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(University of Barcelona)

Laura Mercader and Tania Alba (Speakers)
(University of Barcelona)

Olga Sureda and Tai Lomas (Speakers)
(University of Barcelona)

Marta Piñol Lloret (Speaker)
(University of Barcelona)

Starting in the nineteenth century, by means of several case studies, the session will move forward in time until the present day. Through four presentations, various examples of the interweaving between creative practice and communal living will be covered.

In the paper entitled Disguise, ritual, and cohabitation: the legend of the Barbus in France, Julia Ramírez Blanco relates the story of a group of painters who rebelled against their teacher, Jacques-Louis David. Nicknamed the “Barbus” (the bearded”), these young artists would adopt strange ways of dressing themselves. Around 1800, some of them would move to an abandoned monastery, carrying out their daily life in a very ritualistic way and following a vegetarian diet. Their case is one of the first in which a group of artists understood group formation and communal living as a fundamental part of their artistic project. (See full abstract below)

In Eutopias of feminine creativity. The Cushman house in papal Rome (1851-1870), Laura Mercader and Tania Alba address the creative community that formed around the American actress, Charlotte Cushman, whose Roman house accommodated a large group of women sculptors, thereby creating a network of personal and professional support. Mercader and Alba will study how their relational inventions show the political dimension of feminine friendships in the Victorian era. This case indicates that some women lived beyond, not against, men, forming artistic, public, and political connections among themselves.

Marta Piñol Lloret, in Cosmic harmonies: visual configurations of scientific, social, and spiritual utopias according to the hermetic tradition, studies how the hermetic tradition has paid great attention to utopian concepts and ideals, having as its objective the attainment of maximum understanding. Thus, alchemy becomes a key element to approaching knowledge as a proto-scientific practice and spiritual path. Piñol Lloret will refer to how harmony and the union of opposites are fundamental to the Opus Magnum, and how utopian themes are articulated in a symbolic way (panacea, homunculus, the “Golden World” of Paracelsus...). Equally, she will consider visual and conceptual images that would later inherit the tradition of the Rosicrucians and the Freemasons, institutions founded on brotherhood, utopian disposition, and universal vocation.

Situated now in the present, the presentation entitled Nectar: an alternative vision of a sustainable, open, and collaborative integration of work and life will focus on the

experiential, relating to the open and collaborative project Nectar. Olga Sureda and Tai Lomas will talk about how, located in the midst of nature inside a Natural Park an hour-and-a-half north of Barcelona, *Nectar* is founded on the belief that working in a sustainable, rural, and collaborative environment away from the pressures of everyday life in the city can restore and empower people personally and professionally, by looking for an alternative vision of the integration of work and life. (See full abstract below).

Disguise, Cohabitation, and Ritual: the Legend of the Barbus in France.

Julia Ramírez Blanco

Brotherhoods of artists were an organizational prototype that would develop, taking various forms, throughout the nineteenth century. Through the formation of these groups based on ties of friendship and on the practice of shared rituals, artists started to understand the creation of a group identity as a fundamental part of their aesthetic projects.

This paper focuses on the first brotherhood of artists, formed around 1798 by a group of students of the painter Jacques-Louis David who rebelled against their teacher, condemning him for not being sufficiently “primitive”. The response of these young artists would be more experiential than pictorial: by their outlandish Ancient Greek attire and their long beards they would be nicknamed “Barbus” (the bearded ones), although they would prefer to call themselves “Meditators of the Antique”. After a period of Parisian meetings, around 1800 they adopted the abandoned monastery of Chaillot as their place for meeting and living together. Practising a vegetarian diet, grouping themselves around charismatic leaders, carrying out daily rituals and living together in a ruined building, the experience of the Barbus group can be understood as a case of utopian-artistic practice or as an example of how certain artists have tried to exercise the social imagination, combining innovation in life and in aesthetics.

In this presentation, sources are employed with full awareness of their myth-making character: a generation after the group disappeared, its history would be recovered in the context of Romanticism, which would find in them a precedent for its own forms of mixing art and life. This self-serving interpretation was not interested in the group itself but rather attributed to them a certain role of foundational legend related to a whole series of practices. Following the aesthetic, political, and spiritual ideas, the brotherhoods of artists of subsequent years will continue to understand common identity through ritual, symbol, performativity, and sometimes cohabitation. Group by group, they will lead towards the creative communities of twentieth-century avant-garde movements.

Keywords: Utopian practice, 19th Century Art, Communities, Collectivism.

Cosmic Harmonies: Visual Configurations of Scientific, Social and Spiritual Utopias According to the Hermetic Tradition.

Marta Piñol Lloret

The hermetic tradition gives great attention to utopian concepts. In this sense, alchemy becomes a key element in addressing the issue of knowledge as a proto-scientific practice and spiritual path. Undoubtedly, the harmony and union of opposites are a fundamental issue for the Great Work/Opus Magnum, as well as utopian themes articulated from a symbolic meaning such as the philosopher's stone, the panacea, the homunculi and different transmutations. Therefore, we will contemplate the connections of this discipline with the scientific, social and spiritual fields and we will trace these ideas to Paracelsus (1493-1541), the turn that alchemy gave from the 15th century and its approaches to the "Golden World" as a natural and social utopia. Likewise, we will take into account the different visual and conceptual images of utopia articulated by the tradition of the Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry from ideas such as the temple of knowledge or social utopias with strong symbolic dimensions such as the Christianopolis of Johannes Valentinus Andreae (1586-1654) or the connections that *The New Atlantis* (Francis Bacon, 1626) keeps with Theosophy. In order to do so, we will study different kind of images that allows us to understand the place that the hermetic tradition gives to utopian ideas, either from a more spiritual, social or scientific perspective, to end up referring to the present context and, accordingly, being able to connect old desires like the transmutation of the metals with the cold fusion or the homunculus with the automatons and robots.