DEBT. Unsettling Matters of Interest (Bremen, 22-23 May 25)

Universität Bremen/GAK Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst Bremen, May 22–23, 2025

Susanne Huber

The renewed prevalence of debt in political discourse accounts to significant shifts in global power dynamics and environmental conditions, while regimes of compulsory growth claim borrowed funds as a prerequisite for sustained production in postindustrial societies. This indicates an extension, if not an escalation, of the analogy between artistic practice and a financialized present outlined by Marina Vishmidt and others in the notion of speculation.

Following Leigh Claire LaBerge's proposition that there is "no more abstraction," the symposium and group exhibition shift the perspective to a transdisciplinary exploration of how liabilities materialize in identities and representations, how they operate in transtemporal geographies, and by which media and apparatuses of social differentiation.

"Bodies," "Ecologies," and "Infrastructures" provides instances for situated analyses of how property, value, and interest as structures of both debt and art since the becoming of modernity unfold in a speculative contemporary. Instead of explanatory containment, the symposium aims to contribute to an extended understanding of debt as a formative framework of computational actualities.

Program:

Thursday, 22.05.2025

7 pm
Isabell Lorey (Cologne):
Prekarisierung, Sorge und queere Schulden – Wie wir Demokratie neu denken können / Precarization, Care, and Queer Debt – How to Rethink Democracy

Eröffnungsvortrag / Opening Lecture
(deutsch / simultaneous interpretation to english)

Drinks and Communal Dinner

Friday, 23.05.2025

10 am–12:30 pm
Welcome and Introduction
Susanne Huber (Bremen)

PROPERTY: Corporeal Charge and Embodied Unownership
Moderatior: Susanne Huber

Felix Krämer (Erfurt):
Debt's Debt: A Body History of Inequality after the End of Slavery to the Present in the United States
Luce deLire (Berlin):
The Birth of Debt from the Nature of Value – and a trans lesbian response

Too Big To Fail, Too Small To Notice
Performance by Toon Fibbe (Rotterdam)

Lunch break

1:30 pm–3:30 pm
VALUE: Ecologies in Measure and Scale
Moderator: Friederike Nastold

Vasna Ramasar (Lund):
The Past is in Front of You: Thinking Climate Justice through Debt
Fritz-Julius Grafe (Zurich):
Urban Visions of Global Climate Finance: Indian cities and the making of Groy

Coffee break

3:45 pm–5:45 pm
INTEREST: Infrastructures of Expansion
Moderator: Daniel Berndt

Ibrahim Kombarji (New York/Beirut):
Slicing the Cake: On Lebanon's Economy of Exhaustion (digital)
Bassam El Baroni (Espoo):
Strange Progress: Financial Temporality and the Problem of Indifference

Break

6 pm–8 pm
ACTIVISM: Connectivity and Collectivity
Moderator: Annette Hans

Lucía Cavallero (Buenos Aires):
Transfeminist Struggles against Financial Authoritarianism (digital)
Christoph Sorg (Berlin):
"You are not a loan" – The history and present of debt abolitionist movements

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The symposium is free and open to the public. Registration is not required. For further information please follow this link: https://gak-bremen.de/25v_debt_symposium_de/

Concept and organization:
Susanne Huber (Universität Bremen) and Annette Hans, GAK Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst Bremen

Venue:
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