



*Manegenkünste. Zirkus als ästhetisches Modell.* Anna-Sophie Jürgens, The Australian National University; Jörg Schuster, Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main / Philipps-Universität Marburg; Margarete Fuchs, Philipps-Universität Marburg, 17.11.2016—19.11.2016.

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## **Manegenkünste. Zirkus als ästhetisches Modell**

From 17 to 19 November 2016 the University of Marburg hosted an interdisciplinary conference discussing the circus as an aesthetic model. The three organizers ANNA-SOPHIE JÄRGENS (Munich / Canberra), JÄRG SCHUSTER (Frankfurt am Main / Marburg) and MARGARETE FUCHS (Marburg) opened the first panel setting the main topics and questions for the following days. JÄrgens' paper introduced the panel on circus aesthetics presenting the themed circus in novels as hyperbole and a two-sided phenomenon, which is characterised by manipulation, extremes, and exaggerations on the one hand; and examples of creation and invention on the other. Schuster gave a stimulus for describing the circus as an aesthetic model; he asked whether the circus's bright and shining appearance and its hyperbole versus its principle of vitality and corporeality constitute such a model. Drawing on the circus and the multitasking artist Tea Alba, Fuchs explored how circus ring arts can be described and written. She presented a distinctive set of concepts in order to enable existing theories for the study of the circus; transgression methods; theories of presence and emergence; risk; and equilibrium among others. During the introduction the discussion arose whether the circus is a phenomenon already existing during the Middle Ages or only being developed during the 18th century. The question what the circus is and how transitory its concept may be was evident throughout the entire conference and significant for each research discipline. PHILIPPE GOUDARD's (Montpellier) talk focused on the

risk of circus performances. He built upon Paul Bouissac's much quoted analysis of the circus asking how the audience's emotions are influenced by the arts of the ring. According to Goudard, the artist is able to move the audience's emotions through taking risks and creating an imbalance between himself and the audience.

SYLKE KIRSCHNICK's (Berlin) talk on traditional circus pantomimes opened the panel on arts of the circus ring and clowns ("Manegenkünste und Clowns"). She presented the history and characteristics of the circus pantomimes from Astley to Busch, consisting of domestic animal training, acrobatic, and farce ("Posse") in a classic way. She underlined that the incorporation of exotic and wild animals, as well as national and chauvinist subjects, were part of a later and non-classic interpretation of circus shows. PHILIPP SCHULTE (Giessen) discussed how avant-gardist theatre used the shocking potential of clowns and how, in general, the usage of the clown figure included a subversive act. Drawing on Sergei Eisenstein's utilization of the clown as a shocking attraction, he was able to demonstrate the clown's scary and unexpected effect, not necessarily referring to the current connection with horror. The following discussion endorsed Schulte's argument by stating that the clown has always been a serving figure and therefore in a sense incorporating aggressive behaviour; the clown always symbolized the deviant figure. VERENA THINNES (Marburg) discussed the appearances of circus-related arts, plays, and juggleries in Heinrich Mann's prose which presents

painters, play writers, theatre and vaudeville actors and actresses among others. She outlined how on behalf of performances, Mann's texts present different aesthetic techniques and their (inter)relations to reality.

As part of the panel on circus and literature FRANZISKA TRAPP's (Münster) paper reversed the research question of the conference by focusing on the influence of literature on the circus performance "Le fils sous la neige". She asked in which ways the medium literature affects the circus art and more specifically how the tightrope walk imitates the literary medium. JULIA KERSCHER's (Tübingen) talk was dedicated to artistic aesthetics as literary primitivism in Carl Einstein's "Bebuquin oder die Dilettanten des Wunders". CORNELIA ORTLIEB (Erlangen) presented an example of combating genres and the confrontation of bear and man in the struggle of species through Stéphane Mallarmé's poem "Eine abgebrochene Schaustellung" (a terminated ostentation). JÜRGEN JOACHIMSTHALER (Marburg) dedicated his talk to the function of circus motifs in hybrid texts of the 20th and 21st century focusing on Günter Grass and Johannes Bobrowski. MARION SCHMAUS (Marburg) examined Nietzsche's circensic anthropology (Zarathustra), in which he set up sociology, physiology, psychology and genealogy of the artist. Therefore she explored Nietzsche's emphasis on the interrelation of amusement and aesthetics.

