

## PhD Course "Operative Images" (Berlin, 1–3 Mar 17)

Berlin, Humboldt University, Mar 1–03, 2017

Deadline: Jan 2, 2017

Andrea Völker, Berlin

Operative Images

PhD course Course

dates: 1-3 March 2017

Venue: Berlin, Humboldt University, Department of Art and Visual History

There is much talk these days about images being performative and endowed with some kind of agency. Increasingly one is reminded that images do things. But how are we to make sense of this “doing”? Digital technologies seem to have brought along a wide range of new image practices where images take on new and more active roles, as exemplified by automated warheads, military drones, surveillance cameras, scientific and medical image-guided operations, computer games, and practices involving location-based applications like Google Street View and Pokémon Go. In these cases images do not represent reality as much as they form part of an operation; they do not present the visible as much as they guide and instruct vision and action.

Recent developments in image theory question the assumptions underpinning established representational accounts of images and seek to rethink images in dynamic and relational terms. This is the case when theorist of visual culture W.J.T. Mitchell asks “what do pictures want?,” when New Materialists speculate about the nonhuman agency of images, and when game studies scholars elaborate on image-related interactivity. The conviction that images have power is anything but new, as reflected in magical and religious traditions as well as various kinds of image prohibitions (both religious and secular) – a recent example of which is the call initiated by Le Monde and other French news channels in the aftermath of the 2016 Nice terrorist attack to avoid publishing the names and photos of terrorists. However, this example seems to address a different kind of agency than, say, the kind referred to by a 1964 article on Op Art stating that these were “pictures that attack the eye.” Are artistic images encapsulated in the white cube endowed with the same kind of agency as images used in utilitarian practices? If not, how do we distinguish between types of agency?

This PhD course explores operative images, their practices and ideas, cultural contexts, historical genealogies, and radius of action. When, where and how do images become operative?

Keynote lectures

- Horst Bredekamp (Humboldt University of Berlin)
- Adrian MacKenzie (Lancaster University)
- Martina Merz (University of Klagenfurt/Vienna)

If you would like to discuss your topic with us, please send a proposal of maximum one page to  
Andrea Völker: [operative.images.culture@hu-berlin.de](mailto:operative.images.culture@hu-berlin.de)

Deadline: 2 January 2017

ECTS: 3

#### Organizers

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#### Reference:

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