

ERC Project *Poetry in the Digital Age*

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Call for Papers
Conference: “Poetry and Contemporary Visual Culture”
19-21 May 2022
Universität Hamburg

We are delighted to announce that the ERC project “Poetry in the Digital Age” will hold its first **international and interdisciplinary conference** on the topic of “Poetry and Contemporary Visual Culture”. The research project is situated between literary, cultural and interart studies. It will develop tools to analyze today’s multifaceted poetry formats, ranging from pop culture to works of ‘high’ art, by scrutinizing their forms and sites of presentation and performance, ranging from the stage to social media, from the written page to the urban space. Research will be divided into three main areas, focusing on (1) poetry and performance, (2) poetry and music, and (3) poetry and visual culture. The latter research field will be the focus of this conference.

Since the interrelated ‘pictorial’ and ‘digital turns’ (cf. Mitchell 2008; Benthien/Weingart 2014), the relationship between poetry and visual culture has yet again intensified and new forms of poetry are thus manifest on multiple levels and in various media formats (cf. Schäfer 2015). Multimodal or intermedial poetic forms range from image-script, image-hypertext to image-sound combinations (cf. Kress/van Leeuwen 2010; Simanowski 2011). New aesthetic dimensions of the lyric are visible in remediated formats, in programmed kinetic and iconic script in code poetry, in social media poetry (cf. Bolter/Grusin 2001; Pâquet 2019; Simanowski 2005), and possibly in current unclassified, yet undiscovered forms. The aesthetic entanglement between poetry and visual culture is also detectable in the relation of poetry and film, i.e., in highly-structured ‘video poems’ (cf. Benthien/Lau/Marxsen 2019; Orphal 2014). Extending beyond poetry on the screen and on the internet, poetry in installations and in exhibitions, in book publications, and in the form of drawings offers another kind of artistic appeal in the digital age. The lyric in the visual arts as well as visuality within individual poems also form part of the ‘poetry and contemporary visual culture’-complex.

Novel poetry formats with their specific materiality and mediality not only result in an altered scripturality and literality but they also contribute to a reevaluation of reading and writing practices in digital spaces. Digital poetry also deconstructs and challenges concepts of authorship with regard to cyborg poetry and AI technology within the machine-man-complex (cf. Funkhouser 2007; Suter 2005; Wardrip-Fruin 2007). Interactive poetry, adaptations of concrete poetry, and poetry installations exhibit another essential quality of poetry in the visual realm, namely temporality and ephemerality. Hence, disappearing poems and performative data enactments that invite readers to engage, display notions of processuality and processing. Transformation, for example of bits and bytes into linguistic and visual signs, is moreover a crucial aspect that needs to be scrutinized (cf. Hayles 2006; Kittler 2002; Simanowski 2012). While poets turn into “poet-programmers” (Funkhouser 2007: 330), interaction can transform readers of poetry into “producers” (Bruns 2008: 21). The boundaries of reading, seeing, and using/interacting blur, consequently resulting in altered perception modes. ‘Readers’ likewise engage with the poems as with each other, thus, establishing online communities around sociopolitical agendas and participatory cultures (cf. Jenkins 2009).

These phenomena concerning the interrelations of image, text, and language as well as changes in production and reception practices are thus highlighted in current poetic formats. In doing so, they reflect on the (hidden) functions and the ubiquitous use of digital media. We therefore claim that poetry in the digital age holds a considerable potential for a ‘visual literacy’ as well as a ‘digital literacy’ (cf. Flusser 1997; Gil 2014; Simanowski 2011). Accordingly, we pose the question of how contemporary poetry can contribute to visual culture and media studies, thereby to a ‘postdigital’ media criticism (cf. Schmitt 2021; Stiegler 2014). To investigate the outlined questions and the poetic phenomena ranging from popular culture to highly artistic endeavors, the conference “Poetry and Contemporary Visual Culture” will be held by the same-titled subproject of the interdisciplinary ERC project “Poetry in the Digital Age”.

We welcome interdisciplinary contributions **in English and German** from the fields of visual culture studies, art history, film and media studies, among others, and invite proposals from the following areas of inquiry, particularly on topics no. 1 and 2:

1. Visual Studies and Pop Culture in Poetry Research
2. ‘Poetic Images’ – The Lyric in the Visual Arts and the Figurative in Book Poetry
3. Aesthetics of Script and Images in (Digital) Poetry and Poetry Films
4. Transformations and (Dis)Appearances: Concepts of Process/ing/uality in Digital Poetry
5. Poetic Reading and Writing Practices in Digital Media
6. Modes of Interaction and Perception in Contemporary Visual Poetry
7. Making Visible – Poetry, Protest, Politics, and Participatory Culture

Please submit your abstracts (350 words) and a short bio-bibliographical note (150 words) to Dr. Wiebke Vorrath (wiebke.vorrath@uni-hamburg.de) and Magdalena Korecka, M. A. (magdalena.korecka@uni-hamburg.de) by **August 31, 2021**. The selected proposals will be presented in

a panel format (30-minute presentation plus discussion). The papers and conference results will be published in an edited volume.

For further information about the ERC research project “Poetry in the Digital Age” see: <https://www.poetry-digital-age.uni-hamburg.de/en.html>

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