

STAGING THE ARCHIVES (Cluster 2)

- Operational plan

Having a particular focus on the archives, the cluster will initiate and coordinate critical projects and research activities concerning the field of interest. We encourage explorative as well as experimental work based on official and unofficial archives. Our aim is to implement an interdisciplinary approach into the archival initiative within critical heritage studies. This we think will provide a fertile point of departure for theorizing, articulating and re-evaluating aspects of interacting with the archive's objects and features. In order to prepare a sustainable yet dynamic foundation for critical research in and on archives, the cluster's activities will be directed towards research applications. This involves international networking, as well as locally situated and small scale collaborations.

Structure

Three coordinators head the cluster, each with different fields of expertise. Our operational engine will be the common theme *Staging the Archives*, wherein we will bring out the most fertile synergies from the efforts of the cluster and direct them towards further activities and major research applications. Beside the common theme, the cluster will contain and unite three strands. Each strand will bring urgent issues to the fore, rethinking existing fields of interest, making inventories of new focus areas, building networks and testing ideas of how the archives can be "staged" in ways that shed new light on cultural heritage. Cultural heritage risks equaling that national and cultural self-understanding which it was once intended to be: thus, the ambition will be to constantly question the hegemonic structures from which the heritage comes. In that sense, the objects of the archives will be critically examined in their capacity as sources for new research approaches. We foresee seminars, workshops and guest researchers, but also more innovative and unexpected ways of approaching the archives and its challenges.

Activities

Our common theme *Staging the Archives* will operate through interdisciplinary synergies provided by the following interconnected strands:

Performance and the Archives (strand 1)

Evading Inherited Canon through Digital Methods (strand 2)

The Archive in a Global and Digitized World (strand 3)

The three strands focus on different fields and issues concerning research with, against and in relation to the archives. In this dynamic exchange the question of performativity is central. The strands will have clear focus areas, consistently relating theorizing to applicability, but will also invite to broad participation: especially the overall approach is inclusive and open.

Performance and the Archives (strand 1)

This strand will engage in a broad range of interdisciplinary and critical perspectives on performance, power, place and space. It particularly welcomes crosscutting ideas and initiatives that challenge hegemonic structures outside as well as inside the university. In order to start building something hitherto not existing, the strand has chosen dance as a first laboratory for focused research development. Historiographical criticism reveals that dance can be considered a particularly marginalized or repressed cultural heritage. This void – normally not acknowledged – can be considered pregnant with issues of cultural memory, identity, power, place and knowledge.

Thus dance, understood as a vital form of articulation, can provide a challenging access to the corporeal, material, political and ethical approaches so important in current critical thinking. Moreover, dance

with its capacity to literally move with and within crucial human concerns, is not only a fertile area for explorative exchange; it also brings questions of innovative research methodologies to the fore. The strand will facilitate the implementation of a cross-disciplinary approach, and thus aims to bring together guest researchers and researchers from for example the Valand Academy, the Academy of Music and Drama, and practitioners outside the university.

Evading Inherited Canon through Digital Methods (strand 2)

As literary canon is to be understood as intended to pass on certain cultural self-understandings to posterity, this strand engages to find ways to both evade the influence of canon, and at the same time scrutinize the processes of canonization and marginalization from this particular perspective. This will be achieved by focusing on those literary works that have passed, or been passed, on to oblivion. The assumption is that digitized material can be used for finding mainstream and marginalized notions of cultural systems, the knowledge of which has hitherto been dominated by canonized authors. Thus, new sources must be found in order to enhance our understanding of the previously dominating ones, and new methods and approaches must be developed in order to create new views on previous ages.

As canon and cultural heritage is understood as performative, the ambition is thus to let new sources emerge in performative ways. The performativity of heritage will also be developed along another line: The will of cultural heritage to construe and establish identity (individual, collective, sexual, national, etc.) through the material and intangible containers of shared memory such as objects, narratives and monuments is destabilized as these change in character when reproduced digitally. The question is then not only how this affects the objects and our understanding of them, but in the end how it affects our conceptions of individuality, identity and self on the whole. By opening up for wide discussion of these issues, the strand aims at progressing towards possible solutions and new research questions in broad cooperation.

The Archive in a Global and Digitized World (strand 3)

This strand centers on critical issues of accessibility, democracy and applicability in a globalizing archival field. The traditional “discipline” of archives has during the last decades been challenged by globalization, digitization and “post-modern” theories. As the conventional archive represents power, nation and records that produce a certain kind of truth, it has been criticized for being a monument over itself. In a digitized world the “old” archives are developed into any database and thereby lose their exclusivity as they become searchable in the same manner as vast amounts of other records.

Today there has evolved a new and antagonistic concept of Archive that criticizes the very foundation of the “modern” archive and the practitioners of archives. At the same time there is in reality no discussion among the different groups of antagonists, where the practitioners of the archives have virtually no contact with the “post-modern” and deconstructivistic critics. An important aim for this strand is to create contacts between the different groups and work for theoretical, methodological and critical development of the field. Today we can discern that there is, or already has been, a revolution in the field of communication and the very nature of the ways we look upon, understand and work with our sources, demanding questions such as “what is an archive?” and “how can we stage it?” Consequently the strand invites any creative and critical initiative to partake in the ongoing process of revitalizing research in and on archives.

Criteria for cluster activities

The cluster activities shall

- consolidate the common ground of the cluster;
- identify the main strands for the working research environment of the cluster;
- explore the main interest and synergies of the cluster researchers;
- further academic promotions;
- establish of long term financial security of the research field of the cluster

