Across the Borders of Text and Nation: Intertextuality and Intermediality in 20th and 21st Century Film, Art, and Exhibition Culture

Moderator: Nicole Neuman, University of Indianapolis
Commentator: Johannes von Moltke, University of Michigan

Sara Hall, University of Illinois at Chicago
Mobilizing the International Intertexts of Policing, The Great Police Exhibition of Berlin, 1926

Emily Dreyfus, University of Chicago & Freie Universität Berlin
Musical Interludes and Zones of Political Consensus in German Cinema under National Socialism

Jennifer Kapczynski, Washington University in St. Louis
Mecki and Making Democracy Popular

Tom Haakenson, California College of the Arts
Dada Dimensions: Intertextual, Intermedial, & Transcultural Critique

The panel will establish a multi-faceted, transhistorical conversation about the interface between media forms both within and across the boundaries of individual texts and events, seeking to understand how specific intertextual and intermedial representational practices have impacted audience formation and self-understanding and historically specific cultures of reception. In her paper on the documentation and coverage of speeches, demonstrations, performances, and films that were part of the Great Berlin Police Exhibition of 1926, Sara Hall explores the common and divergent aesthetic strategies and modes of audience address that interfaced to present Weimar-era German police practice as reformist domestically and superior internationally. In “Musical Interludes and Zones of Political Consensus in German Cinema under National Socialism,” Emily Dreyfus focuses on how narrative entertainment feature films such as melodramas used music to sublimate bourgeois values of art and humanism into political ideology in the service of, or at times at odds with, the Volksgemeinschaft. She mobilizes the notion of connectivity between diverse forms of expression and across audiences to explore how musical moments created zones of political consensus (also across class boundaries) in mass cultural production. In her paper, “Mecki and Making Democracy Popular,” Jennifer Kapczynski documents contract negotiations preceding the creation of a series of short films featuring Mecki the Hedgehog, showing how the Mecki media campaign relied on an intermedial character to combat popular views of democracy as a system both imported and imposed — mobilizing his “star power” to render democracy in terms that appeared both familiar and fundamentally domestic. In his paper, “Dada Dimensions: Intertextual, Intermedial, & Transcultural Critique” Thomas Haakenson argues that the various intertextual and intermedial strategies employed by the first Dada artists are key in understanding how Dada transcended its geopolitical and historical origins. He shows how, from the early Dada-inspired journals of MAVO movement in 1920s Japan to the intentionally immolated Xiamen Dada exhibition in China in 1986, from the borderless Cyber Dada Manifesto at the turn of the new millennium to the contemporary political aesthetics of Adam Pendleton’s Brooklyn-based Black Dada project, Dada’s diverse yet interconnected engagements gave, and continue to give, the movement its transcultural fungibility.

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