MANFRED NIEKISCH (Frankfurt am Main) opened the panel on nature, animals and exotic species by focusing on the difference between zoos and circuses. Moreover, he differentiated between the common zoo and professional ones, the latter ones being dedicated to research, nature conservation, and species protection. Whilst his descriptions of the differentiation of the contemporary circus and zoo were widely convincing, his historic explanations lacked a reference to similarities and interdependencies in regard to ethnographic exhibitions ("Völkerschau"), exoticisms and interdependent business relations. Criticism of his talk came mainly from circus owners defending their way of treating animals. VOLKER SOMMER (London) presented main ideas of the Great Ape Project whilst questioning the boundaries humans construct between themselves and other animals. By asking if other animals are property or who belongs to the community of equals he offered an interesting link to the study of the circus which was unfortunately not further discussed during the panel. FREDERIKE MIDDELHOFF (Würzburg) presented her analysis of the More-than-Human Circus in Yoko Tawada's "Et den im Schnee" as part of her project on literary autozoo-

graphics. The novel offers a rather non-intellectual description of the memoirs of a polar bear written by an author unconventionally feeling as the bear. Sommer's and Middelho's talks opened room for the question how to speak for and feel like animals in literature and science.

The topic of body enactments was discussed in two panels. BERNARD ANDRIEU (Paris) has been studying the control of the body of trapeze artists using cameras at the moving and exercising bodies. His talk focused on the analysis of a certain awareness of the living and performing body. CAMILLA DAMKJAER (Stockholm) focused on experiences of the self in circus performances. Her approach stood out in many ways. In order to analyse how the artist's experience from individual concentration to publicly shared attention changes, she practised hand-balancing for several minutes in front of the audience as part of her talk. STEVE GOSSARD (Bloomington) analysed body performances in historical records and revealed their exaggerated description through artists and contemporaries. By comparing the single records about outstanding trapeze acts he was able to show their fallibility. TILLMANN DAMRAU (Dortmund) presented his thesis that the moved body is used as a distinct positioning in circus performances. The performing body is representing the staged fusion of nature and technology and furthermore demonstrating it iteratively. URTE HELDUSER (Hannover) discussed forms of artistic otherness and discourses of Darwin's evolutionary biology in different media ranging from literature to performing arts and film at the beginning of the 20th century. Especially focusing on the Vienna fairground Prater, the movies 'Battleship Potemkin' (1925) and 'Freaks' (1932), she asked whether the body of the freak can be described as self-referential. The following discussion drew parallels to the 21st century theatre.

GISELA and DIETMAR WINKLER (Berlin) presented their archival collections and publications on circus history during the panel on circus and its sources and media. Their collection has a special focus on the circus in the GDR, postcards and posters. As one of their most helpful tools they introduced their catalogue on circus literature which can be searched by keywords. KATHARINA GÄRGEN (Köln) focused on the superlative as a pattern in circus advertisement and performance. In explaining how the circus itself created the desire to always outdo itself, it created the need of constant improvement and innovation. Drawing on parallels with Olympic competitions, she discussed the evolving problem of body limitations and the circus's chance to break with the narrative of the superlative through a artistic rearrangement of the

body. FLORIAN FUCHS (Marburg / Frankfurt am Main) analysed the circus in Franz Kafka's and Charlie Chaplin's work. Studying Chaplin's "The Circus" (1926) and "The Lion's Cage" (1928), he discussed the influence of the emerging sound film as a crisis for the media's silent film and circus.

