

Symposium Barthes by the Margins

What happens to the 'death of the author' when we do not read it as a manifesto for a new critique, but as a commentary on contemporary art? What happens to our perception of *Camera Lucida* when we read it not only as a textbook for photography doubled with a tale of mourning but as a visual manifesto for minorities?

Engaging with Barthes's politics of in/visibility in a broad sense, this workshop will interrogate the centrality of the margins in Roland Barthes' works and explore their underlying visual universe. Acclaimed for his decipherings of everyday mythologies, Barthes not only developed a wide set of tools and concepts to deconstruct the ideologies governing the visible: his critique of cultural stereotypes, his new approach to literature and the arts always go hand in hand with a reflection on the margins and a commitment to minorities.

Magali Nachtergaele will guide our discussion of pre-circulated texts. By confronting some of Barthes' central concepts with the visual universe that innervates them, Nachtergaele will help us ask how what is left in the margins can sometimes crucially shift perspectives on the reception of these concepts.

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BERLIN KULTURLABOR
INSTITUTE FOR CULTURAL INQUIRY

Symposium

Monday, 25 June 2018, 16:00-21:00, in English

Organized by
Julie Gaillard and
Francesco Giusti

Barthes by the Margins

with Magali Nachtergaele

Programme

16:00 – 18:00 Workshop

19:30 Evening Keynote
Magali Nachtergaele
Barthes, Queer Before Queer?
A Journey Into Barthes's Visual Culture

Followed by a roundtable discussion with Julie Gaillard, Francesco Giusti, and Dirk Naguschewski

Please note: there is no need to register for the evening event, but the workshop session will discuss short excerpts from Roland Barthes. Please contact [info@ici-berlin.org] if you would like to register for the workshop and receive the excerpts in advance.

19:30 **Magali Nachtergaele**

Barthes, Queer Before Queer? A Journey Into Barthes's Visual Culture

Barthes's homosexuality is a well-known fact, and recent biographies have shed light on this major part of his social life. How should the inaugural text of *Mythologies* ('The World of Wrestling') be re-read in light of the fact that he was going to wrestling matches with Michel Foucault in order to hook up? What can we learn from it, say, about masculinity, and signs of gay visual culture and desire in general? If we look closely at Barthes's work, we discover a network of signs that echoes the system of the homosexual Proustian subtext, and notice that gay visual culture becomes clearer and always more prominent in Barthes's works from the 1970s, especially in images. Thus, the images speak when words remain silent, in a conservative France where homosexuality is condemned by law until 1981. Images also allow us to revisit key Barthesian concepts, such as the neutral, which can be taken as a queer notion *avant la lettre*, with interesting connections to Susan Sontag's influential concept of 'camp'.

Magali Nachtergaele is associate professor of 20th and 21st century French literature at Université Paris 13 as well as an art critic. She is the author of *Barthes Contemporain* (2015) and *Les mythologies individuelles. Récit de soi et photographie au XXème siècle* (2012). In 2015 she curated the exhibitions *Lumières de Roland Barthes* in Bordeaux and Orthez, and she co-curated the exhibition *The Family of the Invisibles* in Seoul in 2016. A specialist of the relations of art and literature, her works focus on the relations of text and image (photography, contemporary art, media) and on Roland Barthes.