

# [sic!]

SUMMER INSTITUTE COLOGNE

2018 - CONSTRUCTION SITES - CALL FOR  
PARTICIPATION



- Topic: Construction Sites
- 27 August - 7 September 2018
- Location: Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung, University of Cologne
- Deadline for applications: 28 February 2018
- ➔ Extended Deadline: 15 March 2018
- Open to graduate students (master's and PhD)
- Fee: 200.00 Euro, reduced fee for Cologne students: 70.00 Euro (TGS covers the fee for Northwestern students)
- The fee covers lunches, excursions as well as snacks, and coffee at [sic!].
- You will find the application form, a preliminary timetable, and more information on <http://www.sic.phil-fak.uni-koeln.de>
- Please feel free to contact the coordinator Sabine Päsler:  
[sabine.paesler@uni-koeln.de](mailto:sabine.paesler@uni-koeln.de)



**Northwestern**  
**THE GRADUATE SCHOOL**

## [sic!] 2018

We invite graduate and postgraduate students from Art History, Classics, Comics Studies, Communication, Cultural Studies, Dance, English, Film, German, Japanese Literature, History, Literary Studies, Media, Music, Performance, Sound, Theatre, and related fields to apply for this international interdisciplinary program. (All sessions will be conducted in English.) Participants and faculty of [sic!] 2018 will explore perspectives on the topic *Construction Sites* through three themed seminars:

- Comics & Visual Narration
- Sound
- Theatre Historiography

Each seminar will be led by a pair of scholars from Northwestern University (Evanston, USA) and the University of Cologne (Germany). Each participant enrolls in one seminar, thus composing an individual study program. Seminars and workshops are enhanced by excursions, lectures by alumni, poster presentations by students, and social gatherings. The University of Cologne assists participants in identifying accommodation and with other basic logistics.

## CONSTRUCTION SITES

In a profound way, scholarly projects are “construction sites”...

...that exist in tension between what is visible/readable/undertaken and what unfolds in the work-in-progress. Scholars utilize various skills and techniques towards an end - assembling material, generating insights, crafting arguments - and yet the end result may be very different from what was planned. Being “under construction” implies flexibility, improvisation, and ongoing adaptation.

How is evidence recognized as such and marshalled while arguments are “under construction”? Seminars in Comics & Visual Narration, Sound Studies, and Theatre Historiography explore the implications of this, both for participants’ projects and in thinking about how research aggregates into what we call “disciplines” and “fields.”



## COMICS & VISUAL NARRATION

— Prof. Patrick Noonan (Northwestern) & Prof. Stephan Packard (Cologne)

### **Constructing Space, Building Place:**

#### **Topographies of Comics and Visual Narration**

This year, the seminar on comics and other forms of visual narration will look at the ways in which pictures and images construct spatial and narrative structures.

Taking our departure from the distinction between *espace* (space) and *lieu* (place), we will look at how the abstract and formal schemes of space are connected with the semantics of a lived-in place: surfaces of pages and screens are turned into locations where script and pictures, symbols and icons, depth and shape coincide. In the seminar we will explore ways in which this distinction forces us to historicize and contextualize the construction of seemingly immediate perceptions and narrative interpretations of spaces and bodies.

Describing such constructions leads us to examine cultural contexts as well as the aesthetics and traditions of an art form, allowing us to pose questions such as:

- How does the intermedial relationship between narrative forms and visual spaces reproduce systems that make “places” seem familiar?
- How is the abstract formation of space transformed into place as a location for social relationships?
- Which specific creative practices are involved in construing space and producing recognizable narratives, and what cultural archives of established devices and topoi, of consistent points of reference, exist for the creation of such media? What pictorial traditions are taken up or modified?
- What observations may a gaze, informed by these concepts and doubts, see on the page of a comic book, and in other visual narratives? What does such a gaze conceal?
- What are the political implications of how space is used to produce place? How are spaces and places presented in terms of race, class, and gender? How are sets of inclusions, exclusions, and various conditions of accessibility signaled in the depiction of space and movement?
- How is the affinity to caricature in comic books involved in misrepresenting and rendering readable not merely the human body, but also its location in space and its isolation from spatial dimensions?
- How does the presentation of bodies in space translate otherwise invisible and possibly imperceptible abstract concepts, among them the inner sense of time, into a narratively operative form? How is time spatialized?

