

[David Bowie Interart | Text | Media](#)

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Call for Papers

Date:

June 17, 2016

Location:

Portugal

Subject Fields:

Art, Art History & Visual Studies, Cultural History / Studies, Humanities, Journalism and Media Studies, Popular Culture Studies

David Bowie Interart |Text |Media

Date: 22-24 September 2016

Venue: [Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa](#) | School of Arts and Humanities, University of Lisbon

Organisation: [CEAUL/ULICES](#) - Centro de Estudos Anglísticos da Universidade de Lisboa | University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies

Following the announcement of David Bowie's death, tributes soon appeared in the media, presenting him as the most consistently inventive performer of our generation. Many took to social media to pay tribute - Facebook was the privileged venue for impromptu homages and compulsive video sharing via YouTube; a new record for the most video views in 24 hours was broken on Vevo. In particular, Bowie's self-referential adieu "Lazarus," a single from the album *Blackstar* released just two days before his death, struck a chord with listeners. Voicing the comments of many, Annie Leibovitz noted that Bowie "curated his death" with this final album and his off-Broadway play *Lazarus*, based on the science fiction novel *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (1963) by Walter Tevis (whose 1976 film version directed by Nicolas Roeg starred Bowie).

In an interview from 1996 with *The Telegraph Magazine* prior to the release of his album *Earthling*, Bowie stated: "I have done just about everything that it's possible to do. (...) anything that Western culture has to offer — I've put myself through it." Spanning more than five decades, his career as a singer, songwriter, musician and record producer is invested with a cultural significance that goes well beyond his own work directly. Besides his musical career *stricto sensu*, he was an actor, e.g. in Nagisa Oshima's *Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence* (1983) and David Lynch's *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me* (1992); one of the most recent of many roles was as Andy Warhol in *Basquiat*, artist/director Julian Schnabel's 1996 biopic of Jean-Michel Basquiat. He was actively involved in visual arts - Bowie studied art and design, together with layout and typesetting; he collected German Expressionist and British contemporary paintings and was a painter himself (Bowie's online art gallery can be found at [bowieart.com](#)); he sat on the board of the art journal *Modern Painters*, for which he also contributed art criticism; he designed wallpaper; he collaborated with the artist, entrepreneur and art collector Damien Hirst, and multimedia and installation artist Tony Oursler.

From the early days of his career, the presence of interart and intermedia forms is persistent - in the late 1960s, then an aspirant pop singer studying dramatic arts under performer Lindsay Kemp, Bowie was experimenting with mime, kabuki and commedia dell'arte. This clearly impacted the creation of his artistic personae, artfully appropriating avant-garde ideas and bringing them to the realm of popular culture. Many of his songs draw on interart, intermedial and intertextual forms, e.g. the title of "Space Oddity" (1969), his breakthrough single, is a pun on Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968); "The Drowned Girl" (1982) is a version of Bertolt Brecht's poem inspired by the death of Rosa Luxemburg, originally titled "On the Girl Beaten to Death," set to music by Kurt Weill in 1928 as "Ballad of the Drowned Girl" for *Berliner Requiem*. His lyrics reference works from Sigmund Freud's *Interpretations of Dreams* to George Orwell's *1984*; furthermore, their literary quality has also been noted: e.g., philosopher Simon Critchley describes Bowie's lyrics to "Fantastic Voyage" (1979) as Ezra Pound-like. Bowie also composed soundtracks for adaptations of literary works, e.g. writing and performing the music for the TV series adaptation of Hanif Kureishi's novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1993).

This three-day conference calls for an examination of Bowie's oeuvre and its global legacies across the many media platforms and art spheres his creative output- from Starman to Blackstar and beyond - intersects with, including music, lyrics, video, performing arts, literature, theatre, film, television, the internet, exhibition, installation, design and fashion. Looking to encourage inter- and transdisciplinary dialogues, we warmly welcome theoretically-informed papers (for 20-minute presentations), panels (of 3/4 papers), roundtables, creative narratives, artwork or performances from all disciplines, professions and vocations which address the interart, intertextual and intermedial dimensions of Bowie's sonic and visual legacies. Presentations of visual essays are welcome, as well as suggestions for pre-organized panels and roundtables.

Abstracts of 250 words should be sent to the conference email: davidbowieconference@gmail.com.

Suggested topics include, but are not limited to:

- Influences in/of Bowie's music;
- Influences in/of Bowie's alter-egos and personas (Arnold Corns, Major Tom, Ziggy Stardust, Aladdin Sane, Halloween Jack, The Thin White Duke, Jareth, Nathan Adler, Lazarus, etc.);
- Bowie's impact on sci-fi culture; Bowie as sci-fi icon;
- Covers and collaborative or interart forms; Bowie's duets and musical collaborations (Iggy Pop, Lou Reed, Tina Turner, Freddie Mercury, Mick Jagger, Annie Lennox, Placebo, Nine Inch Nails, Damon Albarn, Arcade Fire, etc.);
- Appropriation, adaptation and mash-up; parody and pastiche; metafiction;
- Intertextuality and self-referentiality in Bowie's lyrics and music videos;
- Intertextuality and intermediality in musical genres (art rock, glam rock, pop, electronic, experimental, etc.);
- Bowie, sexuality and androgyny desire; gender-bending in/inspired by Bowie; Bowie's influence within the LGBTQ community;
- Use of literary devices in Bowie's songs (metaphor, metonym, etc.);
- Bowie(s) depicted (e.g. photography, magazine and record covers); Bowie(s) exhibited (e.g. the V&A touring exhibition "David Bowie Is");

- Bowie on YouTube, Vevo and Spotify;
- Bowie and performativity; alien, alternative and transgressive identities in/inspired by Bowie;
- Bowie's songs;
- Bowie on stage;
- Bowie and cinema; Bowie as actor;
- Bowie and painting; Bowie as painter;
- Bowie's music videos;
- Bowie fandom; Bowie as an institution and a cult; academia and Bowie fandom;
- Bowie and brand-building;
- Bowie as trend-setter;
- Bowie and fashion;
- Bowie in the city;
- Bowie's reception beyond the UK;
- Bowie's death.

When submitting your proposal, please provide the following information in a Word document: 1. Author's Name; 2. Email address; 3. Institutional affiliation and position (if applicable); 4. Title of presentation and format (paper, panel, roundtable, creative narrative, artwork or performance); 5. Abstract; 6. Keywords (approximately 5-7); 7. Short biographical note; 8. AV requirements; 9. Availability for panel chair duties. The deadline for abstracts or proposals is **June 17**, with decisions communicated by **July 1, 2016**.

The conference will include the screening, followed by discussion, of Will Brooker's documentary about this unique research experience as he immersed himself in aspects of Bowie's life, work, locations and personae, for a year: tragically, the year in which he died, halfway through his research. It includes his engagements with international media, live performances, physical transformations, geographic pilgrimages and reflections on the process.

The working language is English. The organisers plan to publish selected papers presented during the conference in a peer-reviewed edited collection and/or a journal.

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