



DEUTSCHES FORUM  
FÜR KUNSTGESCHICHTE  
CENTRE ALLEMAND  
D'HISTOIRE DE L'ART  
PARIS



- Call for Papers -

## Exotic Images. Art History's Wanderlust

*Seminar at the German Centre for Art History in Paris (DFK Paris), organised in collaboration with The Sackler Research Forum at The Courtauld Institute of Art*

*Paris, 9 and 10 May 2016*

Henri Rousseau painted *The Dream*, in 1910, during a time when the art world was dominated by international artistic movements and cliché-ridden colonial exhibitions. The picture was exhibited at the Salon des Indépendants and celebrated as a paradigm of the exotic. Unlike Paul Gauguin, Henri Rousseau “Le Douanier” never left Paris. He found ideas and models on his walks through the Parisian Jardin des Plantes. As a concept, the exotic first flourished in the domain of flora and fauna and Rousseau’s painting can be considered a perfect representation of this understanding of the term. It represents not so much an iconography of the strange, but is first and foremost characterised by an effect of estrangement.

Postcolonial Studies have fiercely criticised what has come to be known as exoticism. This has tended to overshadow early discourses of the exotic and its aftermath. Thus the question of the place of the exotic within the formation of the history of art has generally been overlooked. Nonetheless, the concept seems to have found frequent use, precisely

because of its experimental and ambivalent character. As opposed to definitions like orientalist or primitivist, the exotic is limited neither historically, nor geographically, nor stylistically. The question of the exotic thus seems to be essentially open. As such, images that fascinate, unsettle, or create other ambivalent feelings could be qualified as exotic.

Symbolizing a gap in the discourse, exotic images point out a demand in art history, which can be investigated from the viewpoint of historiography. This seminar proposes to trace the various motivations underlying such discourses, from the perspectives of critical methodology and of the history of ideas. Selected case studies will serve to question when, under what circumstances (exhibitions, publications, etc.), on the basis of which criteria (materials, context, etc.), and to what effect (avant-garde, politics, etc.) images are or have been qualified as exotic within the field of art history.

Please send proposals for 30-minute papers in French, German or English (maximum 500 words) accompanied by a short CV (1000 signs maximum) to [lbader@dt-forum.org](mailto:lbader@dt-forum.org) and [merel.vantilburg@courtauld.ac.uk](mailto:merel.vantilburg@courtauld.ac.uk) by 29 February 2016.

More information: <https://dfk-paris.org/>



Henri Rousseau, The Dream, oil on canvas, 204,5 x 298,5 cm  
Gift of Nelson A. Rockefeller, Museum of Modern Art, New York