



An exploration and an experience

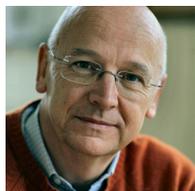
Sacred Silence in Literature and the Arts Conference 2019

Friday 4 – Saturday 5 October 2019
Gleeson Auditorium, Australian Catholic University,
25A Barker Road, Strathfield, NSW 2135

This conference is a coming together of artists, writers, musicians, academics and practitioners of the sacred from different faith and no-faith traditions.

Welcome to the tenth Sacred Silence in Literature and the Arts (SLA) Conference

2019 presenters and presentations



Laurence Freeman OSB

Father Freeman was a keynote speaker at the 2017 SLA Conference, *Awakening the Sacred*. He is a Benedictine monk of the Congregation of Monte Oliveto and also Director of the World Community for Christian Meditation and of its Benedictine Oblate community.

Father Freeman is the author of many books, including *Light Within, Selfless Self, Your Daily Practice, The Inner Pilgrimage, Jesus: The Teacher Within* and *First Sight: The Experience of Faith*.

Strongly committed to inter-religious dialogue and global peace initiatives, he has co-led with the Dalai Lama at regular events in the historic Way of Peace program. He has been made an Officer of the Order of Canada for his work for peace. He is also Director of the newly opened Bonnevaux Centre for Peace near Poitiers in France, where he resides and participates in a broad programme of meditation retreats and dialogue supporting peace-building and mutual understanding. Father Freeman is also a graduate in English Literature from Oxford University with a deep interest in the sacred dimension of literature and art.

Presentation: *Silence in the Russian/American artist Mark Rothko (1903–1970)*. Father Freeman will also lead the conference community in silent meditation.



Associate Professor Mehmet Ozalp

Ozalp is a prominent Muslim community leader in Australia. He is a scholar, public intellectual and community leader. He is an Associate Professor of Islamic studies and the Director of the Centre for Islamic Studies and Civilisation (CISAC) which he founded at Charles Sturt University (CSU). He is also the founder and Executive Director of (Islamic Sciences and Research Academy of Australia) ISRA. Under his leadership, CISAC and ISRA pioneered Islamic Studies courses at undergraduate and postgraduate level since 2011.

Ozalp is the editor-in-chief of the Australian Journal of Islamic Studies. He serves on the executive committee of the strategic research centre Public and Contextual Theology (PaCT) linked to CSU. He serves on the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Sydney. Ozalp has been serving as the Muslim Chaplain at the University of Sydney and the Macquarie University since 2006. Ozalp's publications include these three books: *101 Questions You Asked About Islam, Islam in the Modern World and Islam between Tradition and Modernity: An Australian Perspective*.

Presentation: In Dialogue with Laurence Freeman on *Silence and Wellbeing*.



Rachael Kohn

Kohn is a former ABC radio broadcaster responsible for the program, *The Spirit of Things*. She was awarded a Doctor of Letters from the University of New South Wales in 2005 for services to community fostering religious understanding through her broadcasts, public speaking and book entitled *The New Believers: Re-imagining God*. She has won three world gold medals from the New York Festivals International Radio Competition.

Presentation: Kohn will open the conference with reflections on 'Silence' in the context of her own Jewish faith tradition.



Professor Sasha Grishin AM, FAHA

Emeritus Professor of Art History, Grishin works internationally as an art historian, art critic and curator. He studied at universities in Melbourne, Moscow, London and Oxford and has served as visiting scholar at Harvard University. In 2014 his *Australian Art: A History* was published by Melbourne University Publishing.

Presentation: *Spirituality and the Russian avant-garde*. Professor Grishin examines the links between the early 20th century Russian avant-garde artists and the Russian spiritual tradition inherent in medieval icons.



Professor Carole M. Cusack

Cusack, a Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Sydney, trained as a medievalist. She has a doctorate published as *Conversion Among the Germanic Peoples* (Cassell 1998) and now researches contemporary religious trends. Her books include *Anime* with Katharine Buljan, *Religion and Spirituality: Profane and Sacred Worlds in Contemporary Japan* (Equinox 2015) and *The Sacred Tree: Ancient and Medieval Manifestations* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2011).

