



The British
Psychological Society
History of Psychology Centre

SEMINAR ABSTRACT

Date: Monday 17 July 2017

Location: SELCS Common Room (G24), Foster Court, Malet Place, University College
London

Speaker: Dr Jelena Martinovic (Visiting Research Fellow, Institute of Advanced Studies, UCL)

Seminar title: Visual Illusions, Mescaline and Psychopharmacology: Heinrich Klüver's Form Constants

Abstract: Mescaline, the chemical compound of peyote, attracted the interest of Western scientists since the late 19th century, among them Heinrich Klüver (1897-1967). A German emigré, Klüver introduced gestalt psychology and the pharmacological tradition of experimenting with psychoactive drugs to the United States in the 1920s. Klüver became interested in mescaline for its effects on visual perception and claimed that the substance helps to articulate mechanisms of hallucination. In my talk, I will take up Klüver's brain scientific quest to catalogue visual illusions to question the extent to which his work can elucidate the interrelations of psychopharmacology and the human sciences in the first half of the 20th century. More generally, I will explore how the exemplary focus on visuality, which characterises mescaline research in its constituting years, offers a framework to understand the dissemination of expressive forms in fields such as art therapy, psychopathology and creativity research.