

[Dreaming with all Senses. Sensory Perception in Aesthetic Dream Representations](#)

Announcement published by Sophia Mehrbrey on Monday, September 30, 2019

Type:

Call for Papers

Date:

February 10, 2020 to February 12, 2020

Location:

Germany

Subject Fields:

Art, Art History & Visual Studies, Film and Film History, Literature, Music and Music History, Theatre & Performance History / Studies

Call for Papers

International Conference for Early Career Researchers

held by the DFG-funded Research Training Group "European Dream Cultures"

from the 10th to the 12th of February 2020 at Saarland University

Dreaming with all Senses.

Sensory Perception in Aesthetic Dream Representations

In her memoirs (1903), deaf-blind author Helen Keller writes: "In my dreams I have sensations, odours, tastes, and ideas which I do not remember to have had in reality." In fact, dreams cannot be reduced to their visual and verbal dimension but include other forms of perception and experience: Neuroscientific research shows that dreaming involves all our senses (Bulkeley 2009, Schredl 2008). Above all efforts in psychoanalysis, hermeneutics or the natural sciences to ascribe functions and meanings to dreams, they are an elementary body experience: From the weightlessness of flying to the experience of paralysing stillness, from erotic excitement to physical impulses of anger or fear - dreaming takes place on the dimension of bodily and sensory perception.

Sensory perception itself opens up a vast field of possibilities for the arts. From the allegorical representation of the five senses in Flemish painting in the seventeenth century to the clarinet concerto *D'om le vrai sens* (2011) by Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho, from the late medieval tapestries *La Dame à la licorne* (sixteenth century) to Jeremy Podeswa's episodic film *The Five Senses* (CAN 1999) or David Mackenzie's science fiction drama film *Perfect Sense* (UK/DK/SE/IE 2011), the five sensory organs themselves often become the subject of aesthetic representation. Furthermore, synesthetic experiences - from Richard Wagner's idea of Gesamtkunstwerk to Wassily Kandinsky or installation art - have become a way for the arts to transcend their sensory and medial limitations. Finally, it seems fitting to point to the thesis of philosopher Otto Friedrich Bollnow,

Citation: Sophia Mehrbrey. *Dreaming with all Senses. Sensory Perception in Aesthetic Dream Representations*. H-Announce. 09-30-2019.

<https://networks.h-net.org/node/73374/announcements/4835030/tr%C3%A4umen-mit-allen-sinnen-sinnliche-wahrnehmung-%C3%A4sthetischen>

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stating that the sensory organs only become “real human senses” through art, which affirms the pedagogical and political function of the interdependency between aesthetic artefacts and sensory perception (Bollnow 1988: 31).

Even though dreams and aesthetics are both rooted in bodily experience and sensory perception, there has been little research on this topic. Some disciplines, such as phenomenologically oriented film studies (Barker 2009, Casetti 2008) or interdisciplinary approaches like the so-called somaesthetics (Shusterman 2005, 2012) have recently tried to analyse the interrelation of aesthetic artefacts and their bodily dimension. The DFG-funded Research Training Group “European Dream-Cultures” (“Europäische Traumkulturen”, GRK 2021) has already held a conference on dreams as liminal experiences related to birth and death. It has also dedicated an anthology to their representations in literature, art, music and film (Bertola/Solte-Gresser 2019). The questions raised here will be considered at the planned conference by extending the thematic scope to sensory perception in dreams but at the same time by focussing on the specific characteristics of the aesthetic representation of such experiences. We welcome contributions analysing the presence, modes of representation and functions of dreams in art. According to the concept of the “European Dream Cultures” (Oster/Reinstädler 2017), the conference will pursue its subject across different cultures, eras, media and disciplines.

Examples for possible contributions include:

- Individual and/or collective sensory perceptions in aesthetic dream representations, relating to war, trauma, violence, colonial or postcolonial oppression, liberation.
- Use of dreamlike logic as a way of depicting sensory experiences that cannot be narrated conventionally or communicated in a logical/discursive manner.
- Design of innovative aesthetic forms or the challenging of traditional norms of representation and/or genres by means of a ‘different’ logic that focusses on the sensory perception in dreams.
- Synesthetic dream experiences and their representations in art.
- Sensory experiences of alterity in dreams (Doppelgänger, shifting into another person or transformation into animals and/or objects) and their aesthetic depiction.
- Aesthetic representations of dreams involving liminal experiences or transgressions related to the body or the senses, such as self-distance, changes of location, outer and inner spaces of the body, experiences of unusual or impossible body movements.
- Similarities and differences between the aesthetic representation of dreams during sleep and other dreamlike phenomena such as hallucination, ecstasy, visions, prophecies, traumatic flashbacks.
- Smelling, feeling, touching, tasting, seeing or hearing objects in their materiality and their aesthetic representation in/as dreams.
- Aesthetic representations of sensations in dreams, such as fear, joy, sensuality, uncanniness, or of the experience of time, space, sound and colour across different media.

Following the concept of the Research Training Group “European Dream-Cultures” (<http://www.traumkulturen.de/forschung-publikationen/forschungsprogramm.html#acc-2790>), this call is addressed to early career researchers (doctoral candidates and postdoctoral researchers) from the disciplines of art, theatre, film, media, music and literary studies, as well as history, philosophy

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and other related studies.

Please submit your proposal as a Word file to traumkulturen@uni-saarland.de **by the 3rd of November 2019**. Please describe your project - in English, German or French - in an abstract not exceeding 3,000 characters and include a short CV.

The languages spoken at the conference will be German, English and French. Following the conference, we plan to include selected contributions in a volume of the series *Traum - Wissen - Erzählen*, published by Fink (Paderborn).

Selected Bibliography

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