

# WissensKünste

## Zentrum für Literaturforschung, Berlin

The *WissensKünste* are conceived as a place to explore links between artistic and scientific creativity: Encounters between the knowledge of the arts and the art of knowledge. During Fall 2001 the *Zentrum für Literaturforschung* will start a regular event cycle entitled *WissensKünste*. Its aim is going to be the interconnection of internationally renowned artists and scholars, who will introduce the most advanced positions in their fields and exchange their specific contributions on phenomena of the scientific, technological and media-technological development of culture.

While the arts and sciences are usually divided by the politics of different departments, different ways of education and sponsoring foundations, the event intends to yield its own contribution to the 'Unification', to avoid the danger of a new Berlin Wall between the metropolis of culture and the metropolis of the university.

The *WissensKünste* will be carried out under an annually changing topic. At the interfaces of mutual issues, motifs or paradigms the difference of views and languages of the arts and sciences are to be put into operation. The works of artists were usually subject of theoretical and historical analysis. Their aesthetic competences were often consulted merely to represent knowledge or to exhibit scientific objects. Now it came to the point to view artistic perception and commentary on actual phenomena as a genuine contribution to the investigation of our culture, as a kind of science studies by artistic modes of expression. Therefore, scholars are not intended to be interpreters of artists, but to be their interlocutors - in the mode of an encounter, for instance, between the expert on life sciences and performance artist, video artist and ethnologist, performer of land art and climatologist, urbanist and author, museologist and architect, film-maker and brain researcher. While both areas, sciences and arts, are likewise experienced in observation and experiment, the event cycle is also to be viewed as an experiment.

Such an experiment is needed by both sides:

Contemporary art with its practices of concept art and performance for instance has transgressed the borders of the traditional arts (canvas, stage, book asf.) long ago, which are replaced by experimental, interactive and multimedia projects. Artists involve

theoretical reflections and scientific findings into their works more and more. They often deal with - within their own aesthetic possibilities - the same phenomena and problems, with which the sciences are concerned as well, as it is shown by the engagement of artists and writers in urbanistic and media technological development, in ecological and intercultural conflicts, in the politics of commemoration or even in the development of bio and life sciences. As concrete, sensorial investigation and testing of different modes of perception, cognition and feeling in an environment, which is characterized by science and technology, many contributions of art and literature are themselves part of a complex culture of knowledge. Therefore, the artists' works are not merely seismographic recordings of changed realms of experience or of changed symbolic universes. They actively take part in their development, in their experimental exploration and practical evaluation. Beyond the border of the fine arts - as *techné* and *aisthesis* in the very literal sense - artistic practices work today in the very same field with which the contemporary academic cultures of knowledge are concerned. At the same time the separation between liberal and applied arts has actually become obsolete. This is not only to be observed in the tendencies of architecture, of environmental and urbanistic planning, but furthermore in the area of visual and electronic media, in design, asf.. Due to this, there are actually intensified endeavours to create places, situations and institutions to interconnect perspectives of art/practice and science/theory (e.g. the Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie Karlsruhe, the lectures at the Documenta X, the events of the Ars Electronica or even the event cycles at the Offene Kulturhaus and the Akademie für künstlerische und industrielle Gestaltung in Linz.)

The history of science has recently discovered the cultural history of knowledge, not only the impact of rhetoric and metaphors on its topics, the ways of staging and representing scientific discourse, the media technological, symbolic and aesthetic constitutions of its subjects. Moreover, in many places there is a sensibility for the literary and imaginary past history or reverse of scientific explanations, inventions and findings. And one remembers formerly shared modes of thinking, which above all were getting lost in the course of specialisations and divides of art and science, of natural science and humanities, of theory and practice: for instance, creativity, fiction in the

very sense of forming/production, imagination as re-presentation/imagination, experiment as both testing and observation, techné as art/skill asf.

What about literary research? It has also recently broken fresh ground to put forth perspectives towards cultural history and the history of media. They permit to expand and transfer genuine philological modes, to put it precisely, hermeneutics, criticism and narrative competences on a reading and a poetics of culture. If the history of the aesthetic and symbolic constructions and interpretations of reality were linked to the analysis of the cultural techniques by which they are created, then the different points of intersection between art and science have to be the center of attention. At the *Zentrum für Literaturforschung* this not only concerns the of many years' standing work on the history of aesthetic concepts, but also more recent projects as those on the *aisthesis materialis*, on the semiotics of arts (from the antiquity to modern age), on the history of media and cultural history of Europe, as well as the plan of a literary research on the history of science, which focus on exemplary constellations of the divide between the „two cultures“ (natural science and humanities), on hybrid concepts and on the relations of leading metaphors and leading science. As amplification - as well as intervention or even correction - to historical research the *WissenKünste* should serve the purpose to explore the state of the art of knowledge within a culture, characterized by technology and science.

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