

Tekst, bilde, lyd og rom (TBLR).

Text, Image, Sound, Space. Norwegian Researcher Training School

The Norwegian University of Science and Technology, The University of Agder, The University of Bergen, The University of Oslo, Nord University, and UiT the Arctic University of Norway.

PhD and Research Seminar, October 7-9, 2026
Humboldt-Universität, Berlin/Felleshus der Nordischen Botschaften

Call for papers

The World, the Text, and the Machine

Texts, images, and sounds are carriers of meaning. They mediate content, and they interest us because they reveal something about the world we live in and how we inhabit it. As media, however, they are not merely *about* the world; they are *of* the world – sensate matter to be read and decoded with whatever abilities we can muster – as well as *from* the world, imbued with the tensions and the urgencies that made them come into being in the first place. In a seminal text from the 1980s, “The World, the Text, and the Critic”, Edward Said argued that understanding a text – or any other aesthetic medium – is never only a matter of grasping its message but also to engage with its “sensuous particularity” and its “historical contingency” as “infrangible parts” of its capacity to convey and produce meaning. Always *situated*, mediations merge the worldly situations and modalities of its creation and its reception.

If this stance reflects how scholars of art and literature work, we are now facing a situation where the production, distribution and reception of texts and visual/auditive aesthetic objects is rapidly becoming the domain of the procedures of Artificial General Intelligence.

Computational analysis, mapping, and encoding turn texts, images, and sounds into bits of information – the ghostly and commodifiable derivatives of originary sensual imprints. In the information economy’s algorithmic parsing of archives, the immediate and imperative relevance of experiences of historical contingency and expressive urgency disappears.

AI confronts us with a machinic rationality that despite the blunt materiality of its apparatuses is incorporeal. This forces the question of what will happen at the intersection of the living body and the machine, and their different and even conflicting temporalities. If aesthetics springs from our experience of the ways we live in the world and is thus oriented towards the openness of what is yet to come, the calculus of the logical machine necessarily anticipates the future based on what has passed – abstractions lifted from the archives of the past.

As the conditions of aesthetic production become increasingly computational, new kinds of signifying objects transform the sphere of aesthetic production and consumption. What N. Kathrine Hayles has called “mixed cognitive assemblages” – the interweaving of machinic and human cognitive work – will impact the ways we work and live. This is our challenge.

With this seminar, we will discuss machine generated expressive matter from an aesthetic perspective, both in terms of how we as scholars of aesthetics can understand and assess worldless texts and the power of “hallucinated mediocrity” (Hito Steyerl) they exert, and in terms of how the growing use of machinic intervention in art production alters the premises on which we think about art and work with art. Participants are invited to reflect on how the questions of AI pertain to their dissertation empirically, analytically, or epistemologically.

The number of participants will be limited to max. 15. Should the number of applications exceed the places available, priorities will be made based on relevance, previous participation in the TBLR program, and status of PhD training. Early applications will also be prioritized.

Program: The program will consist of plenary key-note lectures (60-minute presentation, 30-minute discussion) and group work. Participant papers will be presented in a conventional conference setting (20-minute presentation, 20-minute discussion). In addition, there will be text reading sessions. Participants can choose between presenting their own work or a theoretical text from the reading list for a text session. (Reading list available in August.)

Key-note speakers:

Wolfgang Ernst, Professor für Medientheorien, Institut für Musikwissenschaft und Medienwissenschaft, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.

Dr. Francis Hunger Künstlerischer Mitarbeiter / artistic researcher and lecturer Aktuelle Digitale Medien / Emergent Digital Media Akademie der Bildenden Künste München

The titles of their respective lectures will be announced in September.

Working language: English.

Application Process: Those who would like to attend should fill in the application form and submit a short draft of their paper by the 4th of September at the latest (roughly 300 words).

Working language: English.

Credits (TBLR students): 2/5 ECTS. Participation and presentation will result in 2 ECTS, working over and submitting an edited version of the presentation (10-12 pages) after the seminar, will yield an additional 3 ECTS. Signed and authorized course diplomas will upon request be bestowed upon each PhD student participant having completed the course.

Credits (IKK students): Participation and presentation will result in ca. 3 ECTS

Hotel: Hotel reservations will be made by the participants themselves. Up to four nights will be reimbursed (up to 120 Euros per night) for students from the institutions participating in TBLR. A reasonable option is the Humboldt University’s guesthouse: <https://www.ta.hu-berlin.de/guesthouse>

Meals: Lunch every day, and dinner Thursday night.

Travel: PhD students are expected to cover their own travel expenses.

Texts: Reading materials will be made available one month before the seminar.

Deadline for application: 4th of September.

Applicants from TBLR should submit form available on: <https://www.ntnu.no/tblr>

Any questions should be directed to Knut Ove Eliassen (knut.eliassen@ntnu.no).