



Visual Cultures – Transatlantic Perspectives

Munich, 2 - 4 July 2009

Abstracts & Bios

A conference organized by the
Bavarian American Academy

Program and Contents

Thursday, 02 July, 19.00 | KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Martin Jay: Scopic Regimes of Modernity Revisited2

Friday, 03 July, 9.30 |

PANEL I: Visualizing Democratic Legitimacy and Authority

Mark Thistlethwaite: The Face of Nation: George Washington's Image and American Identity2

Wolfram Pyta: A Failure of Symbolizing Democracy: The Case of the German Weimarer Republik3

Friday, 03 July, 11.30 |

PANEL II: Visual Culture and the Representation of Race and Ethnicity

Shawn Michelle Smith: Imag(in)ing Race and Nation: Augustus Washington and John Brown.....3

Astrid Böger: Performances of Racial and Ethnic Otherness at the early American World's Fairs.....4

Friday, 03 July, 15.00 |

PANEL III: Gender and Sexuality in Post/Modern Image Culture

Robin Blaetz: Home Movies: Framing the Domestic Sphere in Experimental Cinema4

Klaus Theweleit: San Francisco Underground Comix: 'America's only Real Revolution in the 20th Century'5

Friday, 03 July, 17.00 |

PANEL IV: Visuality and the News

Michael S. Griffin: Images from Nowhere: Visuality and News in 21st Century Media5

Caja Thimm: Visual Dynamics in Politics – The US Election 20086

Saturday, 04 July, 9.30 |

PANEL V: History and Visual Sites of Memory

Sarah J. Purcell: Seeing Martyrdom: Revolutionary Memory at the Outset of the U.S. Civil War7

Birgit Spengler: Medical Gazes, Gender, and the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing7

Saturday, 04 July, 11.30 |

PANEL VI: Visual Culture in Geography

Michael Conzen: Cartography as Conquest: Visualizing the American West through Maps in the Era of National Expansion.....8

Julia Lossau: Geography, Art and the Visual.....8

Thursday, 02 July, 19.00 | KEYNOTE ADDRESS**Martin Jay*****Scopic Regimes of Modernity Revisited***

Martin Jay is Sidney Hellman Ehrman Professor of History at the University of California, Berkeley. Among his works are *The Dialectical Imagination* (1973 and 1996); *Marxism and Totality* (1984); *Adorno* (1984); *Permanent Exiles* (1985); *Fin-de-Siècle Socialism* (1989); *Force Fields* (1993); *Downcast Eyes* (1993); *Cultural Semantics* (1998); *Refractions of Violence* (2003), and *Songs of Experience* (2004). He is currently completing a book on lying in politics.

Abstract

Written more than two decades ago, my essay “Scopic Regimes of Modernity” has enjoyed a surprising success as a stimulant to a wide variety of efforts in visual culture studies. It developed three ideal types called “Cartesian perspectivalism,” “the art of describing” and “baroque reason.” Examining the criticisms made of the original essay as well as the new scopic regimes posited since on both macro and micro levels, I attempt now to analyze the underlying assumptions behind the category and probe its strengths and weaknesses.

Friday, 03 July, 9.30 | PANEL I**Visualizing Democratic Legitimacy and Authority****Chair: Volker Depkat**

Volker Depkat is a trained historian and Professor of American Studies at the University of Regensburg. He studied history, English and German at the universities of Bonn, Eugene, Oregon and Göttingen, where he completed his PhD with the book *Amerikabilder in politischen Diskursen. Deutsche Zeitschriften, 1789-1830*, (1998). After completing his PhD he did postdoctoral work at the universities of Bielefeld, Greifswald and Berlin, where he held a position at the John-F.-Kennedy Institute for North American Studies. His habilitation dealt with autobiographies of twentieth-century German politicians and was published as *Lebenswenden und Zeitenwenden. Deutsche Politiker und die Erfahrungen des 20. Jahrhunderts* (2007). His latest book is a history of North America in continental perspective.

Mark Thistlethwaite***The Face of Nation: George Washington's Image and American Identity***

Mark Thistlethwaite is professor and holder of the Kay & Velma Kimbell Chair of Art History at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, Texas. He has authored numerous books and essays on American history painting and George Washington imagery.

Abstract

More than any other event or person, George Washington, through innumerable visual images produced during his lifetime and after, came to symbolize the new republic. Functioning as an American icon, Washington's image reinforced and perpetuated values, ideals and a sense of history essential to national legitimacy. This presentation examines how this successful visualization of nationhood occurred.

