

Modern Art and Spiritual Thought

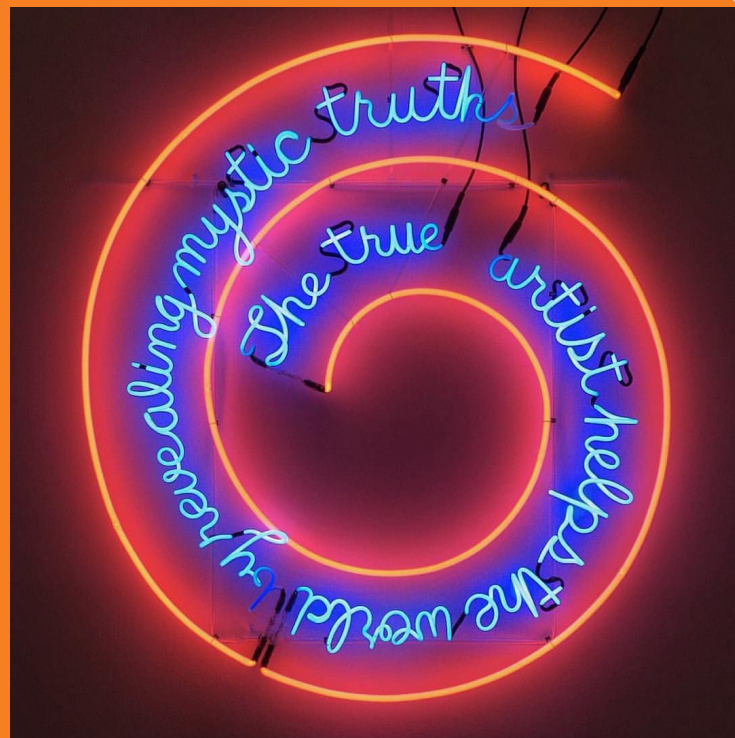
HUM 370-6-20 / ART HISTORY 390-0-1

MW 2:00-3:20 pm (remote/synchronous)

Hamed Yousefi

FULFILLS DISTRO 6: *Literature and Fine Arts*

This course examines the relationship between modern art and spiritual thought in the twentieth century. Though modern abstract art is often assumed to be secular, since its inception in Europe in the early 1900s, many artists such as Hilma af Klint, Wassily Kandinsky, Kazimir Malevich, and Piet Mondrian explained their turn to abstraction in spiritual terms, indicating that modern art is uniquely capable of connecting us to hidden realities. The aim of this course is to learn to read the political, romantic, and aesthetic dimensions of modern art through a spiritual lens and provide students with critical tools to enhance the experience of seeing modernist films, paintings, or sculptures. The course will focus on the work of European and American artists as well as their contemporaries working in the global south. For example, Abanindranath Tagore created anti-colonial paintings that foregrounded India's "spiritual soul" in battle with the "materialist" British Empire. Other topics discussed include Surrealism and magic, spiritual modernism as de-colonial practice, Sufism and Theosophy, American Abstract Expressionism, and Soviet spiritual cinema. We will examine key theoretical texts by Walter Benjamin, Clement Greenberg, and Rosalind Krauss.



Bruce Nauman, *The True Artist Helps the World by Revealing Mystic Truths* (Window or Wall Sign). Medium: neon. 1967.