

## Conference Report

### **XV. International Film and Media Studies Conference in Transylvania**

#### *Figurations of Intermediality in Film*

**Cluj-Napoca, 24-25 October, 2014**

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Intermediality has emerged as a distinct theoretical issue that brings a fresh view into film studies by focusing on the manifold dialogues between different media, orchestrated by cinema. As part of this discipline in formation, in recent years the poetics and the figurations of cinematic intermediality gained increasing interest in the community of researchers of this rather unknown field. This is what constituted the premise of the XV. International Film and Media Studies Conference in Transylvania, held in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, between 24 and 25 October, 2014.

The conference was hosted by the Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania as the fifteenth edition of the international conference series organised by the Department of Film, Photography and Media. At the same time, it was the second international event organised within the framework of the research project entitled *Re-mediated images as figurations of intermediality and post-mediality in Central and East European Cinema*, supported by a grant of the Ministry of National Education of Romania.<sup>1</sup> The film conference series of the Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania enjoys an excellent international reputation, embracing a wide range of topics such as *Words and images. Language/Literature/Moving Pictures* (2007), *Film in the Post-Media Age* (2010) or *The Cinema of Sensations* (2012), to mention but those titles that resulted in volumes of studies published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing. As the second conference of the project mentioned above, it was preceded by another prestigious event, organised together with the International Society for Intermedial Studies (ISIS), entitled *Rethinking Intermediality in the Digital Age* (2013).

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<sup>1</sup> Website of the project: <http://film.sapientia.ro/en/research-programs/cncs-uefiscdi-pce-idei-research-program>

The recent edition of the series, entitled *Figurations of Intermediality in Film* (2014) constituted the organic continuation of the direction marked by the previous year's conference. It aimed to bring together researchers from all over the world specialised in themes related to intermediality in film in order to discuss issues related to the rhetoric and the poetics of intermediality in film in general, and to the theory and methodology of analysis of the figurations in particular. The conference call addressed various aspects of intermediality that can be encountered in a wide range of works from the experimental, avant-garde canon to some current examples of mainstream, "hypermediated" digital cinema, from painterly movies bordering on installation art to so-called "slow cinema" projects. The event focused on one of the key aspects of intermediality, the fact that intermediality as such always manifests as a kind of "figuration" in film. Through this, medial differences are visibly and self-reflexively "re-inscribed" within the moving image. In general, philosophical terms, intermediality can be conceived as belonging to the domain of the "figural" in the sense used by Jean-François Lyotard in *Discourse, Figure*, and elaborated by D. N. Rodowick in his seminal book *Reading the Figural*.

The conference call encouraged the problematisation of intermedial figurations in film from philosophical, aesthetical, ideological, historical, and media theoretical perspectives. It relied on theoretical works dealing with the ways in which moving images operate within a network of interrelated media, re-evaluating cinema's connections to traditional forms of visual arts (e.g. Angela DalleVacche's, Susan Felleman's, Belén Vidal's, Steven Jacobs's works on cinema and painting), on theoretical analyses of the figuration of the *tableau vivant* in cinema (e.g. Brigitte Peucker, Pascal Bonitzer, Joachim Paech, etc.), as well as on recent studies dealing with the relationship between cinema and photography (e.g. Damian Sutton, Garrett Stewart, Régis Durand, David Company, etc.). The theoretical background also included the relationship between stillness and motion within cinema, along with analyses of the connections between cinema, video and installation art (e.g. Raymond Bellour, Yvonne Spielmann, etc.). Besides the issues of intermediality and the figurations of intermediality in film approached from a theoretical vantage point, proposals were also invited to address the rhetoric of intermedial cinema, discussing phenomena of figuration and disfiguration, *mise-en-abyme* and embedding, intermediality and metalepsis, *tableau vivant*, intermediality and inter-sensuality in film, the represented body as the site of intermedial figurations; remediated images as figurations of intermediality and postmediality (remediation, recontextualisation, reframing, media collage, remix); and figurations of

intermediality as imprints of and meditations upon history and time, cultural and personal identity.

The invited keynote speakers of the conference were prominent personalities, authors of volumes with a most significant contribution to this scientific domain: Brigitte Peucker, Professor at Yale University, New Haven, USA, author of *Lyric Descent in the German Romantic Tradition* (Yale, 1987), *Incorporating Images: Film and the Rival Arts* (Princeton, 1995), *The Material Image: Art and the Real in Film* (Stanford University Press, 2007), editor of Blackwell's *Companion to Rainer Werner Fassbinder* (2012); and Eivind Røssaak, Associate Professor at the Research Department of the National Library of Norway, his publications including *Sic. Vedlitteraturens grenser* (Spartacus, 2001), *The Still/Moving Image: Cinema and the Arts* (Lambert Academic Publishing, 2010), as well as the edited books *The Archive in Motion: New Conceptions of the Archive in Contemporary Thought and New Media Practices* (Novus Press, 2010) and *Between Stillness and Motion: Film, Photography, Algorithms* (Amsterdam University Press, 2011).