Wolfram Pyta***A Failure of Symbolizing Democracy: The Case of the German Weimarer Republik***

Wolfram Pyta has studied history, philosophy, and political science at the universities of Bonn and Cologne. After having gained his doctoral degree in 1987, he became assistant professor in Cologne and junior fellow of the “Historisches Kolleg” in Munich. In 1999 he became professor and managing director of the Department of Modern History in the Historical Institute of the University of Stuttgart.

Abstract

The failure of the Weimarer Republik was rightly attributed in historical research to a range of political causes. Though, it wasn't accentuated enough, that the Weimarer Republik also collapsed due to the fact that it failed to transfer the basic idea of the “Volksstaat” in an adequate political symbolism. This was mainly due to the fact, that the perception of “Volksgemeinschaft” presented an overpowering political rivalry, which was significantly more symbolic and favoured a leadership personality born of the WWII experience over the type of parliamentary politician.

Friday, 03 July, 11.30 | PANEL II**Visual Culture and the Representation of Race and Ethnicity****Chair: Christof Decker**

Christof Decker received his PhD in 1994 from the Free University Berlin with a dissertation on American documentary film. His habilitation (2002) addressed the aesthetics and cultural functions of the social melodrama in American literature and film. He has taught at the Free University Berlin, the University of Marburg and was Honorary Fellow at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is Associate Professor in the Department of English and American Studies at the University of Munich (LMU) and has published on film, literary and cultural history, and the history of visual culture.

Shawn Michelle Smith***Imag(in)ing Race and Nation: Augustus Washington and John Brown***

Shawn Michelle Smith is Associate Professor of Visual and Critical Studies at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She writes about the history and theory of photography, and race and gender in visual culture, and is the author of *American Archives: Gender, Race, and Class in Visual Culture* (1999), *Photography on the Color Line: W. E. B. Du Bois, Race, and Visual Culture* (2004), and co-author, with Dora Apel, of *Lynching Photographs* (2007). She is also a visual artist and has exhibited her photo-based artwork in a number of venues throughout the United States.

Abstract

In 1846 the paths of two resolute anti-slavery activists, Augustus Washington and John Brown, crossed momentarily in Washington's daguerrean studio, and the trace of their meeting was recorded in Washington's striking portrait of Brown. Years after this encounter, both men renounced the nation of their births, condemning and refusing the persistence of slavery in the United States. Washington established himself as an important figure in the African American colony of Liberia, and Brown led his famous raid on Harper's Ferry. This paper traces the extraordinary trajectories of these two men through the images they made and inspired, and argues that these images make visible important contests over the terms of race and national belonging in the 19th century.

Astrid Böger***Performances of Racial and Ethnic Otherness at the early American World's Fairs***

Astrid Böger studied in Bremen, Düsseldorf, and at Duke University, and received both her M.A. and PhD degrees from Düsseldorf University. Her dissertation focuses on the documentary aesthetic of the New Deal (2001), while her latest book (to be published 2009) explores the early American world's fairs as sites of nation formation. After working in the Netherlands for several years, Böger has recently accepted a professorship at the University of Hamburg, where she teaches American literature and culture.

Abstract

America staged several turn-of-the-century world's fairs (Chicago 1893; Buffalo 1901; St. Louis 1904) whose ambitious aim was to project impressive spectacles of a racially mixed, albeit predominantly "white" and above all hegemonic national culture. This aim was all the more important in the context of the United States' gradual emergence as a leading nation vis-à-vis the imperial European powers. In this regard, the visual media including painting, photography, and film played a key role in performing and exhibiting a racially and ethnically stratified national culture for mass audiences – both at the fairs themselves and elsewhere, via the emerging print media – avid to "see the world" as staged at these fairs. Complex repositories of cultural memory, such mediated spectacles invite interrogations of (American) nation formation hinging on notions of racial hierarchization and ethnic stereotyping.

Friday, 03 July, 15.00 | PANEL III
Gender and Sexuality in Post/Modern Image Culture

Chair: Antje Kley

Antje Kley is Professor of American Literature and Culture at the Friedrich-Alexander-University at Erlangen-Nuremberg. She has published extensively on Toni Morrison, contemporary multiethnic autobiographical writing in the US, and the ethics of media representation in the British and the American novel. Her essays additionally address issues of intermediality and modernism as well as postcolonial literature and theory. Her current research interests include narratives of recognition, the discourse of presence, American literature and the media, Caribbean literature in English, and issues of transculturality.

Robin Blaetz***Home Movies: Framing the Domestic Sphere in Experimental Cinema***

Robin Blaetz is Associate Professor and Chair of the Film Studies Program at Mount Holyoke College. She has recently edited an anthology called *Women's Experimental Cinema: Critical Frameworks* (2007) and wrote *Visions of the Maid: Women, War, and Joan of Arc in American Film and Culture* (2001).

