Doomed to a constant oscillation between the realms of the Unknown and the illusion of meaning, we advance regressing. Echoing various other scholars, the American philosopher William James marked “the recesses of feeling the darker, blinder strata of character” as the only places in the world in which “we catch real fact in the making.” Yet, instead of curiously exploring what cannot be known, we push it further away, enveloped with fear and anxiousness. The “darker strata” regularly produce angst, aversion, or awe. In this one day symposium, acclaimed scholars and artists will shed “light” on what has been relegated to the sphere of unreason: magic, the irrational, spectrality, the daemonic. Who is afraid of the irrational? What is “magic philosophy” and who needs it? How much reason is reasonable? The symposium ends with a keynote by the distinguished anthropologist Michael Taussig who will share with the audience his own private fear of the ir-rational.

Organized by Sladja Blazan and the ICI Berlin Institute for Cultural Inquiry

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