

SCIENTIFIC REPORT

ESF Exploratory Workshop on

Intermedialities: Theory, History, Practice

Amsterdam (Netherlands), 12-14 June 2009

Convened by:

Prof. dr. Ginette Verstraete and dr. Ivo Blom

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Subject and urgency of the workshop

Over the last decades, intermediality has come to the foreground as an urgent concept in theory on inter-relations within and between arts and media. It has also initiated a strong field of academic research, uniting various disciplines and competences. However, this cross-disciplinary collaboration is not unproblematic, for several reasons.

First of all, because there are different versions and interpretations of the concept of intermediality, the plural ‘intermedialities’ would be more suitable; hence the title of the workshop. Secondly, within this field of research, various approaches sometimes converge, other times stand opposed, coming from literary studies, film studies, media studies, contemporary arts studies, and last but not least new media studies. In Europe, scholars speak in different disciplinary tongues, therefore interdisciplinary encounters are of crucial importance, but may also cause disciplinary misunderstandings. Thirdly, by now, intermediality has established itself as an important field of research, which has had a first strong impetus in the German speaking European countries, with French speaking countries (France, French Canada) as strong partners. Within The field, an organization in French Canada (Centre de Recherche pour l’Intermedialité) has been established, but a European, English speaking network is lacking. Consequently, we also have a language problem, as English written texts are missing; which seems to explain the “underdevelopment” of intermediality as a field of research in the UK & the USA. The lack of English translations or original English texts also causes a serious problem teaching intermediality to non-German and non-French reading students, as various attendees confirmed.

Finally, until now research in the field of intermediality has mainly focused on theory, with less attention being paid to history, let alone to the connections between the academic world with those of curatorship, funding & policy making. Combining theory & practice was felt to be one of the major advantages of the workshop by the attendees. In fact, whereas artists and technicians are increasingly working in intermedial ways, universities and other institutions are lagging behind. The ESF Exploratory Workshop ‘Intermedialities: Theory, History, Practice’ therefore focused on four main issues within the field of intermediality: theory, history, curatorship, and policy & funding.

Meeting place and participants

The ESF Exploratory Workshop was held at De Rode Hoed, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, on 14-16 June, 2009. It was organised by convenor Dr Ivo Blom (VU University), 6 co-convenors (Ginette Verstraete, Ágnes Pethö, Antonio Somaini, Francesco Casetti, Jens Schröter and Yvonne Spielmann) and 2 local organisers, Daniëlle Roeleveld (secretary) and Connie Veugen (minutes). The workshop consisted of 17 people in total, including the convenor and co-convenors. The workshop was attended by people from 8 European nations (Austria, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Rumania, Sweden, and the UK); two Dutch professors attending the workshop originally came from Belgium and Germany. As two invitees cancelled their attendance before the workshop started, representatives from the Czech Republic and Belgium were absent. Among the co-convenors and convenors 3 out of 7 were women, which also applied to the other participants; local organisation was done by 1 man and 2 women. Among the convenors and participants, 8 out of 14 were professors, and almost all had a PhD, with ages ranging from 30 to 60. Attendees came from a wide range of academic disciplines, ranging from film & media studies, cultural studies, literary studies to law studies, often also from departments mixing different arts & media. We even had one professor with a chair in intermediality. Furthermore, the attendees had a wide range of

theoretical backgrounds, such as art history & theory, film history & film theory, theory & history of television, video & new media, semiotics & communication theory, aesthetics, philosophy, copyright & culture etc. Finally, among our attendees, we had some practical expertise on curatorship of exhibitions and on funding of cultural and academic projects. This mixture proved to be very stimulating.

The workshop program

The workshop started with introductory notes by convenors Ivo Blom and Ginette Verstraete, and clear introductions by everyone, in order to get to know each other's background & ideas. This helped to increase the cohesion within the group substantially and to explore the possibilities of alliances.

The first part of the workshop was dedicated to two topics: the historiography of intermediality and the politics of intermediality. 'Intermedialities' were really put on the map by presentations by Ágnes Pethö and Jens Schröter respectively, and even beforehand by a panoramic text on intermediality by Irina Rajewsky, which everybody read in advance. Other reading material, related to the presentations, was put on the accompanying team site beforehand or mailed around. After each presentation there was ample room for discussion, which proved to be a very useful format. The second part of the presentations, on Saturday morning, used the same format. This part consisted of presentations by Antonio Somaini on curatorship and Maaïke Lauwaert on policy making & funding. Here too the discussions proved to be fruitful.

