kokkinen, February 10, 2023.