

INVITATION \\\ CALL FOR PAPERS

⌘ KULTUR KONTROVERS | TRANSGRESSIVE SPACES \\\ SPACES OF TRANSGRESSION

International Cultural Studies Symposium of the University Alliance Ruhr (UAR)

13 – 15 July 2017 at TU Dortmund University

Confirmed keynote speakers:

Keith Kahn-Harris

Gabriele Klein

Patricia MacCormack

Marcus Stiglegger

Catherine Wheatley

Ever since Georges Bataille and the early 20th century, transgression and the transgressive have enjoyed unabated popularity. In cultural contexts, according to Chris Jenks, this interest is particularly reflected in a “radical uncertainty,” which is apprehended and signified in a persistent renegotiation of borders and taboos. Heavily influenced by postmodern thinking, however, the scope of cultural studies aligns transgression most notably with Mikhail Bakhtin’s notions of the grotesque and the carnivalesque. These are conducive to an understanding of transgression, i.e. of deliberate border violation, which strongly inspires the analysis of artistic text and cultural signifying practices.

Alleged subjects that deal with transgression are profoundly polymorphous: while Foucault perceived transgression’s ephemeral nature as being temporarily and spatially extremely limited, most recent scholarly approaches appear to be fluent. Even because we are impelled by its unlasting rapture, we starve for consistently making visible and even tangible the cursory, unstable border. In this regard, much attention has been spent on the phenomena of the European Extreme Cinema by Gaspar Noé, Lars von Trier or Catherine Breillat; this has found remarkable expression in the demonstrative crossings of musical borders in Steve Reich or John Cage; and since the 1990s, writers like Chuck Palahniuk, Dennis Cooper or Bret Easton Ellis are being discussed within the category of so-called Transgressive Fiction.

Apart from the arts and cultural discourses, the political is another sphere in which the notion of transgression has become viable. As thinkers such as Stuart Hall (1996) have argued, political and cultural hegemony can be negotiated along the lines of transgressive movements. Social and political transformations can therefore be conceived of as processes of transgression. These transformations can be shaped and framed by straining its borders to the utmost by way of the arts and its compensation and controversial practices.

The conference aims at an understanding of culture as a space for consumption, within which inspiration, the unknown and the underappreciated are put to the front. This is what Foucault defines as “subjugated knowledge” by which alternative means of being in the world are apt to be uncovered. All of the above culminates in a variety of questions: Is it appropriate to speak of transgression in terms

of permanence and endurance to – in the long run – approach cultural and social change? Besides, it is questionable whether, and if so, how the transgressive moment with its all-too-fleeting character affects practices of culture and their understanding – a question which, ultimately, is a question of power relations.

Is a controversial culture limited to exclusive, national spaces or does it open up beyond geographical borders as an inclusive language of an alternative culture? With respect to its spatiality it is important to ask, which particular spaces do constitute the transgressive? Or is it rather the case that its space is first born in the moment of transgression? These and other approaches can exemplarily be scrutinized by considering their manifestation in a range of phenomena and texts, be it in films and TV formats, in literature, music or theater. If, as J. Halberstam (2011) asserts, we live in a time in which subversion and controversy have come out of fashion, we need the creative spirit of subcultural practices and radical utopists that are committed to the dark side of culture. In a nutshell, the cultural studies symposium opens up on transgression as a subject matter, which welcomes an interdisciplinary discussion.

Possible approaches might include:

- What becomes visible with/through transgression?
- Which forms of media are suitable for the transgressive?
- What are transgressive subjects or is there also a transgressive mode of representation involved?
- Transgression as political phenomenon?
- Is transgression predictable?
- Transgression as libidinal principle?
- Transgression as space of negotiation?
- Transgression as strategy of affect?

Please submit your proposal to kulturkontrovers@gmx.de by 01 December, 2016 including:

- ✗ abstract (max. 300 words)
- ✗ a short biographical note (max. 5 sentences)
- ✗ technical requirements

We invite proposals for 20-minutes papers, which will be followed by a panel discussion.

Organizing Committee

Sandra Danneil (TU Dortmund University, American Cultural and Media Studies)

Kai Fischer (Ruhr-University of Bochum, Comparative Literature)

Sarah Reininghaus (TU Dortmund University, German Literary and Cultural Studies)

Mark Schmitt (TU Dortmund University, British Cultural Studies)