

THOMAS MERTON CENTENARY: BEYOND THE SHADOW

at

The Ammerdown Centre, Radstock, Bath, BA3 5SW

Friday 20 to Sunday 22 November

Residential: £245, Non-residential: £163

Please arrive by 6pm on Friday. Course ends with lunch on Sunday.



Ammerdown Drive in Morning Light

Thomas Merton was born in 1915, and after becoming a Trappist monk went on to be one of the 20th century foremost spiritual thinkers. He wrote over 50 books as well as many letters, essays and reviews, and was prominent in the anti-war and social justice movements in the USA.

As a Christian contemplative who spent his last years as a hermit, he was also deeply interested in Eastern Mysticism and what he could learn from it. He had a longstanding dialogue with D.T. Suzuki about Zen and also met Thich Nhat Hanh and the Dalai Lama. His last months were spent in Asia exploring the nature of the contemplative life in dialogue with others from different cultures and religions, particularly Buddhism. He died on this trip in an accident in Bangkok in 1968.

This Ammerdown weekend, led by **Fiona Gardner** and **Mark Scholefield**, marks the centenary year of Thomas Merton's birth by focusing on two less commonly explored aspects of his life: what influenced his visual art, and what he experienced on his Asian travels at the end of his life.

"... Everything is emptiness and everything is compassion ... I know and have seen what I was obscurely looking for."

Fiona will discuss Merton's epiphany in front of the Buddhist statues in Polonnaruwa, now Sri Lanka, which took place shortly before Merton's death. She will reflect on this experience from both a psychological and a spiritual perspective.

"To convey the meaning of something substantial, you have to use not a shadow but a sign, not the imitation but the image."

Mark will be exploring some of the visual art of Thomas Merton - his photographs and calligraphy - and in particular how they were influenced by Zen, which was fundamental to the way he saw things.

Fiona Gardner is a writer, a psychotherapist and a spiritual director. She is the UK International Advisor for the International Thomas Merton Society.

Mark Scholefield has been contributing to the life and work of Ammerdown since 2005. He runs courses on a variety of subjects including the spirituality of Thomas Merton, and is a long-standing practitioner of Zen. His exhibition of photographs 'The Dancing Waters of El Canigo' will be on show at Ammerdown in 2015.

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