

Session at GSA 2023 (Montréal, 5–8 Oct 23)

Montréal, Canada, Oct 5–08, 2023

Deadline: Mar 1, 2023

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47th Annual Conference of the German Studies Association (GSA).

Session: 19*20: Hybrid Modernism, or the Return of the 1920s in Cultural Productions Today.

There is a discernable trend in German cultural productions of the 2020s to turn back to modernism's heydays in the 1920s and create hybrid productions that function as overlays between the past and the present. Most of them are hybrid in more than one way, however, as they not only navigate different times but also divergent media, discourses, and references. Examples include the filmic review of literary precursors such as Dominik Graf's *Fabian oder Der Gang vor die Hunde* (2021), Burhan Qurbani's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (2020), and Christian Petzold's *Transit* (2018); novels rewriting the visual arts such as Ulrike Draesner's *Schwitters* (2020), and Berit Glanz's *Pixeltänzer* (2019); and artists' take on the ways in which modernism intersected with the rise of fascism, such as Yael Bartana's *Entartete Kunst lebt* (2010) and Malka Germania (2021), Hiwa K's *View from Above* (2017), and Zeina Abirached's and Mathias Énard's *Zuflucht nehmen* (2019). As much as these works are firmly situated in the present of the 21st century, they are equally grounded in the past. The aim of this panel is to focus on this overlay and inquire about the aesthetics, politics, and mnemonics involved with a thinking of the 1920s and the 2020s as mutually constitutive, creating meanings and appearances that radiate in and out of each other indicated by the asterisk of the 19*20s as "the wildcard [that] holds the place open for thinking (from and into that position)" (Christina Sharpe).

The questions that come into view through such an approach concern the field of memory studies, targeting not just the multidirectional nature of the narratives and images put forward, but also the ways in which viewers and readers make sense of time and context through what they are being presented with. What are the markers that differentiate the past from the present, and what happens when both are present within the same frame? How does that mnemonic framing of viewing cultural productions also affect their theoretical framing, as a major reason for the current return to modernism can be found in the discourses prevalent one hundred years ago? These discourses include a radical change in perception brought on by new media and non-human, machinic forms of vision, a political radicalization generated in part by extreme social frictions, the existential threats of a pandemic, the large-scale movement of people in forced paths of migration, and a shaking of gender binaries due to the expression of queer identities. How timely (but also dated) some of the discussions of the 1920s are to this day can be heard in the podcast *Auf den Tag genau* (since 2020) that delivers a news article from one hundred years ago each day.

Before it became a trend in cultural production, Media Studies was already trying to make sense of digital culture by way of thinkers such as László Moholy-Nagy, Paul Klee, or Dziga Vertov. The panel aspires to account for these media theoretical positions both directly through a reading of their takes in light of 19*20 but also more figuratively in regard to the aesthetics of the different media at stake and their inter- and trans-media approaches. Diverging from the quintessential modernist claim of media-specificity, the works of today are hybrid positions. They return to modernism and read it against the grain, as they translate tropes and materials from one medium and time into another.

Designated to include presentations on literature, film, and the visual arts, the panel is designed as an interdisciplinary endeavor. To enable participation from different fields, presentations in English are preferable, but submissions in German will also be accepted. If participants are interested, a selection of papers may be submitted as a proposal for a special issue to a journal in German Studies or an adjacent field.

If you are interested in proposing a topic for a twenty-minute presentation, please send a 350-word abstract and a short bio to Svea Braeunert (svea.braeunert@fh-potsdam.de or sbraeunert@gmail.com) by March 1, 2023. You will be notified by March 10 whether your paper is accepted. All presenters must be active members of the GSA by March 27. Please take a look at the GSA homepage for more information on the conference and membership guidelines.

Please feel free to get in touch in case you are interested in serving as a moderator or commentator as well.

Reference:

CFP: Session at GSA 2023 (Montréal, 5-8 Oct 23). In: ArtHist.net, Jan 22, 2023 (accessed Jul 12, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/38348>>.