SPEAKERS

ABSTRACTS
+ BIOGRAPHIES

Against Method

CROSS-
DISCIPLINARY
STRATEGIES

FOR AGAINST METHOD

www.crossdisciplinary.at

FOR AGAINST METHOD

SYMPOSIUM

CROSS-
DISCIPLINARY
STRATEGIES

dɪ:'ʌngewʌndtə
Universität für angewandte Kunst Wien
University of Applied Arts Vienna

12. NOVEMBER

17:30

INTER, CROSS & TRANS

Panel 1, Moderation by Christian Höller

PETER HOCHENAUER

Before We Cross: What Counts as Knowledge?

Before crossing disciplinary boundaries, shouldn't we ask what counts as knowledge, how we come to know, and what different ways of knowing we can and *cannot* offer? Drawing on the introductory course in cross-disciplinary strategies, the lecture wants to trace how disciplines and their specific ways of knowing have emerged and evolved over time. The aim is to explore the various epistemological assumptions underlying different cultures of knowledge, their respective strengths and limitations, and the challenges of bringing them together when engaging with a complex and uncertain world. Rather than assuming cross-disciplinarity to be the ultimate "answer", the lecture offers an invitation to reconsider the questions we are about to ask, and the knowledge and skills we need to address them.

Peter Hochenauer is a PhD candidate at the University of Vienna, where he researches transformative education and interdisciplinary pedagogy. He develops and teaches courses that frame interdisciplinary practice as a creative design process and an orientation for engaging with the complexity and uncertainty of the world.

ULLI VILSMAIER

Transgress, Transcend, Transform? The Goal Determines the Path

Inter-, multi-, pluri-, cross-, trans-, de-, intra-, anti-, supra-, post? The conceptual landscape of discipline-related terms has diversified significantly over the last decades. Both the language and the according practices of the disciplinary organization of knowledge production seem insufficient to explore and investigate today's complex world. The presentation will provide an overview of discursive streams that introduce a conceptual vocabulary to name what 'undisciplined' researchers do. It will dwell on the concept-methods-nexus, shed light on the epistemic and political consequences of different approaches, and argue that mobilizing a rich conceptual variety can support individuals, teams and organizations to strengthen their research and learning practices.

Ulli Vilsmaier was trained as a geographer with a specialization in inter- and transdisciplinary research. She worked at Salzburg University and Leuphana University Lüneburg where she held a professorship in Transdisciplinary Methods and served as the Presidency's Delegate for Inter- and Transdisciplinarity. Currently, she is a member of the Responsive Research Collective and adjunct professor at Leuphana University.

12. NOVEMBER

19:00

LECTURE PERFORMANCE

Introduction by Yona Schreyer

RALO MAYER

Plots of Un·Earthing,
or How I Began to Dig Ambivalence

To unearth means to excavate, to bring to light what lies buried under sediments: a quasi-archaeological operation, often invoked by critical art. But what if we reverse this trajectory – not downwards but upwards, not into the past but towards the future? Used intransitively, 'Un·Earthing' points towards the transformation of humans in and by outer space. Meteorites embody this double valency: fallen from the sky, they are unearthly and earthly at the same time; they link deep time with speculative futures of space mining; and they are, quite literally, unearthed by meteorite hunters. Tracing the plots of these present-day asteroid miners, I found myself digging, too – extracting stories as they extract fragments of long-gone planetesimals. In this context, storying becomes a method to 'stay with' the ambivalence of digging across disciplines.

Ralo Mayer is an artist, filmmaker and "meteorite licker" based in Vienna. Informed by performative research and the multivalent notion of 'plot', his transdisciplinary practice engages in storying the interplay of space exploration, science fiction, ecology and everyday life on our planet.

13. NOVEMBER

11:00

SCIENCE FRICTION(S)

Panel 2, Moderation by Nina Bandi

JOSHUA SIMON

Metastability – Constellations of Unresolved Potential

Systems around us are constantly on the verge of collapse – supply chains, financial markets, digital infrastructures, ecological systems and electoral democracies. They were designed this way – organized around minimum points of contact and maximum intensity. In thermodynamics this is called metastability. Metastability describes systems maintaining temporary forms of equilibrium precisely by absorbing continuous instability. The term has been used by Gilbert Simondon (with a nod to Norbert Wiener) and Gilles Deleuze, to describe a certain social logic. Increasingly operating through recurrent crises rather than against them, metastability is a critical category for understanding systems whose unresolved tensions and potentials manifest through these very crises. Contemporary art exhibitions can be considered to embody a metastable syntax as well. Through heterogeneous elements held in relation without being reduced to a unified whole, exhibitions can manifest temporary constellations characterized by minimum points of contact and maximum intensity, which makes perceptible the persistence of a configuration retaining unresolved potentials. Through diagonal and elliptic trajectories moving between art history, media archaeology, political theory and political economy, the presentation will suggest metastability as an organizational logic that structures contemporary life.