The initial format of small separate workshops for Saturday afternoon was cancelled in favour of a plenary session, as most participants felt that the newly formed cohesion should not be split up. This resulted in a rich inventory by all attendees of the backgrounds and networks they could contribute to, elements and research within the field of intermediality which were missing, and their individual plans within the field. This proved to be an excellent basis not only to map the existing field, but also to indicate opportunities for input and output. The presence of the ESF representative Arianna Ciula was very helpful, as she could specify possible research funding the ESF or the EU (COST etc.) could offer, while Maaïke Lauwaert listed the funding possibilities of the Mondriaan Foundation, such as grants for development costs. After a full day of rich but dense talk, a cooling off on the Amsterdam canals was well received, when the organization offered a small boat tour.

On the last morning, the previous discussions were made even more concrete by making plans for the future, both limited in scope and more ambitious (see below). This closing session proved to be as rich as the previous sessions.

SCIENTIFIC CONTENT

In our application for this workshop we set out to look at 'intermedialities' on various levels:

- As a European environment or cultural trend (of converging services, functions, marketing strategies, artistic strategies) present in Europe today.
- As specific forms of interplay (with different qualities, intentions, meanings, histories and effects) between and within specific media, such as film, television, graphic design, the hypermedia, and the digital game.
- As a historical phenomenon that finds its roots not only in the technical history of media communication and recording through words and images, but also in the tradition of collage and montage in film and the visual arts, in the history of reproductions and television series, in older literary practices of intertextual

referencing and adaptation, and in previous synthetic critical art experiments (such as the Fluxus movement).

- As a conceptual framework which we will examine to understand what constitutes the specificity of a medium, of a work of art and of the factual and fictional material within the context of a growing number of synergies and the transgression of boundaries.
- As an educational tool: Is it possible to teach young students how to compare arts and media? How to use a comparative approach to study the theory and practice of intermediality, with particular emphasis on the interaction between the arts (literary and visual arts) and the media (advertising, graphic design, film, computer games, websites, etc.), as it has evolved throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries? How can this interaction be understood within a historical context? How can the synergy between the arts and media be defined, mapped, signified and analysed?

Most of the above mentioned topics were dealt with during the ESF workshop: the European environment & cultural trend, mapping the European field (existing networks, past conferences & publications, etc.), the interplay between and within specific media (most attendees already had mixed backgrounds & mixed institutional statures, but new alliances in joined mix-media research were set up too), the multiform ways of historical approaches (the two talks by Ágnes Pethö and Jens Schröter were clear examples of this), and finally the conceptual framework (which was established in the discussions, inspired by the presentations and the text by Irina Rajewsky, 'Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation: A Literary Perspective on Intermediality' (2005)). We also discussed possibilities for educational implementation.

However, in addition to these academic concerns, we also focused on stronger ties with the professional fields of policy making and curatorship, thus crossing academic and institutional boundaries. Finally, we invested much time in operating as a think tank for the future, that is: discussing various initiatives for cross-institutional collaboration and for the stimulation, funding and dissemination of research.

The workshop explored the concepts and practices of intermedia and intermediality and related terms (multimedia, convergence, hybridisation, appropriation, migration, remediation, etc.) in different national, disciplinary and historical contexts: how can we understand the convergence between arts and media; how do we curate it; and how do we fund it? In addition to conceptualisation, we looked at three other important categories: intermediality in historical research, intermediality in curatorship and intermediality in assessment and funding institutions.

The presentation of Ágnes Pethö dealt with the historiographic development of theories on intermediality over the last decades and how these are related to, but also often opposed to the development of film studies. Pethö indicated how film studies has opposed the synthesizing, converging tendency of theories on intermediality for decades, because of a fear that the medium specificity would be endangered; medium specificity is exactly what film theorists have focused on ever since the invention of film, partly in search of legitimization, first in critical and later in institutional circles.

Jens Schröter made clear that when considering the politics of intermediality, it is extremely stimulating to reread classic texts that deal with the concept of intermediality, ranging from e.g. Clement Greenberg, who opposed the concept, to Dick Higgins, who promoted and embraced it, in order to understand the different factions and interpretations. Schröters presentation confirmed the title of the workshop; that is, that we need to talk about Intermedialities in the plural, and take into account the different political, disciplinary and

institutional agendas, if we want to understand the different interpretations. Looking back might prepare us better for the future.

Antonio Somaini focused on both intermedial exhibitions he made himself and those made by others (such as Bruno Latour's *Iconoclash*) – thus indicating a shift in classic curatorship towards a more philosophical and political approach, resulting in exhibiting less 'l'art pour l'art' than mixing both artistic and non-artistic objects to make statements. Maaïke Lauwaert, subsequently, indicated how her employer, the Dutch Mondriaan Foundation, deals with the shifting field of contemporary arts with its increase in intermedial projects by refusing separate funding committees. In both worlds, that of curatorship and that of policy & funding, major shifts have been taking place which call for theoretical & historical reflection by academics too. Lauwaert also contributed to the discussions on curatorship by putting forward inspiring article suggestions on (contested) authorship related to exhibitions.

