

Old Media

Joint PhD-Seminar, *Copenhagen Doctoral School in Cultural Studies* and
Text, Image, Sound, Space, Norwegian Researcher School in the Humanities
New York, May 18-20, 2017

In his essay on the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction, Walter Benjamin noted how the advent of photography radically changed the approach to painting, modifying not only its role in the art system but also in the perception of the audience. The advances in photographic technology created new aesthetic sensibilities thus making it, in the words of Robert Musil, “somehow ridiculous for a person to prize a well-painted lobster” thereby questioning human appetites, our relation to the world and others. Painting not only became tangible in new and different ways, the old *art form* retroactively presented itself as a *medium*.

Technological advances not only prompt the mutation of old media, imbuing them with new qualities and giving rise to novel potentials. Whether in the form of books or clavichords, LPs or CAD-programs, Polaroid photos or paper money, new technologies transform the entire set up and interaction of the media ecologies in which we live, think and act.

In the wake of the momentous media development created by information technology throughout the latest decennia, there has been a considerable upsurge in academic studies of new media, media history, and media archaeology, focusing in particular on the nexus between media and their technological affordances and social environments. With this seminar, we would like to highlight a specific dimension of media development, namely that which has most recently disappeared, what Walter Benjamin called *das Jüngstvergangene*. Or, quite simply, “old media”.

The seminar will focus on three questions concerning our understanding of “old media”.

- Firstly, we are interested in the ways in which we theorize and analyse old media in the light of recent media research. How does our understanding of new(er) media affect how we look at books, theatre productions, paintings, or celluloid films? What happens when art forms are redefined as artistic media?
- Secondly, we hope to question how the artistic use of old media is reflected, reiterated and reinvented for new media ecologies. Typewriters and super 8, gouache and tape recorders, Commodore 64s and copper casting, are among the many otherwise obsolete technologies resuscitated in contemporary artistic practices.
- Thirdly, we invite the participants to examine and discuss the aesthetic, philosophical and political consequences of the reformatting of old media by new media with regard to the construction of everyday life worlds.

Doctoral students from all areas of art and literature studies are invited to present their work and discuss methodological and theoretical issues related to it. This might take the form of a discussion of a text drawn from the reading list, an analysis of a specific work of art, or a general presentation of themes, issues or problems drawn from their own work that might be of general relevance to the topic. And, as always, the course is also open for those who would prefer to present and discuss a draft of a chapter from their ongoing work.

Program

The program will consist of three plenary lectures (45 minutes + 30 minutes of discussion) and group work. It will begin with a welcoming lecture in the afternoon of Thursday the 18th and end with a goodbye dinner on the Saturday the 20th. The three key note speakers are in order of appearance, Andreas Huyssen, German and Comparative Literature, Columbia University, N. Kathrine Hayles, professor in Literature, Duke University, and Rebecca Schneider, Theatre and Performance Studies, Brown University.

Number of PhD candidates will be limited to 15. The course is open to PhD-students affiliated to the TBLR-program or to equivalent programs at Danish universities. The students are encouraged to submit abstract of their presentation (30 minutes each).

Venue

The Norwegian Church, 317 East 52nd Street

Credits

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

Texts

Reading materials will be made available by Dropbox.

As a temporary reading lists, participants are encouraged to look at the following texts

Walter Benjamin: "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technical Reproduction"

Wolfgang Ernst: "Dis/continuities: Does the Archive Become Metaphorical in Multi-Media Space?" in Chun, Wendy Hui Kyong & Keenan, Thomas: *New Media, Old Media*. London: Routledge, 2006 pp. 105-124.

[https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/5910913/Chun,%20Wendy%20\(ed\)%20-%20New%20Media%20Old%20Media.pdf](https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/5910913/Chun,%20Wendy%20(ed)%20-%20New%20Media%20Old%20Media.pdf)

N. Katherine Hayles: "Translating Media - Why We Should Rethink Textuality"

<https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/5910913/Hayles%20-%20Translating%20Media%20-%20Why%20We%20Should%20Rethink%20Textuality.pdf>

Deadline for application: April 1st. Please include a title and preferably a short abstract (300 words), alternatively indicate if you would prefer to present an article from the reading list (will follow).

Deadline for paper: May 1st.

For further information, please contact

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