Joshua Simon is a curator and writer and currently a lecturer at CDS and the Department of Media Theory at Angewandte Vienna. His current research addresses the shift from social reproduction to metabolic synchronization under the digital regime. Exhibitions he curated include *The Kids Want Communism* (2016–2018), */* (2021–2022), and *Slime* (Secession Vienna, 2024). He is the author of *Neomaterialism* (Sternberg Press, 2013) and (co-)editor of, among others, *United States of Palestine-Israel* (Sternberg Press, 2011), *Being Together Precedes Being: A Textbook for The Kids Want Communism* (Archive Books, 2019), and *Communists Anonymous* (Sternberg Press, 2017). Currently, he is finishing to edit a book on *The Digital Revolution as Counter-Revolution* (b_books) as well as working on a new book manuscript titled *Metastability.*

VERA TOLLMANN

New Methods? Critical Heat Studies and Cross-Disciplinary Research in the Thermocene

In what historians call the Thermocene, the fossil age returns as embodied heat: heat waves, tropical nights and urban heat islands change how we live, think and sleep. No single discipline can grasp them. Critical Heat Studies (Zoé A. Hamstead) questions planning's reduction of heat to measurement. Media studies' thermal turn (Nicole Starosielski) examines how thermal cameras, satellites and cooling apps can make heat governable and register its unequal distribution. This talk takes heat as a test case for method: sensed from skin to satellite, heat calls for a constellation of methods. Against a culture of instant data and quick heat sinks, cross-disciplinary research can become a mode of collaboration that asks: who gets to cool down?

Vera Tollmann is a cultural studies scholar based at Leuphana University Lüneburg, initially as a visiting scholar and currently as a postdoctoral researcher at the Centre for Digital Cultures, where she co-organized the conference „Climate Sensitivities: Aesthetics and Politics of Heat" in October of this year. She is a longtime contributor to *springerin* magazine.

13. NOVEMBER

14:00

THE USE AND MISUSE OF METHODS

Panel 3, Moderation by Adnan Balcinovic

CHIARA AMBROSIO

A Feyerabendian Plea for Method(s) as Critique

The idea of art as research is firmly established in the world of art practice, and yet it still remains under-appreciated outside the world of art. Even less appreciated is the idea that art as research, including forms of practice that are explicitly in dialogue with the sciences, crucially revolves around the articulation of methods. Drawing on historical and contemporary case studies, the lecture wants to argue in favor of a dynamic, iterative, and reflexive conception of artistic methods. In a Feyerabendian spirit, it will suggest that the *articulation* of methods (as opposed to settling on "one method", fixed once and for all), particularly in art/science collaborations, can serve as a productive form of critique, especially when it deliberately targets questions that are overlooked, considered as discarded, or outrightly dismissed by the sciences.

Chiara Ambrosio is Professor of History and Philosophy of Science at the Department of Science and Technology Studies, UCL. She has written on visual culture across science and art, pragmatist philosophy and its history, and on Paul Feyerabend's views on art and artistic representations in relation to science. She has extensive experience in supervising fine art practice PhD research which engages critically with science and technology. Her latest book (co-edited with Julia Sanchez-Dorado) is *Abstraction in Science and Art: Philosophical Perspectives* (Routledge 2025, available through Open Access).

BRONISLAW SZERSZYNSKI

Method at the Threshold: Interdisciplinarity and the Anthropocene

Drawing on my work with Nigel Clark, this talk explores both the possibilities and the perplexities of Anthropocene interdisciplinarity, including the promise of contestation or agonism between methods and their theoretical underpinnings. I review the role that interdisciplinarity has played in the articulation of the Anthropocene hypothesis and explore ongoing tensions at the metadisciplinary juncture between the natural and social sciences. Focusing on the geoscience insight that the Earth has the capacity to shift between operating states, I consider the interdisciplinary implications of conceiving of ourselves and our knowledge formations as situated on the threshold between a familiar and an unknowable Earth.

