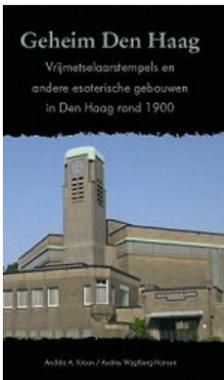
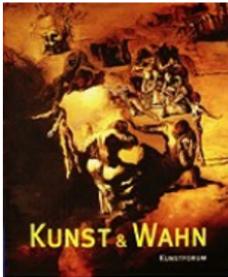


on broader themes like religion and spiritualism, mental illness or outsider art. Examples are: “Zeichen des Glaubens: Religiöse Tendenzen in der Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts” (Stuttgart, 1980); “The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985” (Den Haag, 1986-1987); “Okkultismus und Avantgarde: Von Munch bis Mondrian 1900-1915” (Frankfurt am Main 1995); “Im Reich der Phantome: Fotografie des Unsichtbaren” (Mönchengladbach 1997), and “Kunst und Wahn” (Wenen, 1997).

While historians of religions had supplied clear definitions, art historians kept interchanging terms like ‘spiritualism’, ‘spiritism’, ‘mysticism’, ‘occultism’ and ‘esotericism’, causing confusion. The family tree of esoteric currents and their influence on specific events in art remained unclear, especially to the public. Conclusions were drawn without consulting the historical archives of the relevant esoteric organizations and the enlightening correspondence by artists contained within these archives, that might shed light on such works, was missed. A strong citation culture amongst art historians meant that misunderstandings would be perpetuated instead of being corrected.



The foundation of chairs for western esotericism at European universities, such as the Chair for the History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents in Amsterdam, gave a strong impulse to interdisciplinary research from the end of the 1990s onwards. But the interest of Dutch art historians kept lagging behind international developments. Art historians Marijo Ariëns, Marty Bax (previously involved in “The Spiritual in Art”), Andréa Kroon and Audrey Wagberg Hansen met in 1996 via ARIES (*Association pour la Recherche et l'Information sur l'Esotérisme*), an interdisciplinary study group on western esotericism,