About 50 researchers from 20 countries attended the two-day event. The presentations covered a wide spectrum of topics related to the relationship between film and painting, film and sculpture, the art of video installations, old and new experimental films, the aesthetics of the *tableau vivant*, as well as connections among image, sound, corporeality and media. These questions brought up a broad range of examples from silent cinema to diverse genres of contemporary film, among which special attention was given to the poetics and politics of intermediality in East Central European films that can be seen – as highlighted by the host of the event, Ágnes Pethő – in the context of shifting paradigms in film poetics: from stylistic patterns of modern/postmodern cinema towards what may be termed as “post-media” or “post-postmodern” cinema, and also in the context of an increased integration of Central and East European cinema into globalising trends in film, revealing a “communication” not only between media and arts, but also between cultures.

On the first day of the conference Brigitte Peucker delivered a keynote lecture entitled *The Space of Art in Greenaway*, discussing the aesthetics of intermedial spaces in films by Peter Greenaway. While situating these films between narrative and database, she also emphasised the evocation of theatre rather than film in *The Cook, the Thief, his Wife and her Lover* (1989). In a close analysis of this latter work, Peucker demonstrated Greenaway's ironical approach to the constraints imposed by the central perspective in paintings, detectable in the painterly image of the dinner table, a reference to the oblique framing of Hans Hals' *The Banquet* (1616). The three parallel panels dealt with the following topics: embodied

spectator, intermedial sensuality; translation and remediation: different facets of intermediality in the digital age; democracy and interactive media; figurations of intermediality in contemporary East European cinema; intermedial storytelling and documentary games; recontextualisation, collage and hybridity; restoration and re-evaluation of avant-garde figurations.

The conference continued on the second day with Eivind Røssaak's keynote lecture entitled *The Delay in the System: from Hitchcock to Glitch*. Touching upon several issues of the conference but significantly providing new vantage points, the lecture reflected on the crucial role that errors – delays, detours and arrests – play in the communication and information systems as gestures beyond the system. The analysis focused on errors as events of reflection in the age of technical mediation, mapping an intermedial and transdisciplinary arena and discussing various artistic practices spanning from the cinema to the Internet, from Hitchcock to glitch art. The second conference day embraced panel lectures on various aspects of the figurations of filmic intermediality, such as the connections between literature, sculpture, architecture and cinema; the reframing of established pictorial forms; the cultural logic of intermediality; experimental remediations; post-Hollywood narratives; multisensorial cinema.

The conference initiated a productive international debate on theoretical problems of the intermedial relations in film (discussions on the relations among media and arts, the concept of re-mediation, medial hybridity, the relations between narrativity and intermediality, ideology and intermediality, etc.), as well as on specific figurations of intermediality or re-mediation in film (*tableau vivant*, collage film, etc.), based on diverse concrete examples taken from various filmic genres belonging to different periods and styles. Besides the dissemination of key concepts on figurations of intermediality in film within the framework of keynote lectures and the concluding round table, the friendly and inspiring atmosphere of the conference provided the participants a great opportunity for exchange of scientific and cultural experience and also for more personal encounters in the vibrant, multicultural city of Cluj.

The written versions of the papers presented at the conference are to be published in the peer reviewed journal *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Film and Media Studies*. The conference programme, the abstracts of conference papers, as well as photos and videos can be accessed at: <http://film.sapientia.ro/ro/conferinte/xv-film-and-media-studies-conference-intransylvania>.

As an organic continuation of this event, the *XVI. International Film and Media Studies Conference in Transylvania* was organised at Sapientia University between 23–24 October, 2015, in Cluj-Napoca, having as key-note speakers three prominent experts in film and intermediality studies: Laura Mulvey (University of London), Lúcia Nagib (University of Reading), and Jürgen E. Müller (University of Bayreuth). The conference held under the auspices of the research project mentioned at the beginning of the report focused on the question of the “real” and the “intermedial” in contemporary media and film: the intertwining of the illusion of reality with effects of intermediality, connecting the experience of everyday world with artificiality, abstraction and the awareness of multiple mediations (<http://film.sapientia.ro/hu/konferenciak/the-real-and-the-intermedial>). The 2016 workshop entitled *Intermediality in Contemporary Central and East European Cinema* (30–31 May, Sapientia University, Cluj-Napoca) – having Ewa Mazierska (University of Central Lancashire) and Christina Stojanova (University of Regina) as invited participants –summed up the results of the three-year research project focusing on methodological and theoretical issues related to intermediality, as well as on strategies of intermediality, remediation or media reflexivity discernible in the cinemas of Central and Eastern Europe.