

Klimt's Jurisprudence: Sovereign Violence and the Rule of Law

Public lecture by professor Desmond Manderson, ANU

29 September, 2014

This lecture introduces Gustav Klimt's lost masterpiece, *Jurisprudence*, bringing it into a richer dialogue with its social and legal context. *Jurisprudence*, a suffering naked man surrounded by eyes, eerily captures the relationship between 'sovereignty and bare life' that Agamben argues was re-forged and refined across the twentieth-century. Klimt's image might perhaps be regarded as the very first, and perhaps still the most comprehensive, representation of this profoundly important figure of legal modernity. Drawing on two of the most important cultural events to take place in Vienna at the time—the first performance of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*; and the first publication of Sigmund Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*—the essay complicates and enriches this reading. Like an optical illusion, Klimt's painting hovers uncertainly between three different but equally necessary perspectives: law as it is (the social); law as we imagine it (the philosophical); and law as it might be (the political). The proper name for the discomfiting study of their relationship is *jurisprudence*.

Professor Desmond Manderson is an international leader in interdisciplinary scholarship in law and the humanities. His work has led to essays, books, and lectures around the world in the fields of English literature, philosophy, ethics, history, cultural studies, music, human geography, and anthropology, as well as in law and legal theory. Throughout this work Manderson has defended law's connection to these humanist disciplines is critical to its functioning, its justice, and its social relevance. After ten years at McGill University in Montreal, where he held the Canada Research Chair in Law and Discourse, and was founding Director of the Institute for the Public Life of Arts and Ideas, he returned to Australia, where he is jointly appointed in the ANU College of Law and College of Arts and Social Sciences at Australian National University. His current project, *Fiat Lex*, is on representations of law and justice in the visual arts.

Practical information

The lecture will take place on **Monday 29 September, 2014 at 19.00h (7pm)** in **Auditorium B of the Law Faculty**, Universiteitstraat 4, inner courtyard, B wing ([sitemap](#): nr. 2). The lecture is open to everyone and takes ca. 1 hour, with time for Q&A.

Possible questions can be send to Karin.Pensaert@ugent.be.