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International Conference
"Public Sphere between Theory and Artistic Intervention"
– including the PhD and Post-Doc Students Conference

Doctoral School of Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek (Organizer)
InterScArt – Center for Interdisciplinary Research in Arts and Humanities – The Academy of
Arts (Co-Organizer)

Osijek, May 11 – 12 2018

The conference is based on the recent theories of public sphere and publicness in live arts after Habermas. Its methodological framework consists in creating a creative platform for the analysis of the contemporary community oriented artistic practices, especially those depicted in a post-transitional, multicultural and immersive code. The artistic practices after the fall of Communism were often interpreted as post-dependent, usually in the light of transcultural and post-colonial theories. Nevertheless, public sphere approaches tends to go a bit deeper, beyond the surface of the alleged dependence upon higher political strategies and regimes of artistic expression, thus creating a case-study platform for live art analysis in a broader context. Contemporary performative and artistic activism would thus be put in the context of both, American and European neo-Avant-garde public sphere theories, with the special focus on the activism behind this type of self-management in art. The framework proposed is not only theoretical but it also depicts the practical aspects of the art-as-critique discourses in modern humanities, mainly performance studies, film and video art studies, live art critique, musicology, art criticism, etc. Community oriented performances, live art, in situ art and installation activism in the sphere of counterpublics were often depicted using the post-Habermas' theories of publicness, especially those of Anglo-American critics, such as M. Warner, S. Benhabib, N. Fraser, or post-Marxist thinkers as Ch. Mouffe, E. Laclau, O. Negt and A. Kluge, etc.

Public space interventions are no less important in the field of European Studies and Communication. The impact of European integration on the legal and economic development of national systems opens up space for scientific analysis of the relationship between the European center and the periphery, as well as the impacts that European policies have on Member states and candidate countries. Therefore, we also expect papers from these perspectives. Public is usually perceived as a natural feature of the social discourse, distributing unevenly its semantics across the field of humanities and social sciences.

A very notion of public(s) has a certain contingency in a wide range of contexts, making it difficult to grasp beyond certain metalevels of thought and reflection. It presupposes disagreements and different kinds of struggle, subjection to a variety of social norms and political strategies. In a way, it stands out from the concept of private but, on the other hand, it reluctantly collides with the spheres of privacy and intimacy, even with the mode of thinking about life beyond *fonction publique*. Habermas' influential oeuvre *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962) is thus considered as a starting point for elaboration, but it also calls upon many other forms of revisions and theoretical frameworks.

According to Habermas, public sphere theory optimizes itself by bracketing different identities, but, nevertheless, that are eager to enter in a debate or an argument on matters important to community or common to all. Going public is not merely an act of will, whether in writing, performing, or being engaged in an open statement, public opinion, critique or polemical approach to art. It has to be regarded, both, as a way of contextualizing something in a much bigger debate and, second, institutionalizing something others interpret as private concern. Counterpublics are constituted not only by privileging the subaltern but also by emancipating their critical, even conflictual habitus. While theorizing on his thesis on public sphere as an assembled body of private persons discussing matters of public concern and common interest many authors offer an alternative historical approach, trying to overlap the author's inconsistency with the practical politics or social pragmatism. Nancy Fraser manages to eliminate four important Habermas' assumptions about the bourgeois publics: first, that it is possible to bracket status differences and to deliberate "as if" their subjects are social equals; second, that the proliferation of a multiplicity of competing publics is a step away from greater democracy; third, that discourse in public sphere should be restricted to some kind of deliberation about the common good, where private interest is always undesirable; and fourth, that a functioning public sphere asks for a rigid separation between civil society and the politic of the state. Anyway, this conception of public sphere is considerably agonistic, revealing the very limits of rational consensus inside of the public, or – as Chantal Mouffe puts it – precisely this agonistic struggle is the core of a vibrant democracy. In the agonistic modeling of public sphere there is rarely any terrain for consensus.

This conference should thus reexamine some of the paradigmatic models of collision between the public sphere (and its theories) and the artistic work, subdued to emancipation, institutionalization, participation and irruption, but not only this. Aura of art often coexists with the feeling of genuine community, but in some cases this connection is arbitrary – or it does not function at all. Interdisciplinary habitus of this conference should, therefore, function as a platform for interpretation of live art or artistic immersion in general, somewhere between public politics and counterpublics, but also as *pars pro toto* of a much wider debate on publicness in post-global overheated (T. Hylland Eriksen) contemporary artistic practices.

The conference will include open lectures by keynote and guest speakers, individual panels, according to research fields, and interdisciplinary roundtables.

Panels will be dedicated to:

1. Cultural Studies and Interdisciplinary Art Research
2. Communication Studies
3. European Studies (legal, economic and political aspects of integration in national and EU context)
4. Interdisciplinary Roundtable on Arts and Politics

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Important Dates:

Abstract submission: April 25 2018
Notification of Acceptance: April 30 2018
Conference: May 11-12 2018
Paper submission: June 20 2018
Conference Proceedings will be published by: September 10 2018
Email for applications: conference.ds@unios.hr

Style Guidelines for Conference Abstracts:

1. Abstract must not exceed 350 words.
2. Please use Calibri font, single spaced, italic, 12 pt (including the title).
3. Indicate author/co-author institution and contact email left aligned at the top of the page.

4. Put the title of the paper in bold, left aligned.
5. Please include 5 key words or phrases that closely reflect the content of the paper.

Style Guidelines for Conference Papers:

1. Papers must not exceed 10 pages in length (Calibri font, single spaced, 12 pt for the main text and 10 pt for the footnotes, including abstract, footnotes, figures, references and appendices).
2. Please use Oxford citation style.
3. Before submitting your papers please ensure that it has been carefully read for typographical and grammatical errors. If English is not your first language, please have your paper proof-read by an English speaking person. Papers will be returned if the standard of English is not considered to be good enough for publication.
4. Papers should be submitted as a .doc attachment by email to the conference email.
5. Papers must not be sent in PDF format and should not be zipped.
6. Set the page size to A4 with margins of 2.54 cm all around. Do not refer to page numbers in your text as these will be changed.
7. Do not use multiple columns.
8. Put the title of the paper in bold, left aligned, at the top of the first page only.