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# CRITIQUE NOW

INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES  
ON CRITICAL PRACTICES

JANUARY 12, 2023

## VENUE

Leuphana University Lüneburg  
Universitätsallee 1  
21335 Lüneburg  
[www.leuphana.de/kdk](http://www.leuphana.de/kdk)

CENTRAL BUILDING, C40.704

A WORKSHOP BY LIZA MATTUTAT AND BEATE SÖNTGEN

THURSDAY  
JANUARY 12,  
2023  
2–7 PM

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# CRITIQUE NOW. INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES ON CRITICAL PRACTICES

HOSTED BY THE DFG RESEARCH TRAINING GROUP  
CULTURES OF CRITIQUE

## SPEAKERS

Manuela Bojadžijev (HU Berlin)  
Isabelle Graw (Städelschule, Frankfurt / Main)  
Orit Halpern (TU Dresden)  
María Inés Plaza Lazo  
(The New Institute, Hamburg)  
Nishant Shah  
(ArtEZ University of the Arts, The Netherlands)

## ORGANIZATION

Liza Mattutat  
Beate Söntgen








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**LEUPHANA**  
UNIVERSITÄT LÜNEBURG



Location     Footpath and cycle path     Passage blocked     Information     Post Room     Parking Spot     Bus Stop     StadtRAD-Station

# CRITIQUE NOW. INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES ON CRITICAL PRACTICES

In recent years, different developments have challenged the concept of critique. On the one hand, new technologies and modes of distribution have given rise to a large number of new practices of expressing dissent, discomfort and objection whose criticality needs to be clarified in each case. On the other hand, postcolonial, decolonial, and transcultural perspectives have problematized fundamental assumptions about critique rooted in the Enlightenment.

These developments raise new questions about the validity claims, situatedness, and subjects of critique.

We invited international scholars from various academic disciplines to address these questions against the background of their own research. Their contributions will be the starting point of discussions about a contemporary concept of critique among the third generation of PhD students of the Research Training Group "Cultures of Critique". As with this event we would like to welcome the new fellows and say goodbye to the parting group.

**JANUARY 12, 2023**

**2.00–2.15 PM**

**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

Beate Söntgen / Liza Mattutat  
(Leuphana University Lüneburg,  
RTG "Cultures of Critique")

**2.15–3.00 PM**

**IN DEFENSE OF SYMBOLIC VALUE. ON  
THE CHANGING PROCESSES OF  
CRITICAL VALUE JUDGMENTS IN A  
RESORTIZED ART ECONOMY**

Isabelle Graw  
(Städelschule Frankfurt/Main)  
Moderation: Thorsten Schneider

**BREAK**

**3.30–4.15 PM**

**THE INSIDIOUSNESS OF INFORMATION  
OVERLOAD: OR HOW WE GAVE UP ON  
GOVERNING THE INTERNET AND STAR-  
TED GOVERNING OURSELVES**

Nishant Shah  
(ArtEZ University of the Arts,  
The Netherlands)  
Moderation: Rebecca John

**4.15–5.00 PM**

**THE SMARTNESS MANDATE: THEORIZING  
OUR NERVOUS PRESENT**

Orit Halpern (TU Dresden)  
Moderation: Amelie Buchinger

**BREAK**

**5.30–6.15 PM**

**ARTS OF THE WORKING CLASS. COUNTER  
MESSAGES TO PLATFORM CAPITALISM**

María Inés Plaza Lazo  
(The New Institute, Hamburg)  
Moderation: Ulrike Jordan

**6.15–7.00 PM**

**IS MIGRATION A CRITICAL MOVEMENT?**

Manuela Bojadžijev  
(HU Berlin)  
Moderation: Liza Mattutat

**DINNER**

## IS MIGRATION A CRITICAL MOVEMENT?

**Manuela Bojadžijev (HU Berlin)**

**Manuela Bojadžijev** is a Professor at the Institute of European Ethnology and at Berlin Institute for Empirical Integration and Migration Research (BIM) at Humboldt University in Berlin. Until 2020, she was Professor of Globalized Cultures at Leuphana University Lüneburg. She publishes on racism and migration research, and her work focuses on the study of globalized and digital cultures as well as migration in a global perspective. She is currently preparing a handbook of racism research.

# IN DEFENSE OF SYMBOLIC VALUE. ON THE CHANGING PROCESSES OF CRITICAL VALUE JUDGMENTS IN A RESORTIZED ART ECONOMY

Isabelle Graw  
(Städelschule, Frankfurt / Main)

Taking up the “Critique of Art Criticism” that I formulated together with Sabeth Buchmann in 2019 I will examine the ongoing challenges, pressures and difficulties criticism faces in a globalized and often resort-like art economy which has furthermore partly migrated into the digital realm. The term “resortization” is proposed as a heuristic tool for analyzing the current deep structural changes of the art market’s economic and social infrastructures, both online and offline. With these changes in mind, I will examine the resulting difficulties and possibilities for a critical value judgment that makes theoretical and historical claims. Instead of opting once again for a finalist view on criticism that considers it either to be dead (due to its historical implication into colonial thinking) or believes it to be hopelessly compromised (due to its value generating function) I will argue for an updated and powerful notion of criticism that insists on the importance of symbolic value.

