

Queer Tosquelles 2024 (Köln, 21–22 Jun 24)

Kunsthochschule für Medien Köln, Aula, Filzengraben 2, 50676 Köln, Jun 21–22, 2024

Anna Bromley

QUEER TOSQUELLES will engage with the history of revolutionary, anti-fascist psychiatric practices and their involvement in ways of fleeing and resisting since the 1920s in Spain, France, Italy, and Germany.

The international conference will focus on the practices of Catalan/French psychiatrist François Tosquelles (1912–1994), who influenced Félix Guattari, Frantz Fanon and many others – from institutional analysis to political philosophy.

Tosquelles is still largely unknown in Germany. For some years now, however, a lively reception has been taking place in the art field, especially in Spain and France, with large archival and research exhibitions, catalogues and films.

The conference at the KHM will bring together researchers and artists working on the genealogies of Tosquelles's manifold surrounds and exploring the potentials of his practice today. Here, queerness emerges in many facets: through Tosquelles's insistence on the deconstruction of the nuclear family and the importance of other forms of making kin, through the various rhythms of vagabonding, through the weird, the strange, the non-sensical and the non-normalized, through a political philosophy of multiplicity, through a queering practice that traverses all non-identitarian forms of life.

With Janna Graham, Carles Guerra, Isabell Lorey, Angela Melitopoulos, Stefan Nowotny, Anne Querrien, Gerald Raunig, Wanderley Santos, Francesco Salvini, Henning Schmidgen, Elena Vogman.

Organized by Isabell Lorey, Anna Bromley, Konstantin Butz, Lilian Haberer, Katrin M. Kämpf, Mary Mikaelyan, Maren Mildner, Stefan Nowotny, Heidi Pfohl

In cooperation with the European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies (eipcp)

Free entrance. In English - no online attendance or livestream available.

Program

Friday – June 21

10:30 START

Welcoming by Mathias Antlfinger (Rector of the KHM), Lilian Haberer (Department Speaker of Art

and Media Studies / KHM), Katrin M. Kämpf (Queer Studies / KHM),

Isabell Lorey

Ergotherapy, Vagabondage, and Instituent Care

In his revolutionary psychiatric practice, Francesc Tosquelles insists that institutions cannot care unless everyone cares for the institution. In the process of instituting, instituent care erodes the walls of the institution, spreads to the surroundings and allows itself to be transversally permeated. As a form of vagabondage, it remains unfamiliar and strange and allies itself with resistance. One of the many inspirations for these practices came from the reformatory psychiatric ergotherapy of Hermann Simon, director of the psychiatric hospital in Gütersloh, North Rhine-Westphalia, who increasingly advocated biologicistic and social Darwinist positions at the end of the 1920s. Tosquelles hijacked Simon's reformist practices to make revolutionary use of them.

Angela Melitopoulos

Déconnage (Lecture and Screening)

In its original form, Déconnage is a multi-screen video installation with an archive table and a selection of books (2012, 100 min, Color). Déconnage is part of Melitopoulos's audiovisual research, in collaboration with Maurizio Lazzarato, about Félix Guattari and the concept of machinic animism. This installation and video about the Catalan, anarcho-sindicalist psychiatrist and resistance fighter Francesc Tosquelles was conceived as an interlinked archival survey in experimental audiovisual form. It narrates the beginnings of the institutional psychotherapy invented in the psychiatric asylum of Saint-Alban-sur-Limagnole in the Lozère department in southern France during the Second World War.

14:00 – 15:00 BREAK

Carles Guerra

Tosquelles and the Delusional Narrator

Francesc Tosquelles is a truly fascinating storyteller. Through the many interviews he gave during his lifetime, he emerges as a pragmatic character. Sometimes facing catastrophe or otherwise diffuse humanitarian crises. So much so that, by the end of his life, the several interviewers he attracted were amazed by his epic, yet farcical tone. His account of his own life often challenges factual and archival evidence. At stake here is his own right to be a delusional narrator.

Stefan Nowotny

Living through the End of the World (as We Know It)

The question of catastrophic experience – an experience of 'the end of the world' – constitutes the subject of Tosquelles's medical thesis *Le vécu de la fin du monde dans la folie*, submitted and defended in 1948. In the preface to its delayed publication in 1986, Tosquelles leaves no doubt that, while the thesis presented itself as a clinical account of such experiences 'in madness', he had written it under the impression of a madness inseparable from the dictates of normality: the madness of the Spanish Civil War and of World War II, which had indeed ended the worlds and lives of so many. Against this backdrop, I would firstly like to examine the intertwinement of clinical, philosophical and sociopolitical analyses in Tosquelles's thesis and its implications for what would come to be termed institutional psychotherapy or institutional analysis. Secondly, I would like to consider the existential motif of an experienced 'end of the world' with a view to the desiring surges traversing it, but also to a radical multiplicity of experiences that challenges assump-

tions about the 'we' underpinning what is commonly perceived as a world.

