

THE METAREFERENTIAL TURN IN CONTEMPORARY ARTS AND MEDIA: FORMS, FUNCTIONS AND ATTEMPTS AT EXPLANATION

An International Symposium
organized at the Centre for Intermediality Studies in Graz (CIMIG)
Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz/Austria

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Deadline for proposals: February 16, 2009

'Metaization' – the movement from a first cognitive or communicative level to a higher one on which first-level phenomena and above all the means and media used for the transmission of such phenomena or messages self-reflexively become objects of reflection and communication in their own right – was for a long time mostly restricted to a relative minority of works or artefacts, and in particular to 'high art'. In the 20th century, notably in the context of postmodernism, this situation changed drastically: metaization and its product, 'metareference', have not only increased dramatically in quantity but have also spread to areas in which they could rarely, if at all, be found in the past, in particular to popular genres (where they have produced 'metapop'), but also to the new media. In fact, no matter whether we read a new novel or comic, listen to a musical such as *The Phantom of the Opera*, or play a computer game – in all cases we are nowadays likely to encounter metaphenomena.

This 'metareferential turn' has frequently been observed but rarely studied on a broad basis with the aim of providing a comprehensive synopsis of metareference including its effects and motivations in contemporary arts and media. This is what the forthcoming symposium attempts to do. It is the sequel to a conference held in May 2008 in Graz which was dedicated to both a theoretical debate (the discussion of a conceptual toolbox that would be useful for a transmedial description of 'metareference') and to case studies of works from various genres, arts and media past and present. In partial contrast to the theoretical focus of the earlier conference and its inclusion of historical metaphenomena, the symposium announced here is expected to concentrate exclusively on (in broad terms) contemporary metaphenomena (i. e., from the second half of the twentieth century), but it will continue the transmedial focus and thus encourage discussion of a great variety of media. The following issues will be considered in particular:

- collecting and interpreting relevant examples of metareference in contemporary arts and media, especially where this has not been done so far to a sufficient degree;
- exploring major functions and effects of metaization in contemporary arts and media;
- embedding the current metareferential turn in the general cultural-historical development of 'metaization', and finding possible reasons for its appearance.

The forthcoming symposium will again provide opportunity for intense debate, and its proceedings will be promptly published. There will also be ample occasion for informal exchange during some social activities, for which the historical centre of Graz and the city's beautiful surroundings offer perfect settings.

Papers dealing with any of the above-mentioned topics are welcome; yet **all papers ought to address the functions of metaization in our world** and/or the question of how to explain the current metareferential turn. Especially papers going beyond a

discussion of metafiction, the perhaps best-researched genre in this context, are encouraged. The length of papers, which must be given in English, should not exceed 30 minutes. All those who were interested in, or participated in, the 2008 symposium are again cordially invited to attend, but participation in the forthcoming conference does not require having attended the earlier one. (For those interested: the proceedings of the 2008 symposium are forthcoming as Werner Wolf, ed. in collaboration with Katharina Bantleon and Jeff Thoss. *Metareference Across Media: Theory and Case Studies – Dedicated to Walter Bernhart on the Occasion of his Retirement*. Studies in Intermediality 4. Amsterdam/New York, NY: Rodopi, 2009; you may also want to consult the conference website at: <http://metareference.uni-graz.at>).

Please send abstracts of 300 to 500 words with a short CV including an indication of academic affiliation by email to metareference@uni-graz.at. The deadline for the submission of abstracts is February 16, 2009.

For further information please contact the conference organizers at the e-mail address above.

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