ArtHist.net

Aquatic Complexities (München, 11–12 Sep 24)

München, Sep 11–12, 2024
Deadline: Apr 12, 2024

Hanni Geiger

Aquatic complexities. Tourism, aesthetics and dis:connections.
Workshop at the Käte Hamburger Research Centre global dis:connect, LMU Munich, organised by Hanni Geiger

How we deal with water in tourism mirrors fundamental global complexities. Since modern tourism began by the end of the 19th century, architecture, design, crafts and art have avidly reflected on one of the most important resources of tourism: fresh or salt, natural or artificial (bodies of) water. The depiction of maritime sceneries, waterfalls and rivers in tourism brochures, the use of water in designing pools, spas and hotels with an ocean view or near the beach is connected to the tense relationship of global entanglements and disentanglements. When dealing with water, the sea and rain – referents of the Latin 'aqua' – these works point to more than cultural exchange and preservation, the development of remote areas spurred by water-based tourism, economic growth and how employment in tourism prevents the migration of local population. The pieces also relate to interruptions, invisibilities and absences, such as ecological devastation due to the over-exploitation of water for cleaning, irrigating golf courses and cooling tourism facilities; drought and increasing water costs; the rising sea level and the disappearance of many destinations, environments and cultures; beaches as sites of social inclusion and exclusion; labour migration; and the conflicts between local communities and national and global power structures.

In this workshop, we will develop a dis:connective understanding of globalisation that explores the simultaneity and mutuality of connections and non-connections as manifested in aesthetic creations that deal with tourism and its complex relationship to water. Historical and contemporary visual works that treat water as a motif, material, image, idea, resource, a means, a route, a site, a scenery and an environment can illuminate the ubiquitous but overshadowed or undocumented interdependencies of global entanglements and disentanglements in tourism. The works could help reinterrogate the sensorial aspect underlying tourism design and the connections it generates between the mediated destinations and the consumer with regard to dis:connectivities. Following the etymology of aesthetics (from 'aisthánomai': 'I perceive, sense, learn') and its philosophical ties to A. G. Baumgarten (1750), the pieces not only visualise the often-obscure interdependencies but also engender a sensory and cognitive understanding of dis:connections tied to the aquatic, fostering alternative and non-hegemonic approaches to globalisation research from the perspectives of the humanities and the arts.

Questions arise, such as: how do aesthetic works reflect and mediate ambivalent global processes in relation to water and tourism? What genres, media, techniques, motifs and narratives reveal,

conceal or foster less obvious complex interdependencies? What insights into globalisation, society, and the various creative disciplines emerge in pieces understood as aestheticized – visually and sensorily conveyed – dis:connections relative to water? And finally, can the aesthetic objects and environments surrounding water-based tourism challenge or shape global relationships?

Case studies could include, for example, photographs that reveal the glocal character of maritime holiday paradises in postcards and social media, design that critically reflects the constructedness and exclusivity of beaches, vernacular artisanal objects made from tourist trash washed up on beaches and architecture that sustainably reconnects with nature through innovative tourism infrastructures.

The workshop will bring together thinkers, curators and practitioners from art, design and architecture (history), craft (studies), cultural studies, environmental humanities and related disciplines working on different regions and past, present and future aspects to discuss the many ways in which aesthetic creations surrounding water-based tourism visually reflect and eventually influence global dis:connections.

Potential topics could be (but are not limited to):
- Cultural tourist infrastructures (museums, galleries) and their relation to the sea
- Waterways in arts: development of marginalised areas and making marginalised groups 'available' to tourists (islands, remote coastal areas, the relation of hotspots and backwaters)
- Water and gendered connections and non-connections in tourism
- Water (and/or the coast) as a site/means of inclusion and exclusion, (im)mobility, conflicts and subversive forces related to tourism
- Mutually distorting gazes among tourists and the inhabitants of maritime destinations: stereotypes, imaginaries, expectations, categories, terms
- Methods to explore aquatic complexities tied to tourism
- Environmental challenges and ecological/cultural dis:connections
- Aquatic routes as nodes of tourism and migration
- Cultural and stylistic homogenisation/particularisms/glocalisation facing the maritime
- Designed landscapes and (interrupted, absent) connections: beaches, paths, streets and topographies that relate to water
- (Invisible) water pollution: liquid waste/wastewater from restaurants, ships, boats and the dis:-connections it fosters
- Speculative design approaches on the future of aquatic tourism based on ecocriticism, the concepts of the aquatocene and the hydrocene, AI and others

Proposals should include a short CV, a provisional title and an abstract of no more than 300 words. Please send these documents in a single PDF file to Hanni.Geiger@lmu.de by 12 April 2024.

The workshop will take place on site at the Käte Hamburger Research Centre global dis:connect at the LMU Munich. Accommodation in Munich and meals during the workshop will be provided, and some support for travel may be available.

Sponsored by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and co-funded by the European Union

Contact Information: Hanni.Geiger@lmu.de