Bronislaw Szerszynski is Emeritus Professor of Sociology at Lancaster University, UK. His interdisciplinary research situates social life in a planetary context. He is co-author with Nigel Clark of *Planetary Social Thought* (2021). As well as academic publications, his outputs include creative writing and art-science events.

13. NOVEMBER

16:00

LECTURE PERFORMANCE

Introduction by Gudrun Ratzinger

ŠPELA PETRIČ

On Performative Ethnographies

Performative Ethnographies (PE) is an ongoing artistic research project that invites members of a more general public into spaces where advanced technologies are developed and deployed. Through guided visits, ethnographic protocols and role-play, participants, acting as amateur ethnographers, are invited to examine technological infrastructures from perspectives of their own choosing, including those of imaginary characters, objects or concepts. Their field-note testimonies form an archive of situated, non-expert accounts that depart from expert narratives and framings. By unsettling the position of the observer, PE explores what becomes perceptible when the authority to interpret and produce meaning is redistributed.

Špela Petrič is a Slovenian hybrid media artist with a background in the natural sciences. Her art practice examines applications of technology used for the care and cultivation of living bodies. Recently she has been looking closely at the automation of care in agriculture and medicine. Petrič has received several awards, such as the White Aphroid for outstanding artistic achievement (Slovenia), the Bioart and Design Award (Netherlands), and an Award of Distinction at Prix Ars Electronica (Austria).

13. NOVEMBER

16:30

BUT IS IT ART?

Panel 4, Moderation by Tanja Traxler

OSCAR BASTIENS & TIES VAN DE WERFF

When Artists Leave the Studio: Crossing Borders in the Classroom, the Hospital, and Educational Bureaucracy

How to meaningfully cross borders as an artist, between disciplines, genres, societal practices, and institutional silos? How to prepare art students for the complexities of inter- and crossdisciplinary collaboration? In our presentation, we explore the actual work needed for crossing borders, in three different sites of fruitful interdisciplinary friction: the classroom, the hospital, and the bureaucracy of a contemporary art academy. We approach interdisciplinarity as an artistic method, which shifts the focus from the aesthetics of the artwork to the socio-materialities of the art-worker: the kinds of skills, knowledge and attitudes an artist needs in order to maintain experimental and artistic space in collaborative and interdisciplinary situations. Drawing on the Interdisciplinary Arts program (iArts) at the Academy of Arts Maastricht, we argue that the contribution of art-workers is not simply works of art, but takes the form of an engaged, participatory and embodied process in relation to complex public issues that is meaningfully shareable.

Oscar Bastiaens is a philosopher of technology and ethics, with a background in media innovation and semiotics. He has a particular interest in how ideas, practices, and technologies shape the way we think, create, and relate to the world around us. In the age of AI, he has become an advocate of the importance of art education. Currently, he is the head of the Interdisciplinary Arts (iArts) program, as well as Visual Communication and the Master Scientific Illustration at the Academy of Arts Maastricht (Zuyd University of Applied Sciences, the Netherlands). Ties van de Werff is Professor of Ethics of Artistic Research at the Academy of Arts Maastricht (Zuyd University of Applied Sciences, the Netherlands), where he leads the research group *What Art Knows*. With a background in ethics, Science & Technology Studies, and community arts, he develops and supervises artistic research projects and advises artists, cultural institutions, and art schools on artistic research, interdisciplinarity, ethics, and artistic engagement. He is also Director of the Maastricht Centre for the Innovation of Classical Music (MCICM), involved in national and international artistic research networks, and active as a board member, educator, and musician.

ARIANE KOEK

Creative Collisions:
How to Build an Arts Science Collider

Artistic research is one of the essential ingredients in inter- and crossdisciplinary practice. It leads to connection, engagement, development, deep thinking and research. Often overlooked, it is the glue which binds the crossing of disciplines together and unlocks the imagination and new ways of looking at the world. In this talk, drawing on my experience initiating, then designing and directing for its first five years the award-winning Arts at CERN program, as well as other art/science residency programs in both academia and research laboratories, I will examine what makes such collaborations successful, and what challenges arise when different disciplinary cultures and methods meet.

Ariane Koek is internationally renowned for her work in art, science and technology and an expert in transdisciplinarity and residency programs. The founder of the Arts at CERN program, which she designed and directed from 2009 to 2015, today she works independently as a consultant, associate professor, producer/curator and writer for international foundations, philanthropists, museums, universities, and government institutions around the world, including the European Commission, the Exploratorium San Francisco, and Cavendish Laboratories at the University of Cambridge.