We are explicitly seeking to establish a future European research programme and network, involving academics with a wide range of nationalities, disciplines, experiences and ambitions, whilst also trying to provide a European platform for exploring ways of dealing with the current situation in the arts and media world with regard to growing intermedial relationships.

Literature mentioned and recent relevant publications by attendees

Greenberg, Clement, 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch', in: John O'Brian ed., *Clement Greenberg. The Collected Essays and Criticism. Volume 1. Perceptions and Judgments, 1939-1944* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 5-22.

Greenberg, Clement, 'Intermedia', *October* vol. 56, 2, 1981, 92-93.

Higgins, Dick, 'Intermedia', in: *foeweombwhnw* (New York: Something Else Press, 1969), 11-29.

Higgins, Dick, *Horizons: The Poetics and Theory of the Intermedia* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press), 1984, 18-21.

Krauss, Rosalind, 'Reinventing the Medium', *Critical Inquiry* 25, Winter 1999, 289-305.

Latour, Bruno, 'What is iconoclash? Or is there a world beyond the image wars?', in Bruno Latour, Peter Weibel eds., *Iconoclash. Beyond the Image Wars in Science, Religion and Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press/Karlsruhe: ZKM, 2002).

Müller, Jürgen, *Intermedialität. Formen moderner kultureller Kommunikation* (Münster 1996); idem,

Intermedialität (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 2003).

Müller, Jürgen, 'L'intermedialité, une nouvelle approche interdisciplinaire: perspectives théoriques et pratique à l'exemple de l'audiovisuel et de la télévision', in: *Cinéma*, vol. 10, 203, Spring 2000, 105-134.

Paech, Joachim/ Jens Schröter, *Intermedialität analog/digital. Theorien – Methoden – Analysen* (München: Fink, 2008).

Pethö, Agnes ed., *Words and Images on the Screen: Language, Literature, Moving Pictures* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2008)

Rajewsky, Irina O., *Intermedialität* (UTB, 2002).

Rajewsky, Irina O., 'Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation: A Literary Perspective on Intermediality', *Intermedialités* 6, 2005, 43-64.

Schröter, Jens, 'Intermedialität', *montage a.v.* (1998); see also http://www.theorie-der-medien.de/text_detail.php?nr=12.

Spielmann, Yvonne, *Intermedialität. Das System Peter Greenaway* (Fink, 1998).

Spielmann, Yvonne, Jürgen Heinrichs, ed., 'What is Intermedia.', *Convergence. The Journal of Research into New Media*, vol. 8, 4, 2002.

Spielmann, Yvonne, *Video. Das reflexive Medium* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2008).

Wagner, Peter, *Icons - Text - Iconotexts. Essays on Ekphrasis and Intermediality* (Walter de Gruyter, 1996).

ASSESSMENT OF THE RESULTS

At the farewell and afterwards, all attendees expressed how fruitful the workshop had been and the many eye-openers they had had. Praise was also for the organization. Our next initiatives will be as follows:

1. Team site: The team site we used for the workshop we originally thought to exchange for a Yahoo or Google group, but after the workshop both proved to be problematic either for security reasons or because of a limit on data exchange; therefore, for the time being, we will continue using the team site.
2. Website: We will build a website in the future, which can then be filled with news agenda, articles, links to translated articles or new translations of articles (after permissions have been granted), links to journals & other publications, links to related blogs, etc.
3. Conferences: We established that we could form separate panels on intermediality within three upcoming conferences in Istanbul (NECS conference 2010), Utrecht (Theatre conference 2011) and Lisbon (2012). In the mean time, NECS (Network for European Cinema Studies) has eagerly accepted our proposal for the Istanbul conference. Because of the positive response by some attendees, there might even be more than one panel. The NECS organization has also offered to host a permanent workgroup on intermediality in their midst, in addition to all possible help offered in developing and materializing our ideas.
4. Publication: Co-convenor Ágnes Pethö has offered to publish the proceedings of the Exploratory Workshop as a special issue of her journal. We will need the funding by ESF for proceedings for this publication.
5. Application: Finally, after Arianna Ciula had explained the possibilities of the Research Networking Programme and COST, some of the attendees offered to help write a proposal for the Research Networking Programme, in spite of its early deadline (late October) and busy diaries. Within a RNP programme, various options could be applied for, such as a travelling Summer School and a publication series. The deadline for COST (1 September) proved to be too early for everybody, in spite of the possibilities.
6. Involvement: After the first impetus given by the Amsterdam organization, an appeal was put forward to the attendees from other European cities and countries to proceed with the next steps, in order to balance the work. The promise was made that in future more people from Eastern European countries will be involved, as well as authors whose work we read, such as Irina Rajewsky, and organizers of previous conferences on intermediality.
7. Written input: In addition, we can state that all attendees agreed to send us an A4 with their own ideas on intermediality and plans for the future, which we can use for future funding applications, such as the Research Network Programme application.