- How are the allocation of space on the page or screen and the description of storyspace brought into correlation?
- In which ways does the often purposefully marginal and appropriative art of the comic book open up further questions about the historical, cultural, national and other contexts from which its spatial forms arise? How does it defamiliarize established spaces and meanings?
- Finally, and taking into account that the field of comics studies still understands itself as new: how does the field itself still appear under construction, and how does it seem to take shape through different methodologies and theoretical approaches? How do other disciplines' approaches to the analysis of space and place converge or differ?



## SOUND

— J.-Prof. Peter Moormann (Cologne) & Prof. Neil Verma (Northwestern)

### **Sound at Work**

In this seminar, we will listen with fresh ears to some of the material and theoretical "workshops" that characterize the sound arts. The sound arts, broadly construed, comprises musical and performance traditions as well as media, arts, and games in a variety of expressive contexts. In each session, we focus on one of the sites where we work on sound (and where sound works on us) in order to hear resonances between them, particularly as each confronts moments of impasse, improvisation and error.

Discussion may include well-known spaces, such as concert halls, radio and recording studios, dance clubs and cinemas, as well as the scenes of production or reception that correspond to them. But we will give special attention to less-theorized microenvironments and intangible places where sound is deconstructed and reconstructed, from nonlinear artwork and digital audio workstations to mic capsules and earbuds, VR headsets, the realms of the infra and ultra-sonic, and the inner ear itself. The moment we critically engage any of these workshops of sound, of course, another "workspace" emerges; sound arts re-energize and redistribute a variety of theoretical domains, from semiotics, musicology, and narrative theory to

phenomenology, feminist theory, avant-garde history, and ecocriticism, to name a few.

With this in mind, our seminar asks: how have the “construction sites” of sound and those of theory informed one another, historically? What traffic takes place between them now? Who sets the rules in these workplaces and who breaks them? As critics, how do we learn to work with sound and how do we learn to “play” with it?

Some other questions to consider will include

- How does power work in the places where sound works, particularly when it comes to questions of social difference along lines of class, race, gender, sexuality and nationality?
- What kind of labor is sonic production and reception? What practices and sensibilities accrue around spaces occupied by audio engineers, composers, designers, and performers. What secrets lurk in sound’s rules of thumb, low knowledge, aesthetic habits, gossip?
- What is a “sound work” exactly? How does the “sound work” as a noun relate to the processes that underlie sound work as a verb?
- As theorists, how does sound work open up (or circumscribe) a space of improvisation?



## THEATRE HISTORIOGRAPHY

— Prof. Tracy C. Davis (Northwestern) & Prof. Peter W. Marx (Cologne)

This year, the seminar will consider the relationship between two forms of contingency: (1) what the historian does with evidence whilst their research is “under construction,” and (2) how history “scales” up to grand narratives and “scales down” to micro studies. What is best for a given question? What are appropriate scholarly protocols for utilizing these different approaches? Applicants interested in any of the following questions will be particularly congruent with this approach:

- How do choices about methods relate to engagements with historiography in theatre and performance studies?
- What is the status of various post-event formats (sketches, photography, reviews, anecdotes) in the construction of history?
- How do we see the historian “at work”? Are anachronism, simultaneity, incongruency, conjecture, located or partial perspectives, or incomparabilities clues to this?
- Erudition helps historians to identify good questions, but is also crucial for interpretation. But are there times when it gets in the way of seeing evidence?
- Sometimes, a discerning historian can make a lot from a little: e.g. a single stage prop, vocal inflection, or location can spark an extended study.

Sometimes, we need a lot in order to make very modest claims. How can we think about a corpus of evidence holistically as well as singularly?

- Theatre and performance are manifestations of culture, but are they its symptom or its catalyst? What leads to what?
- Often, a collection of case studies is taken for sufficient evidence of a central claim. Yet zooming in and out works differently - depth, abstraction, clarity, comparison - when aggregated across cases. How can this be intelligently calibrated?
- Is historical thinking one flavor of theatre and performance studies, or all? How is the field dynamically addressing history as a factor, especially in relation to current theatre and performance?
- How is the archiving of performance challenged by the nature of performance? Are there important considerations in relation to specific cultures, periods, and kinds of performance, both to its “disappearance” and “traces”?



— Images: 1) construction site of the Oper am Habsburgerring, Cologne, 1901, 2) construction site of the Oper Köln, Offenbachplatz, 1955, 3) Hair and Make-Up department at the Cologne opera, undated; all held at Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung Cologne

— Photos of [sic!] 2017: Christina Vollmert

