

damaged on many levels: after enduring years of negative propaganda and the loss of many members in the violence of war, they now faced a long judicial process to regain the rights to their buildings and property from the Dutch government. This may explain why they chose to prioritize internal matters, instead of seeking the public eye and trying to counteract prejudices. This allowed many misconceptions, started by the Nazi regime, to continue in the collective subconscious. Because artist's archives had been cleansed of 'sensitive' documents, the post-war generation of art historians often failed to recognize the influence of esoteric currents.

During the second half of the twentieth century, the term 'esoteric' was increasingly associated with New Age consumer fads. For many art historians this was a reason to shun the subject. They did not want the intellectual genius of an admired artist to be blemished by highlighting his or her woolly interest in the esoteric or the occult. Other complex factors also played a role in this process. (Here is an interesting PhD-project into rejected knowledge, waiting for a student to pick it up!) Whatever the precise cause, while esotericism could count on the attention of the art world before the war, the subject was largely ignored by the art historical field after 1945.

The 1960's saw the foundation of the first academic chair for the study of western esotericism at the University of Paris. The interest in the subject by art historians was rekindled in the 1970s, stimulated by publications by Sixten Ringbom *The Sounding Cosmos: a study in the spiritualism of Kandinsky and Abstract Painting* (1970), and Robert Pincus Witten *Occult Symbolism in France: Joséphin Péladan and the Salons de la Rose + Croix*, (1976). Within art history, esotericism was mainly viewed within the context of the decadent fin-de-siècle and the subject was touched upon in exhibitions