17:00 – 17:30 BREAK

Anne Querrien

Tosquelles: la folie citoyenne / Foolishness and Citizenship

Foolishness creates queer subjectivities, following as many paths as there are foolish persons. Foolishness, as a continuous variation on a given path, is blocked by repression or by the inability of the body to follow the mind.

Institutional psychotherapy creates spaces in which fools can express themselves by theater and can be political subjects, ordinary persons. Can the democratic spaces of the clinics be extended to other parts of society, as Guattari tried? Is this extension a kind of intersectionality, as in the local dispute between Tosquelles and Fanon?

18:30 END OF FIRST DAY

Saturday – June 22

10:30 START

Henning Schmidgen

Tosquelles and Canguilhem: A Pathbreaking Encounter

In the summer of 1944, philosopher Georges Canguilhem spent several weeks hiding and caring for wounded patients in the psychiatric clinic of Saint-Alban as a 'resistance-physician'. During this time, Canguilhem took part in the clinical work carried out at Saint-Alban, among other things by examining and observing the patient 'Mme. C...'. In return, as it were, Tosquelles, Bonnafé and others read and discussed the medical thesis that Canguilhem had defended at the Université de Strasbourg in 1943, the famous Essay on Some Problems Concerning the Normal and the Pathological. My paper explores the convergences between the psychological views of Canguilhem and Tosquelles. It focuses on questions concerning the status of mental illness (and queerness) and the 'normativity', i.e., the autonomy, of organic individuals.

Elena Vogman

Three Billion Perverts: Tosquelles and the Politics of the Body

In his research on 'extensive psychiatry' and myokinesis with Mira i Lopez in Catalonia, and then on his flight from the Franco regime to France via the concentration camp Septfonds, Tosquelles conceived of the human body as perpetually moving— 'always a migrant'. Displacement, foreignness, madness became for him essential features of being human. They constituted the point of departure not only for the geo-psychiatric, aesthetic, and environmental approach to psychiatric care at Saint-Alban, but also for 'the politics of the body' advanced within the framework of 'institutional analysis' at La Borde clinic. This presentation focuses on the censored issue of the journal Recherches, founded by CERFI and directed by Félix Guattari, with the title 'Three Billion Perverts. The Big Encyclopedia of Homosexualities' (1973). Following Foucault, the talk analyses in the anonymous and collective contributions to this issue the political and aesthetic means of regaining 'possession of [one's] own body, and of the bodies of others [...] for purposes other than [their] use as a workforce'.

12:30 – 13:00 BREAK

Janna Graham and Wanderley Santos

'Death' in the gaps: Pedagogies of Individualisation and Dis-alienation in London Urban Secondary schools

This presentation will draw from contemporary scenes in urban secondary schools in London where racialised students – whether directed towards Ivy League universities or barista training programmes – are routinely moulded into individuals via strategies as divergent as attachment therapy, behavioural psychology and corporate workplace cosplay. Where Tosquelles's analysis of concentrationist tendencies drew from the spaces of the clinic and the camp, in this presentation we will look at the production of the individual through colonial and neoliberal practices of subjectivation in schools, which, though sometimes adopting the forms used by Tosquelles and others (the team, the newspaper, the Club), do so within an apparatus of social death that renders the life and practice of groups impossible. Working at the meeting places between Fanon and Tosquelles we will test possibilities for how, within these contexts, we might produce 'transfential constellations', processes that – beyond the ideal of pure horizontality – generate micro-revolutions of the individual, multiple expressions of singularity and transversal relations in a collective space.

14:15 – 15:30 BREAK

Francesco Salvini

Maquis in the Institutions

In 1987, a group of workers from Trieste met Francesc Tosquelles, a by now famous gathering recorded by Maurizio Costantino and Giovanna Gallio in *La scuola di libertà* (The School of Freedom). What emerges, as in other conversations of Tosquelles, is a style of research and invention that advances by association and displacement, in what Francesc Tosquelles calls *déconnage*. The point of arrival of the conversation is the common bet on a 'maquis' practice in the institutions. Starting from the word maquis, its polyvalence, its associations, its displacements we will propose a series of critical reflections on the complex and open relationship between Tosquelles's practice and theory and the Basaglian experience in Trieste.

Gerald Raunig

Molecular Psycho-Breakdown-Services

In my lecture, I will focus less on the individual Francesc Tosquelles, but rather on the queer swarm, the dividual Tosquelles, in historical relations and fictional encounters. And if it proves aesthetically probable, this swarm will also meet Harry Spiegel and Irene Goldin, in breakdown services for the International Brigades, on flights over the Pyrenees or in disguises for the French Resistance. And their resistance will never have been individual, straightened and upright, but breaking up and building down, dissemblage, dividual, queer.

18:00 END

Reference:

CONF: Queer Tosquelles 2024 (Köln, 21-22 Jun 24). In: Arthist.net, Jun 17, 2024 (accessed Jan 31, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/42086>>.