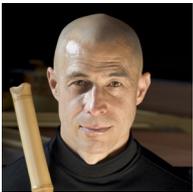
Presentation: *The Multiple Silences of Julian of Norwich* (c. 1342–c.1416). This lecture explores the paradoxical silences in the life and work of Julian of Norwich. Julian’s visions focused on ideas of sin, salvation and punishment, and gained popularity due to the optimistic words attributed to Christ: “All shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.”



Dr Susan Murphy

Murphy is a Zen Roshi and runs regular seven-day Zen retreats. She is the founding teacher of Zen Open Circle and the author of three volumes on Zen: *Upside-Down Zen; Minding the Earth, Mending the World; Red Thread Zen*. She is also a prize-winning film writer-director and a regular freelance producer of feature documentaries for ABC Radio National.

Presentation: *Seven forms of silence in Zen awakening*. The famous 8th century *Song of Freedom* (*Zhengdaoge* in Chinese, *Shodoka* in Japanese) attributed to Yongjia Xuanjue tells us that “It speaks in silence; In speech, you hear its silence”. ‘It’ is unnamed here the way that God is left unnamed, being too limitless for words to contain. Nothing is left out of it, and this fullness of reality has no outside.



Riley Lee

Lee began studying the shakuhachi in 1971 in Japan and became the first non-Japanese officially acknowledged as a shakuhachi Dai Shihan (Grand Master). He has a PhD in musicology from Sydney University and has released over 60 albums, with over 150,000 monthly listeners on Spotify.

In 2018, he designed and taught a course on meditation, the mind, memory and music at Princeton University. Each year Riley gives performances, workshops, and lectures in Australia, USA and Europe. Visit: www.rileylee.net

Presentation: *Sound in silence*. When playing the so-called “original pieces” (honkyoku) for the shakuhachi, much importance is placed on what many would call the silence between the music. Lee will attempt to share his understanding of the “silence” in shakuhachi honkyoku.



Father Michael Whelan

Father Michael is director of the Aquinas Academy adult education centre and parish priest of St Patrick’s, Church Hill in Sydney.

Presentation: *Silence speaks truthfully*. Hans Kung, in his little book on Mozart (*Mozart: Traces of Transcendence*), quotes the German sociologist, philosopher and musicologist, Theodor Adorno, “When I hear great music, I believe that I know that what this music says cannot be untrue.” Silence may be understood as an event. This is hugely paradoxical as silence seems more like absence than presence. Silence is absence in service of presence. Silence speaks – it cannot be untrue.



Judith Beveridge

Beveridge has won prizes including the Philip Hodgins Memorial Medal and the Christopher Brennan Award for lifetime achievement in literature. She published seven collections of poetry, most recently *Sun Music: New and Selected Poems*.

Presentation: *Poetry and sacred silence.* Beveridge will explore how poetry, because of its unique uses of language, can be used as a tool to approach the divine. She will explore the specific devices of imagery, rhythm and sound and show how these become interwoven into a highly concentrated expression which reverberates into and animates our consciousness. Poetic concentration is a pathway into truth, it uncovers connection and interrelationships which enhance our experience of the world. She will explore how poetry awakens us to the many possibilities of being.



Leonard Brown

Brown is an Australian artist who works on both canonical icons and contemporary painting. There is a concurrent exhibition of his work during the conference.

Presentation: “That there is a God is clear; but what He is by essence and nature, this is altogether beyond our comprehension and knowledge” – St John of Damascus.

My dual activities, of canonical icon and contemporary painting, are both moderated within a milieu of an Apophatic Theology, approaching the Divine, by negation, navigating in terms of what may not be said about the perfect goodness that is God.



Debra Phillips

Phillips is a PhD candidate at ACU. Her interdisciplinary PhD by creative project examines the interconnections between narrative, imagination, future, spirituality, and the visual arts in relationship to suicidality. Phillips’ academic writing and presentations refer to textual and visual narratives of the imagined future.

Presentation: *Silence as the ‘sacre coeur’ of art-making.*

Dr Jennifer Carpenter

Dr Carpenter is Deputy Head of School of Arts at ACU.

