

CULTURE AND COSMOS

www.CultureAndCosmos.org

Editor Nicholas Campion

**Vol. 16 No. 1 and 2, 2012 ISSN 1368-6534
ISBN 978-1-907767-05-0 (Sophia Centre Press)**

Published in Association with
The Sophia Centre for the Study of Culture in Cosmology,
School of Archaeology, History and Anthropology,
University of Wales Trinity Saint David
<http://www.trinitysaintdavid.ac.uk/en/sophia/>

Editorial

The Inspiration of Astronomical Phenomena

<http://www.insap.org/>

Origins

The conferences on the Inspiration of Astronomical Phenomena (INSAP) are a series of occasional, interdisciplinary, international meetings which explore the inspiring role of the stars and sky. The idea for the INSAP meetings emerged from a conversation between the late Ray White (University of Arizona), George Coyne, S. J. (then Director of the Specola Vaticana), and Rolf Sinclair (then at the US National Science Foundation), over coffee one morning in Tucson. As they discussed Isaac Asimov's story 'Nightfall' (whose theme is, 'What would happen if the stars came out only one night in a thousand years?'), they realized that there were few if any concerted treatments of the effect of the many and variegated cultural impacts of the perceptions of the day- and night-time sky. Certainly there had never been a conference that would provide a mechanism for a broad sampling of artists, historians, philosophers, and scientists interested in just these cultural impacts to get together, compare notes, and to have the chance to ask those questions about each other's work which may have been stewing away for decades. This lack cried for redress. The idea for the first INSAP was the result, and George Coyne arranged for it to be held at the Specola Vaticana.

The conference held in Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution from 24th to 29th October 2010 was the seventh in the series, and the second to be held in the UK: INSAPIV was held in Oxford

in 2003. Between INSAPVII and the publication of these proceedings, INSAPVIII has been held at the American Museum of Natural History, New York (in July 2013). At the time of publication, discussions are taking place concerning a possible INSAPIX.

The Bath Conference

The seventh INSAP conference was held in the elegant surroundings of the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution (BRLSI) in Bath, a city with vivid mythical and astronomical associations. The father and son team of architects, John Wood the Elder and John Wood the Younger, designed much of the city in line with cosmological principles, inspired by the legend of the nearby Druid university at the Stanton Drew stone circle. Therefore, it is said, Queen Square, where the conference venue was located, is part of a grand design representing the key to the Masonic mysteries. Meanwhile, the Herschel House museum, the home of William and Caroline Herschel, is just a few minute's walk away, and graciously hosted our pre-conference reception. The Herschels are celebrated by three of the papers in this volume, as well as by a fourth conference speaker, David Southwood, Director of Science and Robotic Exploration at the European Space Agency, who spoke on The Herschel Space Observatory.

During the months leading up to the conference, the Local Organising Committee met in the council chamber at the Royal Astronomical Society in London, courtesy of the librarian, Peter Hingley. Peter was too ill to attend the conference and died in the following year. He was renowned for his encyclopaedic knowledge of the RAS's collections and the friendly and unstinting assistance he provided for researchers. He is still missed and the conference organisers would like to dedicate this volume to his memory.

Acknowledgments:

The conference acknowledges support from

- The Royal Astronomical Society.
- The Herschel Museum, Bath.
- The Sophia Centre for the Study of Cosmology in Culture, School of Archaeology, History and Anthropology, University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

Local Organising Committee:

Nicholas Campion, Chair (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, UK)
 Frances Clynes (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, UK),
 Giles Davison (Independent Scholar, UK)
 Peter Hingley (Librarian, Royal Astronomical Society, London)
 Valerie Shrimplin (Independent Art Historian, London, UK).

International Organising Committee:

Francesco Bertola (ISVLA, Venezia, Italy)
 Marvin Bolt (Adler Planetarium and Astronomy Museum, Chicago, USA)
 Nicholas Campion (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, UK)
 Enrico Corsini, (Universita di Padova, Italy)
 George Coyne, S. J. (Specola Vaticana, Vatican City)
 Chris Impey (University of Arizona, Tucson, USA)
 Ron Olowin, Chair, (St. Mary's College, Moraga, USA)
 David Pankenier (Lehigh University, Bethlehem, USA)
 Richard Poss (University of Arizona, Tucson, USA)
 Valerie Shrimplin (Independent Art Historian, London, UK)
 Rolf M. Sinclair, (Centro de Estudios Cientificos, Valdivia, Chile)
 Gary Wells, Vice-Chair (Ithaca College, USA)

Technical Support:

Frances Clynes (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, UK)
 Bernadette Brady (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, UK)
 Aidan Foster (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, UK)

Previous Publications:

INSAP I: Specola Vaticana, Castelgandolfo, Vatican State (1994).
 Publication: *The Inspiration of Astronomical Phenomena (INSAP) Conference Papers* [Published in *Vistas in Astronomy* Vol. 39, Part 4 (1995) and *Leonardo* Vol. 29, No. 2 (1996).]

INSAP II: University of Malta, Malta (1999).

Publication (tentative):

The Inspiration of Astronomical Phenomena Conference (INSAP II)
 [Publication date not set.]

INSAP III: Osservatorio Astronomico di Palermo, Italy (2001).
Publication: *The Inspiration of Astronomical Phenomena III*
[Published in *Memorie della Società Astronomica Italiana (Journal of the Italian Astronomical Society)* Special Number 1 (2002). Salvatore Serio (ed.)]

INSAP IV: Magdalen College, Oxford, UK (2003).
Publication: *The Inspiration of Astronomical Phenomena. Proceedings of the Fourth Conference* [Published in *Culture and Cosmos* Vol. 8, Nos. 1 & 2 (Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter 2004). Nicholas Campion (ed.)]

INSAP V: Adler Planetarium & Astronomy Museum, Chicago, USA (2005).
Publication: *Engaging the Heavens: Inspiration of Astronomical Phenomena V*
[San Francisco: Astronomical Society of the Pacific Conference Series Vol. 468 (2012). Marvin Bolt and Stephen Case (eds.)]

INSAP VI: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, Venice, Italy (2009).
Publication: *The Inspiration of Astronomical Phenomena VI – Proceedings*
[San Francisco: Astronomical Society of the Pacific Conference Series Vol. 441 (2011). Enrico Maria Corsini (ed.)]

Nicholas Campion,
School of Archaeology, History and Anthropology,
University of Wales Trinity Saint David.