Abstract

Maya Deren's groundbreaking 1942 film, *Meshes of an Afternoon*, was shot by Deren and her husband, Alexander Hammid, in their California home. Shaped by Hammid's creative camera, which rocks from side to side in the staircase and captures the haunting reflection of his wife's face in the window, the domestic space plays as important a role as Deren herself. When, on the other hand, Stan Brakhage takes his camera deeply into his family's domestic life, he approaches so closely that the home is barely recognizable yet understood to manifest a vision of the filmmaker's consciousness. I will investigate the tradition of the use of the domestic sphere in U.S. avant-garde cinema in an attempt to interrogate and perhaps stretch the meaning of the term "home movies."

Klaus Theweleit***San Francisco Underground Comix: 'America's only Real Revolution in the 20th Century'***

Klaus Theweleit was born 1942 in East Prussia. He is a cultural theorist, writer, and author of monographs. Theweleit was professor for the theory of fine arts at Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste Karlsruhe till summer 2008 and appointed professor at Soziologisches Institut of the University of Freiburg. He is now retired. Last publications: *Jimi Hendrix. A biography* (together with Rainer Hoeltschl, 2008); *absolute(ly) Sigmund Freud. Songbook*, (2006); *Friendly Fire. Deadline-Texte* (2005). Theweleit is currently working on volumes 2 & 3 of *The Pocahontas Complex*.

Abstract

The most hallucinatory-enlightened vision of the world of the second half of the 20th century, especially the American world with all its madness, was developed by a group of strongly connected San Francisco comic artists during the Sixties. The drawings of Robert Crumb, Bill Griffith, Kim Deitch, Gilbert Shelton & around twenty others, were going to break every rule of clean-cut normality, especially the sexual taboos of (not only) the American society. Since then it made no longer sense to speak of "sexual perversions:" when everything is *allowed* and happens openly – *pure transition*, including strongest drug abuse. All the things we theoretically put together now under terms like "gender trouble" first took shape at two other places: the Andy Warhol factory in New York, and the San Francisco comix underground.

Friday, 03 July, 17.00 | PANEL IV
Visuality and the News
Chair: Petra Dorsch-Jungsberger

Petra Dorsch-Jungsberger is Professor Emeritus of Social Communication and Media Research at the University of Munich. Her research and teaching areas are international communication, media systems, media policy, mass entertainment, national images, the cultural perspective, daily newspapers and the internet as well as the use of images in mass media.

Michael S. Griffin***Images from Nowhere: Visuality and News in 21st Century Media***

Michael Griffin, PhD University of Pennsylvania, is a visiting professor of Humanities, Media & Cultural Studies at Macalester College, the current Visual Communication Area Editor for the *International Encyclopedia of Communications*, and the immediate past Chair of the Visual Studies Division of the International Communication Association. He has taught at the University of Minnesota, the University of Amsterdam, Carleton College, and Macalester College, and was an Annenberg Scholars Program Post-doctoral Fellow at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication, where he studied the uses and functions of visual images in print and television news. Sample publications: "Visual Competence and Media Literacy: Can One Exist Without the Other?", *Visual Studies* 23(2); "Visual Communication," *The International Encyclopedia of Communications*; "Picturing America's "War on Terrorism" in Afghanistan and Iraq," *Journalism: Theory, Practice, Criticism* 5(4); "Photos from Abu Ghraib", *Message: Internationale Fachzeitschrift für Journalismus* 3/2004; "Camera as Witness, Image as Sign: The Study of Visual Communication in Communication Research," *Communication Yearbook* 24; "The Great War Photographs: Constructing Myths of History and Photojournalism," in B. Brennen and H. Hardt, (eds.), *Picturing the Past: Media, History, and Photography, International Media Monitoring* (with Kaarle Nordenstreng); and "Looking At TV News: New Strategies for Research," *Communication*, 13(2).

Abstract

The role of visual representation in journalism has taken a paradoxical turn. Emerging media technologies in the last half of the 20th century offered the promise of direct visual surveillance. An ideology of verisimilitude, that the mechanically reproduced image could effectively stand-in for actual experience, combined with ever improving technologies of rapid transmission, reinforced a growing public sense that communication media could function as direct, unproblematic extensions of human perception. Yet, the course of media technology and practice over the last 20 years has not served to enhance visual surveillance of realities beyond our first-hand experience, nor has it demonstrably improved visual information concerning world events. Rather, emerging environments of televisual and digital media have increasingly employed images as condensed and simplified visual markers, often little more than simple prompts for pre-existing cultural categories, concepts, and narratives. In fact, the increasing standardization and intertextuality that characterizes visual news production, across media and on the web, can be argued to represent a turn away from modernist hopes for the visual. How must we reconsider practices of visual journalism in these contemporary contexts?

