

Graduate Conference: *Aesthetics and Politics*

On 13 May 2017, the graduate student community of the Department of German and Dutch gathered in Jesus College for their Conference on Aesthetics and Politics. The Conference featured ten speakers who presented their research in four panels, chaired by the Department research fellows Dr Yvonne Zivkovic, Dr Katharina Karcher, Dr Erica Wickerson, and Dr Marie Kolkenbrock. It was an excellent platform for the graduate community to exchange ideas and engage with relevant issues in German studies. After Professor Sarah Colvin's welcoming remarks and fortified by coffee, we proceeded with the first panel. In this group, gathered around the topic of "Cultivation and Culture", Margarete Tiessen, Syamala Roberts and Justine Kolata explored the infrastructures behind the various institutions of culture, such as publishing houses, galleries, and Enlightenment salons. In the second panel on "Political Selfhood and Transcultural Subjectivity", Ali Jones picked up on Justine's examination of the formation of the self, considering the aesthetic formation of political subjectivity in terms of the sublime. Kathrin Wunderlich gave the first of two talks on Kathrin Röggla, speaking on the politics of aestheticising 9/11 in her fiction alongside the work of Thomas Lehr. Kathrin examined the potential of transcultural perspectives in representing historical events of extreme stress. After lunch, Professor Erica Carter gave the keynote speech on "The Politics of the Aesthetic" in the film of Rainer Werner Fassbinder. Following this, Rafael Dernbach and Anat Messing Marcus considered the representation of the future and the past in their discussions on anticipatory realism and natural history in film. In the final panel of the conference, Nick Courtman explored how Volker Braun performs a critical archaeology of work in *Machwerk*. Isabelle Zirden picked up on Kathrin's paper on Röggla, considering her aesthetic principle of catastrophe as a poetological and political position. Finally, Abhimanyu Sharma talked on language policies in Luxembourg, observing that they often aim to homogenize the country's society.

The organisers of the conference would like to thank the Department of German and Dutch and the Schröder Foundation for enabling this enlightening and stimulating event for the graduate students. It was an opportunity to learn about the work of other students, see convergences and discover new angles to examine politics and aesthetics. We finished the day with closing remarks and a discussion chaired by Professor Andrew Webber, with new reflections on the institutionalization of culture, the constitution of the self, modern narrative and dramatic principles, the hermeneutic implications of anticipation and retrospection, and the changing role of work. The organisers are grateful to Professor Erica Carter for contributing a thought-provoking keynote speech, providing engaging comments and questions throughout the day, and promoting the [German Screen Studies Network](#).

Organisers: Anat Messing Marcus, Syamala Roberts, Pavlo Shopin