

## *Call for Papers*

### Publicum. Formations of the public in aesthetic and artistic practices

In the concept of the ›public‹, aesthetic as well as social discourses and developments overlap and diverge. While literary and political public spheres were nearly indistinguishable in the beginning, they lost this connection in the course of social differentiation. Still the striking fact remains, that the qualities of the public sphere are regularly described in aesthetic categories, e.g. in describing the public sphere as a space of visibility, or when political events are compared to theatrical spectacle.

Today, the public sphere is often diagnosed as being in crisis. This crisis may be attributed to the ›tyranny of intimacy‹ (Sennett) and the replacement of public with private matters, or to the fragmentation of the public sphere into disconnected segments. At the same time, the public (as audience) has been devalued in artistic discourse and practice as a merely passive subject, which has been emphatically contrasted with the creative artistic individual. As a remedy, strategies of transforming the audience into productive actors have been suggested; however, these models of involvement need to be criticized therein, that they do not solve the question of »the public«, but merely negate or ignore it.

Insofar as the relation between aesthetics and politics always implies the question of a »community of sensibility« (Rancière), re-evaluating the potentials and modalities of »the public« seems more than urgent, this category being understood not so much as a socio-empirical quantity, but more as the point where art and the communal sphere converge. What formations of the public can be found in artistic practices and modes of aesthetic reception? Which models of commonality, which strategies of aesthetic inclusion and exclusion can be found in artistic processes, for example in collective, pseudonymous or anonymous productions? How can art participate in the communal or public sphere, and what are the limits of such a conception under the given conditions?

The interdisciplinary conference *Publicum. Formations of the public in aesthetic and artistic practices* will explore these and related phenomena in art and culture, examining current as well as historical examples. Its line of inquiry aims at the public spheres of the arts as well as at an aesthetic of the public. It focuses on processes of cultural production as well as reception and encourages theoretical reflection on the formations of the public articulated therein.

Scholars of cultural studies, literature, arts, philosophy and sociology are invited to submit their abstracts. Papers are welcome that are written and presented in English. Each presentation will be 25 minutes. Selected papers will be published in a conference reader.

Please send your abstract **of no more than 300 words**, including a short biographical notice, **before September 1, 2009** to [interartkonferenz\[at\]googlemail.com](mailto:interartkonferenz[at]googlemail.com), or the following postal address:

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Notification of acceptance: September 15, 2009  
Conference date: **November 26-28, 2009**

Concept and conference management: Dietmar Kammerer