**Isabelle Graw** is the publisher of the journal *Texte zur Kunst*, which she co-founded with Stefan Germer (1958–1998) in 1990, and Professor of Art History and Art Theory at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste – Städelschule, Frankfurt am Main. Her previous books include *Three Cases of Value Reflection: Ponge, Whitten, Banksy* (2021), *In Another World: Notes, 2014–2017* (2020), *The Love of Painting: Genealogy of a Success Medium* (2018), and *High Price: Art Between the Market and Celebrity Culture* (2010). She lives in Berlin.

# THE SMARTNESS MANDATE: THEORIZING OUR NERVOUS PRESENT

Orit Halpern (TU Dresden)

In this talk I will examine the historical relationship between the automation of decision making, freedom, and democracy after the 1970s. Through an examination of financial technologies, economic thought, psychology, and computing, I will discuss how concepts of democracy and intelligence were transformed through novel technical practices and ideas. I do so to trace a historical genealogy of how freedom and democracy came to be linked to self-organizing, networked intelligences, and non-conscious decision making.

In taking up democracy and freedom I engage with older liberal thinking. In 19th century liberalism, where individuals like John Stuart Mills argued that democracy must comprise in “experiments in living” that demanded constant self-improvement as central to a democratic liberal subject. Such scientific self-experimentation was envisioned as a process of “truth seeking” and forwarded an ideal of democracy that demanded work, in fact, we might say today it is inconvenient. On the other hand, Friedrich Hayek argued that the more functions of society that do not enter thought, the further a society advances. Along the same lines, financial innovators such as Fischer Black argued for the merits of automated and „convenient“ decision-making processes.

I will investigate the contests and transformations in our ideas of decision making and collectivity. At stake is the question of how democracy and citizenship moved from being envisioned as demanding consciousness and effort, to an equation that envisions freedom from thought, and convenience, as political freedom. Additionally, I will discuss, whether and how to contest this vision.

**Orit Halpern** is Full Professor and Chair of Digital Cultures and Societal Change at Technische Universität Dresden. She is currently working on two projects. The first is a history of automation, intelligence, and freedom; the second project examines extreme infrastructures and the history of experimentation at planetary scales in design, science, and engineering. Her first book *Beautiful Data: A History of Vision and Reason* (Duke UP 2015) investigates histories of big data, design, and governmentality. Her current book with Robert Mitchell (forthcoming MIT Press January 2023) is titled *The Smartness Mandate*.

# ARTS OF THE WORKING CLASS. COUNTER MESSAGES TO PLATFORM CAPITALISM

María Inés Plaza Lazo  
(The New Institute, Hamburg)

The multilingual street paper on art and society, wealth and poverty called *Arts of the Working Class* (AWC) was born in 2018, a year in which our unpaid work as social media users grew without remorse; a time just before Mark Zuckerberg admitted in court that what he does with Facebook is to simply “sell ads.” AWC also sells ads to art institutions, galleries, and self-organized spaces to pay for art criticism.

But instead of appropriating, copy/pasting, and publishing data as raw material – visuals, free reviews, and press releases – the activities AWC presents and represents are refined by the way it operates against its own typology of PR. Therefore AWC is not just another advertising model in what Nick Srnicek calls platform capitalism, but operates as a liberation of art criticism from today’s content-ism.

Art criticism is used in this street newspaper as a link between the pluriverse built by diverse thinkers and a constant struggle for fair pay for this practice long since occupied by gatekeepers. AWC brings readers back to the real world by placing art criticism in the hands of street vendors who also use it as a currency for survival. Just as art critics are economically dependent on the social and intellectual currency they produce with their texts the vendors are the data itself and simultaneously the antidote to art’s ban as hyperware.

The lecture activates several encounters between producers, sellers, and readers of AWC as testimonies of an ongoing negotiation beyond the exploitative dependency chain of public relations, FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) loopholes, and the changing parameters and channels in which art is mediated and reflected.

**María Inés Plaza Lazo** (b. 1989 in Guayaquil, Ecuador) currently lives and works between Berlin, Bonn and Luxembourg. Together with Pawel Sochacki, she is the founder and editor of the street newspaper *Arts of the Working Class*. She just started to work as Head of Communication & Engagement at MUDAM - Musée d’Art Moderne in Luxembourg.

# THE INSIDIOUSNESS OF INFOR- MATION OVERLOAD: OR HOW, WE GAVE UP ON GOVERNING THE INTERNET AND STARTED GOVER- NING OURSELVES

Nishant Shah  
(ArtEZ University of the Arts,  
The Netherlands)

The democratization of the internet is the story of access, engagement, production, and circulation of information, where we have enjoyed and celebrated the ways in which tools of information production have shaped the overwhelmingly rich tapestry of information that is our digital ecosystem. Even when we realize that the rise of granulated information systems is accompanied by growing problems around questions of privacy, safety, security, and risk, we continue to believe that the information excess, in itself, is a desirable state of things. Drawing from a fractured time-line of internet governmentality in India (and the rest of the world), I show how information overload is not just a management challenge but produces new ontologies of digital subjectivity which is premised on a diminished agency for self-identification, negotiation, and agency in contemporary digital times.

**Nishant Shah** is a feminist, humanist, technologist, working on questions of internet governance, digital cultures, political organizing, and digital narratives with a focus on collective action for hopeful futures. He was the co-founder of the Centre for Internet & Society in India, has held distinguished professorships in India, Germany, and The Netherlands, and knowledge partnerships with international human rights organizations like Hivos and Oxfam-Novib.

# NOTES

