Realisms of Relations: Ecologies of Art in the Aftermath of Modernity (Frankfurt/Oder, 9-10 May 25)

Europa-Universität Viadrina Frankfurt/Oder, Logenstraße 11, 15230 Frankfurt/Oder, Logensaal im Logenhaus, May 9–10, 2025

André Rottmann

If the term “ecology” historically designated the relations of an organism to its organic and inorganic environment, it would seem evident that it today has evolved, way beyond the sciences, to signal an ever-expanding global field of factors and forces at the intersections of nature and technology, politics and economies, media and aesthetics.

Throughout the humanities, considerations of the concept’s reach and impact abound from various vantage points—from charting the “critical zones” of our “New Climate Regime” (in the writings of the late Bruno Latour), to considerations of the changed “Climate of History” (in the recent work of Dipesh Chakrabrty) to proposals for interspecies companionship (put forward by Donna Haraway and Anna L. Tsing) and analytics of a media-saturated “general ecology” beyond nature (mapped by Erich Hörl, among others).

The visual arts obviously are not exempt from the current ecological paradigm’s far-reaching repercussions. Quite to the contrary, considerations of the aesthetic play a pivotal and prominent role across a host of disciplines concerned with navigating the new terrain of multiple ecologies and the “realism of relations” (Hörl) propelling them: By consequence, both the histories of landscape painting and Land Art, of system aesthetics and site-specificity concomitant with key terms such as object and context, space and site, authorship and agency are in process of being reformulated from an expanded environmental perspective informed by debates around the notion of “Anthropocene”, the rise of Artificial Intelligence and other concatenations of living organisms and technological entities in milieus of cohabitation and interdependence in digital culture.

Bringing together contributions from art history and philosophy, this international conference aims to address to role of art and aesthetic theory in rethinking the realisms of ecologies. In doing so, it poses and pursues the question in how far contemporary confrontations with ecological thought might find a nexus and corrective in the epistemic, perceptual and critical capacities of art in the aftermath of modernity.

Conference schedule:

Friday, 9 May 2025

13.00- 13.15

André Rottmann (European University Viadrina Frankfurt/Oder):
Welcome Address and Introduction

13.15-14.15
Ursula Ströbele (Hochschule für Bildende Künste Braunschweig):
Non-Human Living Sculptures since the 1960s. Animals and Plants in Artistic Habitats

14.15-15.15
Julia Gelshorn (Université de Fribourg):
Whose Intelligence? Realisms of Contact, Consumption and Connection

Coffee Break

15.30-16.30
Christopher Williams-Wynn (Freie Universität Berlin):
Political Ecology from the South: Negotiating Colonial Legacies at the Center for Art and Communication

16.30-17.30
Sebastian Egenhofer (Universität Wien):
Sculpture and the Un-Conditioning of Architecture

Appetizers and Drinks

18.00-19.00
Keynote Lecture (in cooperation with the Institute for European Studies (IFES) – Human & Planet Talk Series)

Juliane Rebentisch (Hochschule für bildende Künste Hamburg / Princeton University):
The Reality of Ghosts: Haunted Landscapes in the Anthropocene

Saturday, 10 May 2025

10.00-11.00
Ina Blom (University of Oslo / University of Chicago):
Photography's Filter Ecologies (Absconding from the Index)

11.00-12.00
Toni Hildebrandt (Universität Bern):
The Ecological Vocative: Art and Politics after Fukushima

Lunch Break

13.00-14.00
Pierre Wat (Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne/ European University Viadrina Frankfurt/Oder):
Landscapes of the Anthropocene?

14.00-15.00
Kerstin Stakemeier (Akademie der Bildenden Künste Nürnberg):

The Deadly Narcis and his Modern Nature

Coffee Break

15.30-16.00
Concluding Session

The event is organized by the Professorship for Theories of Arts and Media at the European-University Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder). Additional funding was generously provided by the Viadrina Center for Graduate Studies (VCGS) and the Institute for European Studies (IFES).

Convener:
André Rottmann

Speakers:
Ina Blom, Sebastian Egenhofer, Julia Gelshorn, Toni Hildebrandt, Juliane Rebentisch, Kerstin Stakemeier, Ursula Ströbele, Pierre Wat and Christopher Williams-Wynn

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