

When Life Becomes Art: Molecular Biology and the Arts

Evening Lecture by Dr. Ingeborg Reichle
(Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities)

Tues. 20 July 2010 19:00 hrs.

at the Academy of Media Arts Cologne (KHM), Aula, Filzengraben 2, 50676 Köln

By contrasting contemporary art with recent scientific developments, it is possible to demonstrate that art today not only serves to comment on science, but also represents a form of research and knowledge production in its own right, though one belonging to a radically different epistemological tradition. Moving beyond the postulated dichotomy of the "objective" sciences and the "subjective" arts, contemporary art shows us that art is no longer limited to the production of beautiful artefacts, but has established its role as a legitimate form of knowledge production in its own right. Today the engagement of art with science ranges from artists' iconological handling of scientific imaging to research projects executed as artistic endeavours by artists working in the laboratory. In the last two decades we have seen a number of artists leave the traditional artistic playground to work instead in scientific contexts such as the laboratories of molecular biologists. Such artistic interventions in genetics and biological forms have made possible new means of artistic expression and art forms, like 'Transgenic Art' and 'Bio-Art'. These new art forms differ dramatically from more traditional artistic approaches that explore the natural and additionally have developed new methodologies. More radically these new art forms have crossed the boundaries between the artificial and the natural, provoking a different understanding of 'nature'.

Dr. Ingeborg Reichle is an art historian and theorist at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Germany. From 1998 till 2005 she was active at the Humboldt-University in Berlin. She has done interdisciplinary studies in London and Hamburg and holds an MA in Art History from the University of Hamburg and a PhD at the Art History Department at the Humboldt-University in Berlin. Her doctoral dissertation, dealing with Art and Biotechnology in the Age of Technoscience, was published (Springer 2005, in German) 2009 at Springer in English: "Art in the Age of Technoscience. Genetic Engineering, Robotics, and Artificial Life in Contemporary Art." From 1998 to 2003, she lectured on gender studies and new media art at the Art History Department at the Humboldt-University and was involved in the practical application of electronics in the deployment of computers and new media in art historical works like PROMETHEUS and she was developing relevant internet resources. Since 2005 she is active as project leader of the interdisciplinary research group "Bildkulturen" at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities in Berlin and lectures at the Hermann von Helmholtz-Zentrum für Kulturtechnik at the Humboldt-University in Berlin.

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