

Networks and Visual Seriality in Print Culture (Leuven, 29–30 Apr 24)

KU Leuven & KBR, Apr 29–30, 2024

Deadline: Nov 30, 2023

Crucifix Benoît

"Networks and Visual Seriality in Mass-Market Print Culture".

This conference seeks contributions that approach periodicals through the prism of two interrelated concepts - networks and seriality - that describe and capture relationships, connections, and dialogues amidst the vibrant diversity of mass-market print culture.

Context:

This conference is a joint event between the Royal Library of Belgium (KBR) & KU Leuven. It is the closing conference for ARTPRESSE, a Brain-be 2.0. research project offering an intermedial study of Belgian art as a networked structure as seen through the lens of the mass media magazines in the interbellum years. The corpus of digitized broad-audience illustrated periodicals (+500,000 pages) is accessible online and fully text-searchable through BelgicaPeriodicals. It is also organized alongside an exhibition on the French film-photo-novel taking place in Spring 2024 at KU Leuven Central Library, showcasing the large collection hosted by the University Special Collections. The exhibition approaches the film-photo-novel as part of mass-market periodical culture.

Argument:

Covering a period that stretches from after the First World War to the 1960s, this conference invites for new perspectives on European popular serial culture in print, its diverse forms and its media networks in the 20th century, as well as on the archival and curatorial approaches to this type of print heritage. By mass-market print culture, we refer to a broad and diverse variety of popular serial culture in print: from illustrated periodicals to almanacs, pulp book series to print ephemera, film-photo-novels to stapled leaflets. A specific attention will be given to mass-market illustrated magazines, as studied by the Artpresse digitization and research project, on the one hand, film-photo-novels and film magazines on the other hand. This conference proposes to approach this miscellaneous array through the prism of two interrelated concepts - networks and seriality - that describe and capture relationships, connections, and dialogues amidst the vibrant diversity of mass-market print culture. Taken together, defined in an open and encompassing way, these two concepts are opening new avenues for research into periodical cultures:

Networks:

Within this diversified publishing field, with print and graphic materials increasingly circulating between different formats, it becomes crucial to see this media landscape as a networked structure. Networks have been a primary lens for the Artpresse research project, which has explored the relational and intermedial dynamics between Belgian publishers, journalist-writers, photogra-

phers and graphic contributors, and the art discourses they convey (both textually and visually). Following-up on this framework, we call for new cross-disciplinary approaches to networks in popular periodicals and mass-market print culture. Because of their “in-between” position (Brake 2019: 42) and their “performative role” (Stead 2018: 12), broad-audience illustrated periodicals enable (fine) art to be promoted and even “popularized” through serialized materials, while at the same time manifesting the intellectual, social and professional relationships of their editors, and the porous boundaries between visual art, press, mass media, literature... Their visual languages are based on the serialization of heterogeneous and hybrid contents, which are also the result of cultural and media transfers. Following Evanghélia Stead’s recommendation to extend the concept of periodical networks to “the circulation of models, materials and ideas” (Stead 2018: 15), we would like to deepen the following questions related to seriality. How do periodicals visualize their own networks (through serialization)? Do serial strategies vary according to discourse/domain? How do mass-market magazines assimilate and disseminate “modernist” materials (through their texts, illustrations and layouts)? How do commercial models and artistic practices interact with editorial ambitions to constitute a viable and competitive illustrated magazine in a given time and place?

Visual Seriality:

Amidst changing formats, new media, and the continued proliferation of mass-market print, seriality propels forward this expansive logic, while also offering regularity and periodicity, providing a familiar structure to contain its sprawl (Beetham 1988; Kelleter 2017; Levay 2018; Letourneux 2014; Turner 2020). Following on endeavors to address the “unruliness of serials,” the heterogeneity of serial forms in magazines beyond narrative fiction (Turner 2014), and especially Vincent Fröhlich’s (2022) inquiry into the visual seriality of illustrated periodicals, this conference invites contributions that broadly tackle the serialization of images (and by extension, image-and-text relationships) in mass-market print culture. Fröhlich proposes an “expanded and open concept of seriality,” focused on degrees and networks of relationships between different features, grounded in Wittgenstein’s conception of family resemblances. This capacious framework invites to pay more attention to unmarked visual series, to differentiate levels and degrees of dependencies that form a “network of serial relationships” and to analyze how those connect to different loyalties as well as distinct time structures (Fröhlich 2022: 84). Such serial relationships cover a range of visual features that variously deal with image sequences, juxtapositions, echoes, both over the page or double page, within a single issue, and across the back catalog of a periodical. It also requires a particular attention to questions of layout, composition, typography, reproduction techniques, intermediality.

Overall, we welcome contributions on following topics and more:

- Theoretical and methodological takes on networks and visual seriality in periodicals
- Serial relationships between illustrations and other periodical contents
- Role of images in segmenting content and producing visually recognizable categories
- Cut-out and collectible images, made to be clipped, kept, displayed, or rearranged (scrapbooks, posters, etc.)
- Highbrow, lowbrow, middlebrow; canons, anticanons, and questions of cultural status and effects of hierarchization as they affect visual seriality
- Popularization through reproduction and serialization of fine arts in broad-audience periodicals
- Intermedial networks, relationships to other media and film in particular

- Serial media that engage with image sequences and juxtapositions: comics, photo-novels, drawn novels, etc.
- Digital Humanities approaches to networks in mass-market print culture: affordances and complexities of digitization for analyzing broad corpora; distant and computational methods for studying visual series and tracing networks
- Challenges in archiving and accessibility for popular print culture

Keynote Speakers:

Vincent Fröhlich, University of Marburg

Evanghélia Stead, Université Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines

Submitting a Proposal:

Abstracts of maximum 250 words, alongside a short biographical notice, should be sent as document files (.docx, .odt or .txt) before November 30, 2023 to benoit.crucifix@kuleuven.be and morgane.ott@uliege.be. Proposals will be anonymized and reviewed by the scientific committee. Notifications of acceptance will be sent on December 15, 2023.

Researchers at all career stages are welcome to submit abstracts. The conference will take place in person at the KU Leuven Central Library in Leuven and at the Royal Library of Belgium in Brussels. Depending on available funding, travel and accommodation costs for speakers will be (partly) covered by the organizers, with priority for early-career and non-tenured researchers.

Organizing committee:

- Jan Baetens, KU Leuven
- Julie Bawin, ULiège
- Benoît Crucifix, KBR/KU Leuven
- Michel Delville, ULiège
- Sébastien Hermans, KBR/KU Leuven
- Frédéric Lemmers, KBR/ULB
- Morgane Ott, ULiège
- Fred Truyen, KU Leuven

Scientific committee:

- Maaheen Ahmed, Ghent University
- Paul Aron, ULB
- Julie Birkholz, KBR/Ghent University
- Daniel Biltereyst, Ghent University
- Brecht Deseure, KBR/ULB
- Björn-Olav Dozo, ULiège
- Jared Gardner, The Ohio State University
- Matthieu Letourneux, Université Paris Nanterre
- Birgit Van Puymbroeck, VUB
- Marianne Van Remoortel, Ghent University

Partners:

- ARTPRESSE
- Pop Heritage Lab

- Cultural Studies Research Group

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Bibliography:

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Reference:

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