

Lagaay Alice in conversation with Geerken Hartmut

On the ethos – and ethnography – of 'creative indifference': discovering the philosophy of Salomo Friedlaender

keynote lecture

Bio:

Hartmut Geerken is a free-jazz musician, composer, writer, publisher, author of radio plays, filmmaker and joyful practitioner of creative indifference. He lived and worked in Athens, Cairo and Kabul before settling with his family on the shores of Ammersee in Southern Germany. Hartmut and his wife Sigi came across the writings of Salomo Friedlaender by chance in 1966, when they travelled to France to investigate the correspondence and other written work by Victor Hadwiger, a German-speaking poet from Prague. This chance discovery led to a series of further encounters and a curious passion out of which a lifetime's project was born, leading to the compilation and later publication – in their own 'Waitawhile' publishing house – of the collected writings of Salomo Friedlaender.

Alice Lagaay is currently a research fellow in philosophy at the IKKM in Weimar (Bauhaus University). She is a founding member of the Performance Philosophy network, and co-editor (with Laura Cull O'Maoilearca and Will Daddario) of the Performance Philosophy book series published with Palgrave Macmillan. Her work in recent years has focused on notions of 'negative' performance: silence, failure, letting-be, the neutral, (creative) indifference, and the impossible.

In 2013, while researching for an article she was writing on the potency of the concept of the 'neutral' (that which is neither 'this' nor 'that'), Alice stumbled upon a footnote in a book by William Watkin. It was a reference to a writer she had not heard of before and something about the title of the book – *Schöpferische Indifferenz*, creative indifference – compelled her to look it up. This is how she first came across the philosophical writings of Salomo Friedlaender, who turned out not only to strike a chord with Alice's interest in the figure of the neutral, but also to resonate with another of the main strands of her research: performance philosophy. Alice went on to publish an article on Friedlaender in the first edition of the online open-access performance philosophy journal. Hartmut Geerken was alerted to the article and contacted Alice soon after its publication. This is how their correspondence started; where it will lead, no one yet knows.

Their conversation will explore the main tenets of Salomo Friedlaender's philosophy of 'creative indifference' (no prior knowledge required) and its possible relevance for Performance Philosophy. Through the prism of their mutual interest in Friedlaender, and the respective routes that led them there, Hartmut and Alice will address the guiding questions of the conference ranging from how Performance Philosophy *acts* (drawing on personal anecdotes relating to chance encounters, acquiescence, adventure and serendipity) to considering research as a way of life, and life as a way of research, and, finally, to what it might mean to be at once open to what comes and guided by an inner secret... They will talk jazz, ethnography and ethics, whilst touching on one of the central concerns of Alice's current research: Can there be an ethics of indifference?

