

Summaries of the Panel “Disruptions in the Arts”

The proposed panel, “Disruptions in the Arts”, deals with the phenomenon of aesthetic disruptions in the different arts of contemporary culture. It does so in a comparative manner, referring to central debates in theories of the arts from the 20th and 21st centuries. It takes up Adorno’s concept of art as a riddle or enigma and seeks to show that contemporary art, with its disruptive models, radicalizes Adorno’s concept. It is based on the assumption that contemporary arts do not derive their political potential from a clear-cut, content-based addressing of recipients; instead, they create a specific space of perception and interaction by means of formal strategies, and thus (temporarily) disable hegemonic structures of action and communication. The panel aims to investigate moments and constellations of aesthetic disruption with regard to their respective media contexts, with a special focus on the possibilities of irritation and reflection in the process of aesthetic experience. Construed as a break in common practices of reception and/or decoding, the arrangement and observation of aesthetic disruptions opens up a perspective on a contemporary politics of form. This allows “disruption” to be conceived as a meta-category of critical analyses of society. The concept of disruption, which has been broadly discussed in media theory, is being made productive for the analysis of aesthetic objects by connecting it with other concepts such as “performance”, “space”, “presence” and “emotion”. Through second-order observation, a new perspective opens up on orders of the “sayable” and the visible that define the “age of media immanence” (Malte Hagener). This new perspective facilitates a breaking of the surface of evidence and reveals latent (societal) alternatives. The panel’s shared ground consists in the hypothesis of an epistemological potential inherent in aesthetic experimental systems of disruptions which can be rendered productive for the observation and criticism of the political-cultural conditions of the constitution of “world-reference” in the media.

While remaining open to additional suggestions, the panel will consist of the following contributions:

Moritz Mutter (Dresden): Critical and anti-critical theories of art: Adorno, Marcuse and Luhmann.

The talk traces the concepts of Criticism and Positivism with regard to their disruptive potential in the art-theoretical texts of the three authors concerned. For Luhmann, the function of art is to demonstrate the possibility of non-arbitrary structure in the realm of the merely virtual. This constitutes a paradoxical Utopia amidst an “anti-critical” theory. On the other hand, for Luhmann, the logic of alternatives is the logic of functional differentiation itself. This aporetic form of art, also found in Adorno and Marcuse, is investigated further in the talk.

Lars Koch (Dresden): “To disturb the existing image...”. Strategies of aesthetic disruption in post-dramatic theatre

This talk/presentation examines paradigmatic forms of aesthetic disruption in post-dramatic theatre, using works by Christoph Schlingensiefel and René Pollesch as examples. Both Schlingensiefel and Pollesch aim at creating theatrical situations of the “non-identical”, in which a specific political sense of contingency can come to fruition. The goal of the presentation is to describe these post-dramatic politics of disruption and to examine to what

extent Adorno's aesthetic theory provides a suitable language of description for framing a critical aesthetics of disruption.

Anna Schürmer (Dresden): Interferences – Critical Perspectives on Early Loudspeaker Music

Electronic music in the 1950s was interference, based on the white noise of sinus tone generators. These sounds, never heard before, disturbed not only listeners but also bourgeois concert-going rituals. They eliminated the interpreters as well as the stage, and called into question the widely available radio sets which turned domestic living rooms into concert halls. The disturbances resulting from electronic music further escalated the situation, and they can also be read as a meta-category of critical analysis of the present. On a theoretical level, the talk will address the acoustic dimension of the performative turn and phenomenological analyses of the emotions of listeners.

Tobias Nanz (Dresden): Cold War movies and the collapse of reason

During the Cold War, several movies (such as *Fail-Safe* and *Colossus*) thematised the military defence system, its automation, and the role of reasonable politicians during a crisis. In these movies, the threatening apocalypse will be unleashed by human or technical failure or by a large computer network taking control. The latter seeks to prevent the end of the world, which results from the collapse of human reason. This talk will examine the disruptive patterns of these highly popular movies and analyse the underlying discourses and their aesthetic realisation on the screen.

Christoph Kleinschmidt (Frankfurt a.M.): Perturbing the reader. Adorno's "Rätselcharakter" of art and the dialectical impact of contemporary literature

According to Adorno's concept of the "Rätselhaftigkeit" of art, every artwork offers meaning that simultaneously includes a gesture of hiding. Pursuing this line of thought, the paper shows how contemporary literature radicalizes this concept by developing strategies of perturbation. These strategies of perturbation create an ambivalent relation between the text and the reader: the reader is involved in and distanced from the text at the same time. Based on Rainald Goetz's "Irre" and Sibylle Lewitscharoff's "Pong", the paper demonstrates that these strategies of perturbation counteract common habits of reading and make it impossible for the reader to adopt an attitude of indifference towards the text.