FINAL PROGRAMME

Friday, 12 June 2009

- 12.30 Door open & informal lunch at De Rode Hoed
- 13.00-13.15 **Official welcome by Convenors**
Ginette Verstraete and Ivo Blom (VU-University, Amsterdam, Netherlands)
- 13.15-14.15 **Introductions by the co-convenors and participants**
- 14.15-14.45 **Presentation 1 “Historiography of Methodologies: intermediality & film”**
Ágnes Pethő (Sapientia-Hungarian University, Cluj, Rumania)
- 14.45-15.45 Discussion
- 15.45-16.15 Coffee/tea break
- 16.15-16.45 **Presentation 2 “The Politics of Intermediality”**
Jens Schröter (Universität Siegen)
- 16.45-17.45 Discussion
- 17.45-18.00 **Presentation of the European Science Foundation (ESF)**
Arianna Ciula (ESF Standing Committee for the Humanities (SCH))
- 19.00 Conference dinner

Saturday, 13 June 2009

- 09.00-09.30 Door open & coffee/tea
- 09.30-10.00 **Presentation 3 “Intermediality & Curatorship”**
Antonio Somaini (Politecnico, Milano/University of Genova)
- 10.00-11.00 **Discussion**
- 11.00-11.30 Coffee/tea break
- 11.30-12.00 **Presentation 3 “Intermediality in Policy Making & Funding: the case study of a funding program for e-culture projects”**
Maike Lauwaert (Mondriaan Foundation, Amsterdam, Netherlands)
- 12.00-13.00 Discussion
- 13.00-14.00 Lunch
- 14.00-15.30 **“Creating New Alliances”: mapping the field, tracing the gaps, ambitions**
- 15.30-16.00 Coffee/tea break
- 16.00-17.00 **Continuation of the discussion, making plans**

17.30 Boat tour & drinks aboard
Dinner (at one's own expense).

Sunday, 14 June 2009

09.30-10.00 Door open, coffee/tea

10.00-12.00 Concrete plans for the future

Discussion of follow-up activities/networking/collaboration:

Possibilities of application and collaboration for the future: e.g. at ESF (Research Networking Programme) & elsewhere (COST), network organisation, website, separate panels at conferences in 2010-2012, publications (e.g. the workshop proceedings), Summer School-like workshops, education on MA and PhD level, exchange of students & lecturers, collaborations in funding & policy making, collaborations in curatorship.

12.00-12.30 **Conclusions by the convenors**
12.30 End of workshop and departure

Final List of Participants

Convenor:

1. Ivo BLOM (VU University, Amsterdam, Netherlands)

Co-Convenors:

2. Ginette VERSTRAETE (VU University, Amsterdam, Netherlands)
3. Ágnes PETHŐ (Sapientia – Hungarian University, Cluj-Napoca, Rumania)
4. Antonio SOMAINI (Politecnico, Milan/ University of Genova, Italy)
5. Francesco CASETTI (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan, Italy)
6. Yvonne SPIELMANN (University of West of Scotland)
7. Jens SCHROETER (Universität Siegen)

Participants:

8. Susanna ARAÚJO (University of Lisbon, Lisbon, Portugal)
9. Maaïke LAUWAERT (Mondriaan Stichting, Amsterdam, Netherlands)
10. Martin SENFTLEBEN (VU University, Amsterdam, Netherlands)
11. Jürgen MUELLER (University of Bayreuth, Bayreuth, Germany)
12. Chiel KATTENBELT (University of Utrecht, Utrecht, Netherlands)
13. Klemens GRUBER (Universität Wien, Vienna, Austria)
14. Annika WIK (Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden)

Local Organisers:

15. Daniëlle ROELEVELD (VU University, Amsterdam, Netherlands)
16. Connie VEUGEN (VU University, Amsterdam, Netherlands)

ESF Representative:

17. Arianna CIULA

Statistical information on Participants

Countries of origin

NL	7	HU	1
IT	2	UK	1
DE	2	PT	1
AT	1	SE	1

Gender

Male: 8 Female: 8