

CALL FOR PAPERS

Creative Bodies—Creative Minds

An international, interdisciplinary conference

26th – 27th March 2018

at RESOWI Zentrum, Universitätsstraße 15, A-8010 Graz, Austria

Organizers: Sociology of Gender section, Department of Sociology, University of Graz; FH JOANNEUM – University of Applied Sciences Graz; and Graz University of Technology

In 2008 the then Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, proposed funding cuts in the arts sector, reasoning that the arts were a “niche interest” that did not concern “ordinary people”. The writer Margaret Atwood wrote a powerful polemic in *The Globe and Mail* in response. She argued that not only was the arts sector beneficial to the Canadian economy, but also that “ordinary” Canadians were creative. She went on to compile a list of everyday creative activities from making music or films for the Net, through knitting and quilting, to gardening, cooking and home woodworking shop to demonstrate that creativity is a part of being human, rather than a niche interest [1].

Atwood echoed Raymond Williams’ proposition of “ordinary” culture, a culture created not by the arts, but in the process of everyday activities of ordinary people [2]. Building on his work, a group of researchers led by Paul Willis lamented in 1990 that there was “decreasing room for creativity in the necessary symbolic work of most paid work”. As a consequence, creativity outside of the professional milieu was crowded out into leisure space, which in turn became the home turf of “common culture”: “vulgar sometimes”, but also “‘common’ in being shared” [3]. They clearly set “the arts” and “culture” in opposition, the former elitist and exclusive, the latter ordinary and inclusive. Scholarly work on creativity has fed into this dichotomy by focusing on the lone genius. Only in recent years has its social dimension come under more intense scrutiny, fuelled by technological advances and the networking potential of new media audiences across the globe. David Gauntlett emphasizes the community aspect of this new, democratic creative culture: “making is connecting” [4], while Andreas Reckwitz concludes that creativity has become a universal model for culture and an imperative in many parts of society [5].

Gender scholars have participated in this current wave of inquiries into creativity from the everyday to creative industries. They have also raised critical voices, pointing out the gendered definition of creativity to the exclusion of activities in which women typically engaged. The beginnings of this argument can be traced at least as far back as the end of the 19th century and to the change of perspective introduced by the Arts and Crafts Movement. In 2007 Riane Eisler and Alfonso Montuori proposed a de-gendered definition of creativity, one that opens the concept to include a greater variety of activities, beyond mere invention. According to them, creativity is that “which supports, nurtures, and actualizes life by increasing the number of choices open to individuals and communities” [6].

Scholarly interest in creativity as a social and gendered phenomenon coincides with renewed interest in the body, embodiment and the material, championed by, among others, feminist new materialism, the sociology of emotions, cultural sociology, and sensory methodologies in qualitative research. The CREATIVE BODIES—CREATIVE MINDS conference aims to bring these strands of inquiry together with a special emphasis on the interrogation of gender. The areas of interest for conference presentations include, but are certainly not limited to:

- Gender in everyday, artisan, artistic and professional creative activities;
- Embodied creativity; the intersections of the sensory, the affective and the verbal;
- Material, processual and relational aspects of creative practices;
- Gendering of non-traditional sites of creativity;
- DIY, Maker Movement: from knitting, through home-making to Open Source;
- Gender in the new media and the creative industries;
- Creative embodiment of gender and challenging gender boundaries;
- Gendering the economy and politics of creativity;
- The place of creative methodologies in teaching and scholarly research, art-based research;
- The gender of creativity in social and cultural theory.

Confirmed keynote speakers:

- Emma Rees, Professor of Literature and Gender Studies, University of Chester; creator of the biennial Talking Bodies conference.
- Marta Hawkins, Director of the Futures Entrepreneurship Centre, University of Plymouth.

We are inviting proposals for presentations from scholars, practitioners and postgraduate students from a wide range of disciplines including, but not limited to: sociology, cultural studies, anthropology, art, performance, history, literary studies, social studies of science and technology and environmental studies.

Please send a 250-word abstract and a 150-word bio note before 30th September 2017 to Creative.Bodies@uni-graz.at

Registration fee: Includes all coffee/tea breaks and lunches on Monday and Tuesday (26th and 27th March) and dinner on Monday (26th March), as well as the conference welcome pack with the printed programme and a booklet of abstracts.

Regular conference fee: 150 EUR

Reduced conference fee (postgraduate students): 100 EUR

Nominal fee (students of Uni Graz, FH JOANNEUM and TU Graz, without a paper): 10 EUR (20 places are reserved in the category “nominal fee” and will be allocated on first come, first serve basis.)

Information on registration, accommodation, and updates on the programme will be available on the **conference website**:

creative-bodies.uni-graz.at

We are currently applying for funding to offer partial support to postgraduate students and to researchers from institutions in countries with disadvantaged exchange rates.

Graz, a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site and Cultural Capital of Europe for 2003, is the capital of the Austrian state of Styria and the home of Austria's second largest university.

The conference organizers took inspiration from the Talking Bodies conference held every two years since 2013 at the University of Chester and will be proud to make the Creative Bodies—Creative Minds its sister conference.

Conference organizing committee:

Libora Oates-Indruchová, Professor of Sociology of Gender, University of Graz

Jana Mikats, Assistant Professor of the Sociology of Gender, University of Graz

Susanne Sackl-Sharif, Musicologist and sociologist, Department of Media & Design, FH JOANNEUM – University of Applied Sciences Graz

Wolfgang Slany, Professor of Software Technology, Graz University of Technology

Bernadette Spieler, Assistant Professor of Gender and Computer Science Education, Graz University of Technology

Important dates:

Submission of abstracts: 30th September 2017

Informing about abstract acceptance: 31st October 2017

Conference registration opens: 15th November 2017

Conference registration ends: 31st January 2018

References:

- [1] Margaret Atwood, "To be creative is, in fact, Canadian," *The Globe and Mail*, 24 September 2008 (21 March 2013). Online.
- [2] Raymond Williams. 1961. *The Long Revolution*. London: Chatto and Windus.
- [3] Paul Willis, Simon Jones, Joyce Canaan, Geoff Hurd. 1990. *Common Culture: Symbolic Work at Play in the Everyday Cultures of the Young*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- [4] David Gauntlett. 2011. *Making is Connecting: The Social Meaning of Creativity, from DIY and Knitting to YouTube and Web 2.0*. London: Polity Press.
- [5] Andreas Reckwitz. 2017. *The Invention of Creativity: Modern Society and the Culture of the New*. Translated by Steven Black. Cambridge: Polity. Original edition, 2012.
- [6] Riane Eisler and Alfonso Montuori. 2007. "Creativity, Society, and the Hidden Subtext of Gender: Toward a New Contextualized Approach." *World Futures* (63): 479-499.