

150 years Sigmund Freud

Symposium “Working with Freud”

hosted by the Department of Modern Foreign Languages on 31 August 2006



Freud by Andy Warhol

In commemoration of Sigmund Freud’s birthday 150 years ago, the Department of Modern Foreign Languages in conjunction with the Austrian Consulate General hosted a symposium entitled “**Working with Freud**” at the Sasol Art Museum on 31 August 2006. The aim of the symposium was to celebrate this event by examining the relevance of Freud from different perspectives within a South African context. The symposium was attended by about 70 people and a number of scholars from different disciplines, each of whom made a presentation on the subject.

Freud, who was born to Jewish parents on 6 May 1856, grew up in Vienna as the first-born of eight children. Through his studies in medicine and his specialization in brain anatomy and pathology he became acquainted with Dr. Josef Breuer with whom he later collaborated and developed a treatment for patients with hysteria. The ‘talking cure’ as it was initially known slowly replaced treatment through hypnosis to evolve into psychoanalysis. The generally accepted point of departure for psychoanalysis dates back to the publication of *Die Traumdeutung* (*The interpretation of dreams*) in 1900.

Carlotta von Maltzan, professor of German and organizer of the symposium, opened the proceedings by highlighting that Freud’s innovative exploration of the mind has had an impact on differing theoretical approaches which has resulted in synergy across disciplinary boundaries. Through the development of psychoanalysis as a science or *Wissenschaft* in its own right Freud created an entirely novel approach to the exploration of mental life and the treatment of the human psyche, thereby fundamentally changing our perception of humanity and culture. In a 1913 paper entitled “The claims of psycho-analysis to scientific interest ” Freud discusses the significance and relevance of psychoanalysis to other fields of knowledge,

such as general psychology, philosophy, biology, developmental science, the history of civilization, sociology and education, to name but a few. The title of the symposium “Working with Freud” highlights the impact that Freud continues to have in various disciplines and fields of interest, in the lecture hall as well as in research.

Of the various contributors to the symposium **Ulrike Kistner** from the University of South Africa explored the field of psychoanalysis from a South African perspective, while **Lou-Marie Kruger** and **Leslie Swartz** (both from Psychology at Stellenbosch University) evaluated Freud’s impact in terms of psychoanalytic techniques and practices in relation to women and poverty on the one hand and to disability on the other. **Gunther Pakendorf** (University of Cape Town) shed light on Freud’s relevance in literary analysis through his comments on E.T.A Hoffmann’s *The Sandman* and Freud’s illuminating interpretation of the ‘uncanny’. **Margarete Lamb-Faffelberger** (Lafayette College, USA), visiting scholar at the Department of Modern Foreign Languages and specialist on Austrian literature, examined the impact Freud had on the 2004 Nobel laureate for literature, Elfriede Jelinek. One of the highlights of the symposium was a presentation by **Mark Solms**, professor of Neuropsychology at the University of Cape Town, and member of the British Psychoanalytical Society. He is a renowned scientist and scholar, and is currently editing the Revised Standard Edition of the Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (24 volumes) and translating and editing the Complete Neuroscientific Works of Sigmund Freud (4 volumes). Solms presented a paper titled “Translating Freud” dealing with some of the crucial questions arising from this work.

The ensuing discussion reinforced the stimulus that Freud’s work can provide for interdisciplinary debate.

Programme

- 15. 00** **Working with Freud**
Carlotta von Maltzan, University of Stellenbosch
- 15. 20** Presentations in Panel:
Claims of/on Psychoanalysis - A South African Perspective
Ulrike Kistner, University of South Africa
- Not mastering the mind: Freud and the “forgotten material” of psychology**
Lou-Marie Kruger, University of Stellenbosch
- Using Freud to think about disability**
Leslie Swartz, University of Stellenbosch
- Confronting the Uncanny**
Gunther Pakendorf, University of Cape Town
- Resisting Oedipus: Elfriede Jelinek and Sigmund Freud**
Margarete Lamb-Faffelberger, Lafayette College, USA
- 17. 00** Plenary Presentation:
Translating Freud
Mark Solms, University of Cape Town
- 18. 00** **Reception hosted by Austrian Consul General, Mrs Christine Kivinen**