During the conference there were two strategies apparent of how to examine the circus; the circus as a transitory model and the classic circus, whose origins were changed throughout times. The conference attendees agreed on a still existing undervaluation of the research of the circus throughout disciplines, institutions of research and preservation of materials. Therefore the broad discussions on the theme of the circus brought researchers together across disciplines and countries. Though, there was no agreement gained on how important the ancient circus was for the 18th century; it will be a future question among others for researchers of literature, cultural and historical studies.

#### Conference overview:

##### *Zirkus-Ästhetiken â systematische Aspekte*

Anna-Sophie Jürgens (München/Canberra): Hyperbolic Circus Aesthetics and the Affinities between Circus and Fiction â Circus Novels and Circus Novels

Jörg Schuster (Frankfurt a.M./Marburg): Zwischen schinem Schein und asemiotischer Kunst â Zirkus als Ästhetisches Modell

Margarete Fuchs (Marburg): Manegenkünstler (beschreiben)

Philippe Goudard (Montpellier): Arguments for Risk at Circus as aesthetic Model

##### *Manegenkünstler und Clowns*

Sylke Kirschnick (Berlin): Zirkuspantomimen

Philipp Schulte (Gießen): Send in the Clowns â Zum subversiven Einsatz einer Zirkusfigur in zeitgenössischen Theaterformen

Verena Thinner (Marburg): Kunst, Komödie und Gaukelspiel in Texten Heinrich Manns

Jana Korb (Berlin): Zwischen Kunst, Kleinkunst und Sexarbeit. Frauen im zeitgenössischen und gegenwärtigen Zirkus

Sandy Sun (Montpellier): Two aesthetic Models for one Trapeze Act

##### *Zirkus und Literatur*

Franziska Trapp (Münster): Literary Circus: Towards the Adaption of Novels in the Work of "Les Colporteurs"

Julia Kerscher (Tübingen): Artistische Ästhetik und/als literarischer Primitivismus in Carl Einsteins "Bebuquin oder die Dilettanten des Wunders"

Jürgen Joachimsthaler (Marburg): Grenzerfahrung Zirkus. Zur Funktion von Zirkusmotiven in hybriden Texten

Cornelia Ortlieb (Erlangen): Ein Kampf der Gattungen in der Manege. Stéphane Mallarmé's "un spectacle interrompu"

Marion Schmaus (Marburg): Von Seiltänzern, Tier-Bändigern und Zauberern: Nietzsches zirkensische Anthropologie

##### *Natur, Tiere und Exoten*

Manfred Niekisch (Frankfurt a. M.): Zirkusse und Zoos â Was sie eint und trennt

Volker Sommer (London): Schluss mit dem Affenzirkus!? Perspektiven des Tierrechts

Frederike Middelhoff (Würzburg): Würfelzucker und Peitsche. Humanimale Zirkusimaginationen in Yoko Tawadas "Et den im Schnee"

##### *Körperinszenierungen*

Bernard Andrieu (Paris): The Awareness in Body Living in CNAC (Centre national des Arts du Cirque): a Case of Emersiology of Gesture

Camilla Damkjaer (Stockholm): Experiences of Self in Circus From Individual Concentration to Publicly Shared Attention

Steve Gossard (Bloomington, Il.): The Fallibility of the Historical Record

Tillmann Damrau (Dortmund): Bewegte Körper â ostentative Physis

Urte Helduser (Köln): Darwin im Zirkus. Zur Artistik anormaler Körper zwischen Wien und Hollywood (1900-1933)

##### *Zirkus â Ästhetik und Medien*

Katharina Gergen (Köln): Immer noch ein bisschen Körper â die Ästhetik des Superlativs im Zirkus

Florian Fuchs (Frankfurt a.M.): Spektakel, Selbstre- Charlie Chaplin  
flexion und Konkurrenz: der Zirkus bei Franz Kafka und

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