

Easter - Anthroposophical Society, Wellington Branch

The Mystery of the Therapeutic Background of the Isenheim Altar

Monday, 3rd of April 2023, 7:30 - 9:00 pm, 19 Bristol Square, Lower Hutt



Dear Members and Friends,

On this evening, we invite you to gain insights into the images of the Isenheim Altar in Colmar, France. It is considered one of the most significant, and at the same time most mysterious altars we have from the past. It was not placed in a church but used for healing practices by the Antonites, a widely known lay organisation of nurses, doctors, pharmacists, and other carers in Middle Europe. At that time, new diseases appeared in which the limbs of the people started to rot and many of them had frightening hallucinations. This was caused by the toxic ergot in cereals and was named *Antonius-Fever*. In any case, the Antonites brought people with this disease to this altar before any medical treatment started. Their approach was to heal body, soul, and spirit. Over time, the Antonites founded more than 400 hospitals/monasteries in Middle Europe.

Many of you might be familiar with the above picture, but this is only one of 9 more panels. The altar was painted and constructed around 1512 - 1516 and is attributed to Matthias Gruenewald - which is not the real name of the painter. We don't know when he was born and when he died. We also don't know from which resources he got his inspirations. It is not only the artist who is shrouded in mystery; the altar holds any number of astonishing iconographic secrets.

Anita Mortlock and Herbert Wolpert are sharing their insights as both have a long-time interest in the mysteries of this altar in Isenheim. It is envisaged to have more of a conversation on this evening and all knowledge and perceptions of this most significant piece of art are welcome.

We are looking forward to seeing you then.

The Committee of the Branch

Darien, Fiona, Ingrid, Tessa, Uta, Herbert