

CfP Materiality and Mediality: Aspects of a Different Aesthetics

Conference, March 2–4, 2022, CRC 1391 “Different Aesthetics”, Tübingen

The Collaborative Research Centre (CRC) 1391 “Different Aesthetics” examines aesthetic acts and artefacts of the premodern era within the field of tension between artistic knowledge of forms and composition and social practice. Whereas aesthetics in modernity is credited with a far-reaching autonomy, premodern aesthetic acts and artefacts cannot be allocated to a socially separate sphere of ‘art’ but appear to be part of various social practices. Thus, the CRC 1391 conceives of aesthetic acts and artefacts differently, that is, it views them decidedly praxeologically as flexible actors who cross the boundaries between the autological dimension of technique and artistry on the one side and the heterological dimension of social practices and history on the other side.

Materiality and mediality are, so we suppose, central coordinates of a ‘different’ aesthetics which can be used to analyse both the social and compositional premises of premodern acts and artefacts. When investigating aesthetic acts and artefacts, materiality and mediality may therefore contribute to overcoming traditional hierarchies and dichotomies of the history of aesthetics (and the research thereof), e.g., subordinating the material aspect of acts and artefacts under ‘cognitive’ paradigms like form, or playing off the artistic composition against medial functions. In this sense, materiality and mediality refer to specific ways of regarding acts and artefacts, focussing on the material on the one hand, the medial on the other hand as aspects of a different aesthetics.

The attention for materiality and mediality may furthermore be associated with the conceptual amplification which both notions have received in recent cultural theory. According to cultural theory, materiality refers to far-reaching discursivations, conceptualisations and semantisations of the materials which acts and artefacts are made of. Recent theories of materiality (e.g., by Bruno Latour) concern the role that materials play in the context of social practices. This role is no longer confined to a passive-objective mode of existence but can range from a resistance to being formed to the provision of options for action to a quasi-human capacity for action. Materials are initially understood in tangible and physical terms. They comprise substances such as metal, paper, and stone as well as bodies of humans and (other) animals, their vocal utterances, and sounds in general. However, the properties and qualities of materials are not only determined by their physical nature, but they also result praxeologically

from their discursive, poietic, practical, or reflexive handling. Against the backdrop of this theoretically broadened concept of materiality, one can also grasp non-physical components of acts and artefacts such as visual arts' themes, literature's subject matters, imaginations, knowledge, etc. as materials. Thereby, depictions of materiality and tensions between asserted and factual materiality (e.g., in alchemy) come into view.

For historical mediality research (e.g., by Christian Kiening), mediality refers to processes of mediation in a wide sense: to the aspects of conveying a message as well as to mediation between agents or domains (e.g., between immanence and transcendence). In contrast, the notion of 'medium' focusses on singular objects which are identified as media by their mediating actions. To understand medial processes of mediation, recent media theory's (after Marshall McLuhan) central shift from media marginalism to media generativism (Sybille Krämer) is crucial. According to this shift, media are not 'mute' containers for messages or contents, but they at least influence the messages or contents which they not only convey but usually also decisively shape or even generate. Thus, partial artistic significance (and agency) can be attributed to media themselves, because they adopt semantic potentials of the (autological) concept of form without detaching themselves from their (heterological) activities of mediation.

Against the backdrop of these theoretical considerations, premodern acts and artefacts are to be brought into focus. How do they accentuate their own materiality? How do they correlate form and mediality? What role do the shifts aimed at by theory (from form to material, from ontology to praxeology, from communication media to processes of mediation, etc.) play in aesthetic practices understood as social practices? How is this role (aesthetically) reflected? At the conference, the two aspects of materiality and mediality are furthermore to be correlated, or confronted, with the CRC's praxeological model (see <https://uni-tuebingen.de/de/160699>). Potential subsequent questions are:

- How do materials and media situate themselves within the field of tension between autology and heterology?
- Which tensions or convergences between materiality and composition as well as between mediality and mediation are made aesthetically productive?
- In what way do materiality and mediality interpenetrate within the framework of the praxeological model? How can possible interpenetrations be methodically substantiated and / or theoretically conceptualised? Which configurations or

handlings of materials and media can be observed within and with the help of aesthetic acts and artefacts?

- What role do intermateriality and intermediality play? Are there instances of concealing or negating materiality or mediality (immateriality or immediality)?
- How can the affinities of an approach based on materiality and mediality with ritual research and the theory of performativity be deepened?

To answer these and further questions, case studies and / or methodologically and theoretically oriented contributions from all disciplines concerned with the premodern era (such as archaeology, art history, history, literary studies, musicology, rhetoric, religious studies, theology, and so on) are requested. We are looking forward to contributions which are related to the CRC 1391's approaches, which apply them exploratively, or which scrutinise them critically.

Please send your proposal for a paper in German or English of 25 minutes max., together with a short abstract (maximum 300 words), to Jan Stellmann and Daniela Wagner (jan.stellmann@uni-tuebingen.de; daniela.wagner@uni-tuebingen.de) before September 30, 2021. The conference is supposed to take place in person. The costs for travel and accommodation will be covered. If meeting in person should be impossible on the planned dates, the conference will be carried out as a virtual event. The conference languages are German and English. We plan to publish the contributions in a collective volume.