

# ***COMPARED TO WHAT?***

*On the Relation Between Normativity and Subversion in Pop Cultural Contexts*

January 29 -31, 2015

Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, Vienna (AT)

With Hans-Christian Dany, Diedrich Diederichsen, among others.

## **CALL FOR PAPERS**

Questions regarding the currency and relevance of the concept of subversion in contemporary pop are at the center of the 7th annual conference of the "Popular Culture and Media" division within the German Association for Media Studies (GfM). If we are to follow the diagnosis that subculture, negation, dissidence and autonomy were once significant reference figures for a pop discourse that currently appears to be largely void of any political brisance, then the question of the possibilities and limits of subversion for pop culture is all the more urgent. On the one hand, the increasing commodification of deviant tendencies under capitalist conditions seems to be making the concept of subversion obsolete as a critical category of popular cultures. On the other hand, pop's supposedly thorough integration of calculated individual irritations suggests a restoration of the anti-totalitarian tendencies of the concept of subversion. The fact that a critique of the logic of this development in turn establishes an order that stabilizes an alternative in relation to this logic appears at once to be an opportunity and a problem.

In an attempt to mediate between various approaches to the problem of a subverted norm on the one hand and normalized subversion on the other, the conference strives for an entanglement of social, political, aesthetic and economic perspectives on popular cultures and their subverting potential. The goal of the conference is to debate the following questions in a multi-disciplinary manner: what makes up the subversive power of contemporary popular cultures? Which normative variable is used to legitimize subversion for pop culture? What are the subject, object and forms of subversion? What understanding of difference does subversion imply? And not least: what is the relation of pop cultural subversion to the political and to politics?

Against the backdrop of these questions, the conference is seeking contributions that examine, for example, the history of subversion in pop, queer-feminist and/or

postcolonial approaches to popular cultures, or pose questions regarding theoretical aspects of democracy, the cultural industry and networks within pop culture. Contributions interpreting the pop cultural implications of the Occupy movement or of the Arab Spring are just as welcome, as well as those seeking to shed light on pop economies, politics and aesthetics in regards to the above-mentioned dialectic of normativity and subversion.

## **PROPOSALS**

The "Popular Culture and Media" division's annual conference understands itself as interdisciplinary and is open for researchers from all disciplines dealing with pop and popular cultural phenomena. Theoretical, empirical, historical and critical projects are equally welcome. Membership in the division or the GfM is not a prerequisite for participation. The "Popular Culture and Media" division seeks to create an internationally oriented exchange and invites proposals for **15-20 minute** long lectures in **German or English**. Please send abstracts of **no more than 300 words** as well as a **short bio (max. 150 words) by September 1, 2014** to:

[proposals@popkongress.de](mailto:proposals@popkongress.de)

## **SPECIAL FORMAT RESEARCH WORKSHOP on January 30, 2015**

On **January 30, 2015**, the division will offer a research workshop for doctoral candidates and students from all disciplines as an integral component of the conference. The participants will have the possibility to present their research papers in the workshop and to address the expert panel of the division with concrete questions and problems. The workshop will focus on the specific challenges that arise during the execution of a research paper and will thematize open questions, as well as theoretical, methodological and/or conceptual challenges. The main goal is a problem-oriented, constructive, collegial and solution-oriented exchange about specific problems in the work-in-progress projects that are presented. In order to give this exchange more space than is commonly possible in lecture and discussion formats, the workshop will be structured in two phases:

**Phase 1:** 10-15 minute problem-oriented lectures by the workshop participants

**Phase 2:** Specific exchange in open group talks about the themes, questions, challenges and problems mentioned in the lectures.

Research papers from bachelor theses to dissertations are welcome. The **10-15 minute** presentations can be held in **German or English**. Those interested in presenting their work in the research workshop can send an **abstract (max. 350 words)** as well as a **brief explanation on the state of their work by December 1, 2014** to [forschungsworkshop@popkongress.de](mailto:forschungsworkshop@popkongress.de)

(Organization: Mario Anastasiadis and Katja Kaufmann)

The research workshop is a basic offer from the "Popular Culture and Media" division. Contributions are thus explicitly not tied to the conference theme but can come from the entire spectrum of media and popular culture. The participation in the research workshop is free of charge and irrespective of a participation in the pop congress. We do, however, recommend participating in the congress, with regards to the idea of networking.

#### **ORGANIZATION TEAM POP CONGRESS 2015**

Tobias Gerber and Katharina Hausladen

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The annual conference will be hosted by the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna.