Caja Thimm***Visual Dynamics in Politics – The US Election 2008***

Caja Thimm, PhD, is Professor for Communication Studies at the University of Bonn since 2000. She was a visiting professor at UC Santa Barbara Department for Communication where she received an award for “Outstanding Graduate Teaching” (2005), and Liverpool University (2007). Since 2007 she has been a member of the commission for the “6th Report on the Older Generation” by the Federal Government of Germany, where she is the co-chair.

Abstract

In his quest for the American Presidency, Barack Obama has revolutionized online campaigning. Particularly, blogger activism and online grass rooting strategies like direct e-mailings, text messages or twitter became widely known. But just as important were the videos published on YouTube. Obama succeeded in turning the online video platform into a private television station and used it for his visual branding. It will be argued that this concept of online campaigning will change the role of visualization in political communication beyond short lived election goals.

**Saturday, 04 July, 9.30 | PANEL V
History and Visual Sites of Memory****Chair: Karsten Fitz**

Karsten Fitz is Professor of American Studies, Culture, and Media Studies at the University of Passau, Germany. He studied American Studies and Political Science at the University of Hannover, where he received his M.A. in 1994 and his PhD in 2000. Fitz received the Fulbright American Studies Fellowship 2002-03, which he spent at Harvard University and the American Antiquarian Society. His publications include *Negotiating History and Culture: Transculturation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* (2001) and *The American Revolution Remembered, 1830s to 1850s: Competing Images and Conflicting Narratives* (upcoming). Fitz is currently editing an anthology with the title *Visual Representations of Native Americans: Transnational Contexts and Perspectives*.

Sarah J. Purcell

Seeing Martyrdom: Revolutionary Memory at the Outset of the U.S. Civil War

Sarah J. Purcell is Associate Professor of History at Grinnell College, where she also directs the Rosenfield Program in Public Affairs, International Relations, and Human Rights. She is the author of *Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in Revolutionary America* (2002), *The Early National Period: An Eyewitness History* (2004), and “Commemoration, Public Art, and the Changing Meaning of the Bunker Hill Monument,” *The Public Historian* 25 (2003). She is currently at work on a book about the politics of mourning and the U.S. Civil War.

Abstract

At the beginning of the U.S. Civil War in 1861, the public memory of Revolutionary War martyrs shaped reactions to the initial deaths of the war. The public in both Union and Confederate states viewed their martyrs in the mold of previous Revolutionary heroes. But instead of military martyrdom holding the nation together, as it had since the Revolution, the tradition of Revolutionary heroism helped to split the nation apart in the Civil War. This paper examines how the tradition of mourning for Revolutionary martyr Joseph Warren influenced commemorations of the death of Col. Elmer Ellsworth and James W. Jackson – both killed in Alexandria, Virginia, in May 1861. By examining ritualized funeral celebrations, newspapers, popular prints, photographs, material culture, and a wide variety of print culture, this paper shows how the politics of Revolutionary War military martyrdom influenced mourning for Civil War heroes and helped to propel the Civil War.

Birgit Spengler

Medical Gazes, Gender, and the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing

Birgit Spengler is Assistant Professor of American Studies at Goethe University, Frankfurt. She is the author of *Vision, Gender, and Power in Nineteenth-Century American Women's Writing, 1860-1900* (2008), which received the Cornelia Goethe Prize 2007 for outstanding academic research in Women's and Gender Studies. She is also the editor of *Appropriating Vision(s): Visual Practices in American Women's Writing (Amerikastudien / American Studies, forthcoming)*. Her research interests include 19th-Century American Literature and Culture, Visual Culture, Gender Studies, Intertextuality, and Contemporary American Literature.

Abstract

Even before the ostensible “visual turn” of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, issues of vision form a constant topic in American women's writing. Female authors reflect nineteenth-century changes in the conceptualization of vision and refer to visual practices in order to ponder fundamental epistemological, social, and cultural concerns – including the ways in which issues of gender, race, and class structure social relations in nineteenth-century America. This literary preoccupation with visual practices not only supports Michel Foucault's assumption that a systemic shift in the visual organization of power and knowledge marks the Western world from the late eighteenth/early nineteenth-century onward, but also suggests that we extend our critical interest to the time that precedes the modernist movements of the turn of the century and re-examine conventional ways of periodization. In my paper, I will explore “visual negotiations” in medical settings, which render the gender and power implications of visual practices particularly obvious. I will argue that the ways in which female writers depict scopic relations reflects their view of the current state and future possibilities of social relations within the American nation. As my literary examples suggest, it was particularly the time around the Civil War which seemed to allow a hopeful look into the future – a hope, however, which the conspicuous objects of Edith Wharton's fiction or the panoptic prison of Gilman's “The Yellow Wallpaper” at the turn of the century ultimately refute.

