

**Gesellschaft für Comicforschung
(Society for Comic Studies – ComFor)
6th Annual Academic Conference**

Comics Reporters – Documentary Comics – Comic Biographies

November 11-12, 2011 – University of Passau

Organizer: Prof. Dr. Thomas Knieper



Call for Papers

In traditional media, a *reporter* engages in a journalistic mode of representation characterized by personal eyewitnessing, concrete depictions of individual stories, and a subjective combination and description of experiences, all serving to promote the results of her or his journalistic research. *Documentaries* differ by their mission to represent real life experiences with the highest degree of fidelity; here, the systematic and authentic disclosure of information takes greater prominence. Finally, a *biography* might be considered a factually and objectively accurate description of a person's life. Once biographical facts receive a more creative treatment, it is more appropriate to speak of biographical or historical novels.

But can the same distinctions be made for comics? Examples abound: *Anne Frank* (Ernie Colon / Sid Jacobson), *Hadashi No Gen* (Keiji Nakazawa), *Blankets* (Craig Thompson), *Cash – I see a darkness* (Reinhard Kleist), *Castro* (Reinhard Kleist), *Footnotes in Gaza* (Joe Sacco), *Haarmann* (Peer Meter / Isabel Kreitz), *Held* (Felix Görmann a.k.a. Flix), *Mädchen* (Felix Görmann a.k.a. Flix), *Maus* (Art Spiegelman), *Palestine* (Joe Sacco), *Persepolis* (Marjane Satrapi), *Sag was* (Felix Görmann a.k.a. Flix), *The Year of Living Dangerously* (Ted Rall / Pablo G. Callejo) and so many other comics engage with biographies and private experiences but often embellish and embroider their material.

What similarities and differences do such comics show? When can a comic be considered journalism? What journalistic devices are employed in which ways? Are we seeing the introduction of new genres, the development of new narrative forms? Is the tradition of the reporter being reanimated in drawings? How do these comics relate to photoreporting, to documentary movies, or to the biographical novel? What do the stylistic devices in these comics intend, and how do they function? What are their actual effects?

Questions from this spectrum will frame the discussions at the 6th Annual Academic Conference of the German Gesellschaft für Comicforschung (Society for Comics Studies or ComFor, www.comicgesellschaft.de).

Please send abstracts of no more than 300 words **by March 31st** via email to Thomas Knieper (thomas.knieper@uni-passau.de) and Alexandra Schätzl (alexandra.schaetzl@unipassau.de). Make sure to include a title, a short summary of your projected talk, a short selective bibliography where appropriate, as well as your name, email, and address. Talks will last no longer than 30 minutes, followed by ten minutes of discussion.

Note that membership in ComFor is **not** required.

Forum: As in previous years, ComFor will offer a workshop-style forum for presentations and discussions on any current or planned projects in comics research, independently from this year's conference focus. Abstracts should follow the guidelines above, but talks in the forum should last no longer than 15 minutes.

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Further information on sessions, travel, lodging, conference fees and venues will be available once the program has been finalized.