Presentation: *Negotiating silence and silences in the 13th century: The power and meaning of silence in hagiographical texts from the Low Countries.* Dr Carpenter focuses on a unique corpus of 13th century texts from the Low Countries that record the lives of local, contemporary, holy women (mostly) and men, including laywomen, recluses, monks and nuns, early beguines and hospital sisters. The paper will consider the power and meaning of silence in these texts – silence practised in relation to monastic tradition, silence and speech in relation to the assertion of mystical authority, and the silences of texts written to shape and advocate for new and sometimes unsettling religious experience.



Dr Michael Griffith

Griffith is an Associate Professor of Literature at ACU. He is founder of the Religion, Literature and the Arts Movement in Sydney in the 1990s and author of *God’s Fool: The Life and Poetry of Francis Webb*, winner of a Human Rights Award in 1991.

Presentation: *Silence and the Australian spiritual imagination.* I have had a long standing interest in the way that poets, novelists and Australian artists explore the theme and experience of silence as a touch-stone for their deepest search. “Words reach into the silence,” T.S. Eliot.



Uncle Max Dulumunmun, Indigenous Yuin Elder

Presentation: *Sacred Silence in the Indigenous Experience.*



Juno Gemes

Prize Winning Australian Photographer

Presentation: Digital Exhibition of her photographs on the theme of *Silence in the Australian Context.*



Robert Adamson

Prize Winning Australian Poet

Presentation: His poems from the local Sydney Hawkesbury landscape, focussing on the theme of silence.

Friday, 4 October

Tea and coffee available from 8am

TIME	SESSION	PRESENTER
8.30 – 9.30 am	Pre-conference discussion: Silence and wellbeing	Father Laurence and Professor Mehmet Ozalp
9.30 – 9.40am	Welcome to ACU and housekeeping	Michael Griffith
9.40 – 10am	Welcome to Country: Indigenous Yuin Elder on Sacred Silence	Uncle Max Dulumunmun
10 – 10.20am	Morning meditation	Fr Laurence Freeman
10.20 – 11am	Reflections on silence	Rachael Kohn
11 – 11.30am	Morning tea	
11.30am – 12.20pm	It speaks in silence; in speech, you hear its silence	Dr Susan Murphy
12.20 – 12.50pm	Negotiating silence and silences in the 13th century	Jennifer Carpenter
12.50 – 1.10pm	Introduction to digital exhibition on silence	Juno Gemes
1.10 – 2.10 pm	Lunch in the art gallery and surrounds	
2.10 – 3pm	“That there is a God is clear; but what He is by essence and nature, this is altogether beyond our comprehension and knowledge” – St John of Damascus An Introduction to the exhibition of Leonard Brown’s art in the McGlade Gallery	Leonard Brown
3 – 3.50pm	Silence speaks truthfully	Fr Michael Whelan
3.50 – 4.20pm	Poetry of silence: The Hawksbury	Robert Adamson
4.20 – 4.45pm	Afternoon meditation	Fr Laurence Freeman
4.45 – 5.30pm	Light supper	
5.30 – 6.30pm	Spirituality and the Russian avant-garde	Sasha Grishin
6.30 – 7pm	Avo Paart/Hildegard von Bingen	Gregorian Choir of Arcadia
7pm	Close	

Throughout the day you can visit Juno Geme’s digital photographic exhibition on Sacred Silence in the computer laboratory adjacent to the Atrium.

Saturday, 5 October

TIME	SESSION	PRESENTER
9 – 9.30am	Morning meditation	Fr Laurence Freeman
9.30 – 10.20am	The multiple silences of Julian of Norwich	Carole M. Cusack
10.20 – 11.10am	Poetry and sacred silence	Judith Beveridge
11.10 – 11.40am	Morning tea	
11.40am – 12.45pm	Mark Rothko	Fr Laurence Freeman
12.45 – 2.15pm	Lunch and gallery viewing	
2.15 – 3.15pm	Sound in silence	Riley Lee
3.15 – 3.45pm	Silence as the 'sacre coœur' of art-making	Debra Phillips
3.45 – 4.10pm	Afternoon meditation	Fr Laurence Freeman
4.10 – 4.50pm	Light supper	
4.50 – 5.30pm	Silence and the Australian spiritual imagination	Michael Griffith
5.30 – 6.30pm	Concluding plenary session (questions and answers)	Keynote speakers
6.30pm	Conference Close	

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Front image: Artwork by Leonard Brown

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