

# Media Acts

## The 10th International Conference of the Nordic Society for Intermedial Studies (NorSIS)

26-28 October 2011,  
Trondheim  
Department of Art and  
Media studies,  
NTNU

### Confirmed keynote speakers

Jacques Rancière,  
University of Paris (St-Denis)

James Elkins,  
School of the Art Institute of  
Chicago

Sara Danius,  
Södertörn University College

Frederik Tygstrup,  
University of Copenhagen

Aud Sissel Hoel,  
NTNU

## Call for papers

Recent technological changes that involve digitization have been claimed to erase the differences among individual media, and fundamentally to alter the conditions of perception and experience. In the art world, formerly dominant conceptions of art forms such as poetry, painting, sculpture, and even video art, which in the 1960s were codified as channeled sensory portals, have been replaced by blurred domains of new media art, of sound art and tangible media. What, then, in the current situation, does the disputed concept of 'medium' mean? Certainly, media still matter – but why, how and in what ways?

The 10th NorSIS international conference addresses these questions by changing focus from what a medium is (in terms of substantial characteristics) to what media do. Mediated forms of expressions are to be considered in terms of their achievements, that is, in terms of the productive changes they introduce into the mediated situation. The conference invites presentations that investigate and compare different kinds of mediated expressions, not as re-presentations of a pre-given reality, but as transformative performances, interferences and interventions. The conference takes up the issue of form, not in the Greenbergian formalist sense in terms of isolated sensations and brute material forms divorced from questions of meaning, but suggesting that form be treated in terms of formative interventions. It takes up the issue of media borders, not as the borders between art forms and individual media, but rather as the cultural borders and social divisions that result from, or are undermined by, human formative interventions. Hence, processes of mediation are understood as involving articulating apparatuses that bring about a particular distribution or redistribution of the sensible (Rancière 2004). Mediated forms of expression are conceived as performing media; and by asking what media do, we want to provide fresh approaches to the old problems of image-text relations and media borders, as well as to the ideological or political powers of media.

What, then, are the implications of conceiving media as performative? First, mediated forms of expression are not passive; they interpellate or call upon us. Pictures, for example, do not passively await significations that we arbitrarily attribute to them. Following this line of thought, it would even make sense to ask if pictures look back at us (Elkins 1996), or to ask what they want (Mitchell 2005). What we perceive first, whether in a mediated situation or not, is not abstract forms and colors, but the "face" of the surroundings, the physiognomic, affective and emotional aspects. Second, human formative interventions are never innocent. A particular distribution of the sensible not only determines what



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### Submission and questions:

mediaacts@hf.ntnu.no

### Deadline for submission of abstracts: 15 May 2011.

Please visit our website for  
more information

[www.ntnu.no/ikm/mediaacts](http://www.ntnu.no/ikm/mediaacts)

See also NorSIS at  
<http://lnu.se/research-groups/nordic-society-for-intermedial-studies?l=en>



is visible and what is not; it not only provides a delimitation of space and time, but determines who can have a share in the community commons, who can have a voice and be heard and who cannot (Ranci re 2004). Besides, any culture possesses a common repertoire of narratives and cognitive forms that can be used to configure facts. There are, one could say, an aesthetics and an ethics of the fact. A distinction can be made between a general cultural poetics and a specific poetics of individual forms of expression (Tygstrup and Holm 2007). The poetics of literature and film, for example, contribute to the general cultural poetics but are simultaneously apart from it. The political and ideological significance of mediated forms of expression, therefore, relates to their power to uphold and sanction as well as to frustrate and contest the divisions of the dominant cultural poetics.

Elkins, James (1996): *The object stares back: On the nature of seeing*. New York: Simon & Schuster

Mitchell, WJT (2005): *What do pictures want?* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ranci re, Jacques (2004): *The politics of aesthetics: The distribution of the sensible*. London: Continuum.

Tygstrup, Frederik og Holm, Isak (2007): "Litteratur og politik," *K & K*, No. 104.

We welcome theoretical or methodological papers as well as case studies that explore these themes. Proposals may draw inspiration from but are not limited to questions such as:

- How do media act or perform?
- What is the intervening power of form?
- What are the differences between the way in which pictures and language act? What about other media?
- In what way are the boundaries between different media breaking down? What is transmediation?
- What is changed when the medium is changed?
- What are the ideological and political powers of media acts?
- How do people interact with media?

We welcome abstracts of 250-500 words on these topics. We invite both proposals for individual papers and pre-constituted panels. Panels may consist of 3 or 4 speakers with a maximum of 20 minutes speaking time each.