Saturday, 04 July, 11.30 | PANEL VI Visual Culture in Geography

Chair: Barbara Hahn

Barbara Hahn is Professor of Economic Geography at the University of Würzburg. She received her PhD in geography with a dissertation on Cyprus at Bochum University in 1982 and in 1990 her habilitation at Mannheim University with a thesis on Canadian Cities. Since the mid-1980s her main research focus is on North America and she has worked on several projects in the United States. Her work focused on poverty and public housing in New York City, public spaces in American Cities, Shopping Centers in the United States, and the internationalization of retailers (Wal-Mart in Germany, Aldi in the United States). From 1994 to 2000 she was Professor for economic and social geography at University of Lüneburg. In 1993 she taught at the Fulbright summer school at New York University and winter term 1999 she was a visiting professor at the University of Chicago.

Michael Conzen

Cartography as Conquest: Visualizing the American West through Maps in the Era of National Expansion

Michael Conzen is Professor of Geography at the University of Chicago, with interests in historical and urban geography, the history of American commercial mapping, and urban morphology. Recently he has served as cartographic editor of the *Encyclopedia of Chicago* (2004), published *Thinking about Urban Form* (2004), and *Mapping Manifest Destiny: Chicago and the American West* (2007), and is finishing work on a second (full-color) edition of his collaborative work, *The Making of the American Landscape*.

Abstract

The European colonization of North America and the United States conquest of the west would have been unthinkable and unsuccessful without maps. This paper examines the role maps played in creating vital images of the West; who made and published them; and how their design and effectiveness was shaped by different agents with different purposes for different audiences. It will show how government took a lead in mapping for knowledge and exploitation, how business built on that investment, and how disinterested individuals filled in the gaps left by the others. The prominent role played by some German cartographers in American mapping of the West will be noted. In the era of national expansion, cartography blurred the boundary between public and private activity as an essential medium for every type of development initiative.

Julia Lossau

Geography, Art and the Visual

Julia Lossau is Assistant Professor for Cultural Geography in the Department of Geography at Humboldt-University Berlin, a post she took after working as lecturer at Heidelberg University. She studied for her PhD in the Department of Geography at the University of Bonn. Between 2001 and 2003, she was a Marie-Curie-Fellow (European Commission) at the Department of Geography and Topographic Science at the University of Glasgow. Presently she is working on the symbolic economy of cities, examining different forms of public art practices and their spatial effects. Books and articles include *Die Politik der Verortung. Eine postkoloniale Reise zu einer anderen Geographie der Welt* (transcript, 2002); *Themenorte* (co-ed. with Michael Flitner, 2005); "The body, the gaze and the theorist: remarks on a strategic distinction," *Cultural Geographies* 12 (2005); "Einfach sprachlos but not simply speechless: language(s), thought and practice in the social sciences," *Area* 37 (2005, with Gesa Helms and Ulrich Oslender).

Abstract

The paper is concerned with the various relationships between geography and visual art. While both fields have distinctive traditions and histories, they share an interest in the meaning and representation of the (physical and social) environment, notably the landscape. This paper explores these interconnections and differences through a reflection of the significance that the visual has for both fields.



The Bavarian American Academy

The objective of the Bavarian American Academy is to support research on or related to North America and to enhance the interaction between science and culture, society and economy. Although the primary focus of the Academy's activities is the USA, in the context of interdisciplinary and interregional studies it also supports research on Canada, Latin America and the Caribbean. The BAA provides a network of cooperation for Bavarian scholars from a wide range of disciplines in the cultural and social sciences specializing in these areas. It aims at coordinating and focusing their respective competencies and resources. The BAA is an innovative, comprehensive inter-university institution.

Please note:

The conference proceedings will be published in 2010 as a volume of the *Publications of the Bavarian American Academy*. Further information is available from the office of the Bavarian American Academy or our website.

For detailed information contact our office:

**Bayerische Amerika-Akademie
Bavarian American Academy
Karolinenplatz 3
80333 München
Germany**

Fon: +49 (89) 54 50 40 30

Fax: +49 (89) 54 50 40 35

**info@amerika-akademie.de
www.amerika-akademie.de**