

Course description

Aesthetic Concepts and Changing Forms

PhD course

Munich, Germany

January 9-12, 2013

The course is organized by the Norwegian researcher training school *Text, Image, Sound, Space* (University of Bergen, University of Stavanger, University of Agder, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, and University of Tromsø) in cooperation with Ludwig-Maximilian-Universität, Munich.

Description

Few terms in aesthetic studies are more widely used than 'form', and it has always been an essential concept in the description and theorizing of artistic expressions and practices. From Plato's metaphysical theories of *eidei* to modern thinkers like Schlegel, Croce and Cassirer, from the word 'form' used as a contrast to 'content', 'form' meaning shaped or designed material, etc., the concept in essence appears to belong to critical discourse. Texts, books, images, sculptures, piano sonatas or theatre plays have form – or are being formed and performed. Whether we have a philosophical understanding or use the concept less academically, it prevails in both the arts and aesthetic theory like an elusive yet ever-present shadow.

However, the concept is also so variable and inclusive that it has ended up being one of the most ambiguous that we have, and recent theorizing on the nature of the arts pays far less attention to 'form' than to the related concepts of 'genre', quite possibly because so much modern study of form has been associated with varieties of formalism.

In an era where electronic and digital media offer innovative structures for rapidly producing, distributing and receiving art expressions, new versions and meanings of the form concept have emerged: 'Format', 'formatting' and 'performative' are terms coined to describe and explain new phenomena and ways of thinking about them. Invisible energies, vanishing substances as well as complicated technology are dimensions of contemporary art that call for a redefinition of form concepts. Adaptation and transmediation processes reopen questions of form related to content (the medium and the message) and even govern the way we consciously or unconsciously perceive form. The methodological approaches and theoretical understandings in today's criticism are dynamic, interrelationship-oriented and infinite. Developments in the arts itself challenge – as always – the academic disciplines, including their analytical tools and theoretical paradigms.

At the same time: Traditional art expressions and literary genres remain important and vivid, having principally no difficulty in being aesthetically innovative. Seemingly unchanging materials like pen and pencil, oil and wool, wood and stone are as relevant as ever in artistic production. Old narratives, poetical and musical genres as well as iconographic motifs and conventions reappear in new settings and modern patterns. Mythological stories can be made relevant in the efforts explaining contemporary human destinies, and the body is a permanent resource for artistic creation.

The questions that we want to address in this doctoral course are related to the concept of 'form' and its relevance in today's aesthetic criticism. For instance, is there anything like constant forms or constants in form? Have the new media and digital culture made us rethink the notion of form in productive ways? What do new concepts – format, formatting, performative – add to our understanding of the way art works?

Our discussion's point of departure is in the innovative aspects of contemporary artistic

expression, from literature and music to the fine arts; from this position we aim to generate a critical discussion of the form-related models of our aesthetic thought and discourses.

Program

The program will consist of plenary lectures (45 minutes + 30 minutes of discussion) and group work.

PhD students from the member universities will be invited to attend. In addition, the course will be open to 2-3 PhD students from Ludwig-Maximilian-Universität. Estimated number of PhD candidates: 20. The students will be encouraged to submit papers (max. 15 pages in English or Norwegian), to be discussed in groups (30 minutes each).

Venue

The course will be held at Evangelische Akademie, Tutzing (am Starnberger See).

www.ev-akademie-tutzing.de

From Airport Franz-Josef-Strauß go by S-Bahn (Linie S1 or S8) to Munich Hauptbahnhof (ca. 45 minutes); then take the S6 to Tutzing (another 45 minutes).

On Friday we will return to Munich and will probably have one lecture at the university. Hotel accommodation in Munich will be provided for one night.

Credits

Credits for participation are **5 points** (ECTS) with paper and **2 points** without.

Economy

The research training school covers hotel accommodation and meals.

Curricular texts

Reading material will be published on the website.

Deadlines

Deadline for application: **November 1, 2012**

Deadline for submitting papers: **December 1, 2012**

Please, submit application form to:

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