# Things Beside Themselves

**3.–5.2. 2020**

## Mimetic Existences

The concluding conference of the DFG/SNF research group Media and Mimesis

From the perspective of industrialised, Western societies of discipline and control, to be 'beside oneself' denotes at best a religious, and at worst a pathological state of subjective exception. Through intoxication, possession, or various affects, the subject here enters an alternative state (of being) in which he or she assumes the identity of something else or becomes simply non-identical. To be beside oneself is then a key indicator of an excessive form of mimesis, which in the dispositif of modern Western ontologies is experienced as a loss of self – a loss that is regulated and subjected to therapy.

In contrast to such normalising classifications, mimetic practices in a wide range of media cultures show that being beside oneself represents a mode of existence of mimetic artefacts and mimetic subjectivation. This excessive mimetic mode of existence allows us to conceive the historical and ontogenetic being of things as a transformative intermediate being. Mimesis can thus be understood as a trans-subjective, intermedial praxis that is tied to particular materials and techniques and emerges through hybrid operational chains.

The conference's thematic focus on 'things' is intended to underline the transhuman, object-oriented dimensions of mimesis, in line with a research approach that is less interested in psychological explanations than in connections and feedback loops between heterogeneous materials, cultural codes, and mimetic practices. It nevertheless does not exclude the being-beside-oneself of human actors, yet conceives the latter as agents of mimetic practices on the basis of an overarching conception of things as processual assemblages of materials, digital and analogue objects, human and non-human actors, and cultural technologies and practices that are capable of initiating desire-driven mimetic economies.

The conference subtitle, 'Mimetic Existences', is intended to capture the milieu-specific character of media: as forms of milieux, media function as affordances through which people and things come to be beside themselves. On the basis of a milieu-oriented conception of media, the conference will focus on intermedial mimetic processes, including mimicry and processes of fusion, transformation, and embodiment that operate mimetically between heterogeneous media/milieux.

In accordance with the research group's outlook, the conference themes are intended to highlight such intermedial practices and processes of embodiment and metamorphosis in highly diverse contexts, including digital image media, artistic, literary, and publishing practices, popular science media, and the ethnology and history of political (de-)subjectivation processes and economic media practices.

Things Beside Themselves. Mimetic Existences 3.–5.2.2020

Salon IKKM Cranachstraße 47 99423 Weimar Germany

**www.fg-mimesis.de**

Medien und Mimesis

## Mo. 3.2.2020

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| 14.00 | Opening |

Session **1**

14.30 Peter Bexte (Cologne)

### Backbenchers in the Parliament of Things. Or: Re-reading Psalm 118,22

Response:

Research Group
*Media and Mimesis*

15.30 Coffee

Session **2**

16.00 Christoph Bläsi (Mainz)

### Automated 'Gatekeeping' and Automated Text Production: Machines in Publishing and Authoring Processes as well as in Content Discovery

Hannes Bajohr (Basel)

### The Gestalt of AI: Machine Learning Beyond the Atomism-Holism Divide

Response:

Research Project
*Subalterne Mimesis*

19.00 Conference Dinner

## Di. 4.2.2020

Session **3**

10.00 Rosa Eidelpes (Vienna)

### Mimesis redoubled

Manuel van der Veen (Karlsruhe)

### Placing things beside themselves – "to see how they hold up" (Georges Braque)

Response:

Research Project
*Mimetische Existenzweisen*

12.00 Lunch

## Session **4**

13.30 Michael Suter (Basel)

### Mimetic Currency and Gradated Sovereignties in Colonialism

Margie Borschke (Sydney)

### The poetics of circulation

Response:

Research Project
*Produktive Imitationen*

15.30 Coffee Break

Session **5**

16.00 Noam Elcott (New York)

### Four Stations of the (Wooden) Cross: Symbolic, Real, Imaginary, Trompe l'oeil

Hendrik Blumentrath (Berlin)

### Stage Actors

Response:

Research Project
*Einbetten, Aufklappen, Anhängen*

18.30 Dinner

19.30 Reception and Party

## Mi. 5.2.2020

Session **6**

10.00 Mareike Vennen (Berlin)

### How to Picture a Dinosaur? The Visual Politics of Natural History Objects

Michael Cuntz (Weimar)

### "Can you do that again?" Trajectories of (auto-) mimesis in musico-technological ensembles

Response:

Research Project
*Mimesis des Raumbildes*

12.00 Closing Remarks
Farewell Coffee / Snacks