

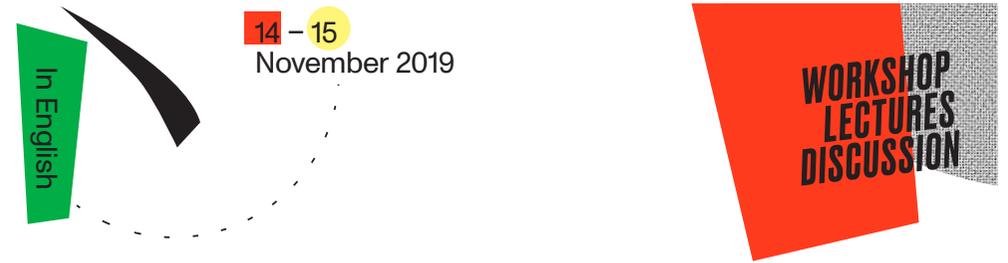
Experimental Humanities

Across the humanities and in the performative arts the experiment – commonly associated with the empirical sciences – is gaining ground. These diverse endeavours understand the experiment as a formalized (re)staging of an encounter that may produce unforeseen results. Such encounters put greater emphasis on the research environment and foreground the participation of previously neglected human and non-human actors. As a consequence, increasing attention is paid to the constitution, agency, and surfaces of objects of knowledge. The lectures and the workshop aim to examine the relation, distinction, and interplay between experimental practices, laboratory settings, and creative processes, as well as the status of repetition, restaging, and novelty within knowledge production in the humanities and the performative arts.



ICI Berlin Institute for Cultural Inquiry
Christinenstr. 18/19, Haus 8
D-10119 Berlin
Tel: +49 30 473 72 91 10
www.ici-berlin.org
U-Bhf Senefelder Platz (U2)

A criticalhabitations event in cooperation with ICI
Berlin, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Paderborn
University/BMBF, and Potsdam University



experimental humanities



Organized by
Alexander Dunst
Elahe Haschemi Yekani
Anja Sunhyun Michaelsen
Anja Schwarz

Programme

LECTURES AND DISCUSSION, 14 NOVEMBER 2019, 18:00, IN ENGLISH

- Nishant Shah
Error 400 – Bad Request: Authorship, Authority, Authenticity in the Experimental Setup

The model of the experiment often comes with the imagined attributes of neutrality and openness, particularly made glamorous by the promise of failure. Ideas of replication, verification, and scalability further reinforce the idea of the experiment as a pure form of knowledge production that can be constructed and repeated as a universal given, thus offering a truth that can be evidenced. Shah proposes that experimental setups depend upon the political, contested, and exclusionary constructions of authorship, authority, and authenticity, which are hidden in the description of the experimental setup. Looking at a postcolonial feminist history of digital technologies, computational networks, and cybernetics, this talk will dismantle the experimental setup by looking at the conditions of asking questions and the need to expand the idea of the experiment beyond the logistics of apparatus, process, and replication.

Nishant Shah is the Vice-President of Research at ArtEZ University of the Arts and a research mentor with the Hivos Foundation's 'Digital Earth' programme. His current preoccupation is with questions of 'aesthetic warfare' that examine digital technologies, informational networks, and design practices that shape current post-truth moments and their implications for social justice and human rights interventions.

- Vanessa Agnew
Lines of Sight: Excursions in Seeing, Feeling, and Knowing

The talk examines the use of historical reenactment, virtual reality (VR), machine learning, and big data in the production of knowledge about the past. Dealing with museum and art exhibits and documentary shorts such as *Nazi VR* and *Triple Chaser*, Agnew examines the ways in which new technologies are marshalled and older ones repurposed in order to gather and present compelling historical evidence. Against this backdrop, the talk asks what space remains for interpretation and the articulation of feeling. Is history's 'affective turn' in the process of being superseded?

Vanessa Agnew is a professor of English at the University of Duisburg-Essen and senior fellow at the Australian National University. Her *Enlightenment Orpheus: The Power of Music in Other Worlds* (2008) won the Oscar Kenshur Prize for Eighteenth-Century Studies and the American Musicological Society's Lewis Lockwood Award. She co-organizes the Critical Thinking programme of the Academy in Exile, which provides fellowships for scholars-at-risk.

- 18:00 Introduction
- 18:10 Talks by Nishant Shah and Vanessa Agnew
- 19:10 Panel discussion with Nishant Shah, Vanessa Agnew, Alexander Dunst, and Anja Schwarz followed by a Q&A

WORKSHOP, 15 NOVEMBER 2019, 10:00–18:00, IN ENGLISH

Experimental Encounters

- Tahani Nadim and Sybille Neumeyer
Experimental Planting

A seed. An archive. Soaked in material memories of soils, weathers, technologies, journeys, and cross-species interactions. The moment of planting, like an uncertain inscription: will it hold, will it stand up to the scrutiny of bugs and political winds? What endures in the archive and what stands to lose life and the right to flourish are not unrelated. As an effectual epistemic arrangement, archives shore up categories and histories that accord livable lives to some. As a permeable site of things and people, archives can hardly contain the derelictions and nervousness that structure the practices of recording, breeding, and keeping.

Through their method of 'experimental planting', Nadim and Neumeyer are introducing other living and non-living records into archival tectonics. In doing so, they seek to examine questions of narratives found in and produced by agricultural practices and archives. They want to pay particular attention to the troubles hidden in their ghostly matters. They begin by approaching two sites of archival matter: documentary fragments relating to experimental agricultural stations of the German colonial empire kept at the Botanical Museum and Botanical Garden Berlin and the historical archive (Historische Bild- und Schriftgutsammlung) of the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin. In re-sorting, re-classifying, up-turning, and re-describing documents and traces, this workshop will experiment with and speculate about beginnings and endings, plots and plantations, and present pasts.

Tahani Nadim is a junior professor for socio-cultural anthropology in a joint appointment between the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin and the Humboldt-University's Institute for European Ethnology. Her interdisciplinary research combines the sociology and anthropology of science and problematizes data practices and data infrastructures in biodiversity discovery and natural history collections.

Sybille Neumeyer is a multimedia artist, living and working in Berlin. Her work focuses on ecological issues and includes drawings, installations, objects, moving and still images through which she explores the relationships and entanglements between humans and non-humans. Currently she is investigating micro-histories and polyphonic (hi)story-telling based on cross-disciplinary research.