

Call for Abstracts for International Conference

The Performativity of Politics in Digital Media, Arts and Culture

October 16-19 2024

Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, UK,

Centre for Interdisciplinary Performative Arts

and

University of Arts, Belgrade, Serbia,

Centre for Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Studies

The international hybrid conference *The Performativity of Politics in Digital Media, Arts and Culture* will combine practice research and academic papers. We invite research contributions that highlight novel ideas, methodologies and practices on the performativity of politics in the digital world. The conference will take place in Belgrade at the splendid neoclassical building of the Rectorate of the University of Arts, overlooking the river Danube, and will also be available online.

We welcome proposals of 300 words from scholars across different disciplines and at various stages of their careers (post-doc, early and mid-career researchers and full professors), artist practitioners, and activists. There will be a separate panel for PhD students, who are encouraged to participate.

Presenters will be notified about acceptance by **e-mail**. Each presentation will be 25 minutes. After the conference, a selection of papers and practice research will be published in English as an open-access edited collection by the University of Arts. Contributors will be invited to submit their work by **29 November 2024** and the collection is planned to be published by September 2025.

Background: As an inherently self-referential narrative, the performativity of political discourses reconstitutes itself through cultural, social and artistic styles and forms. Enactment has always been a significant factor in the comprehension of political events, from elections to conflicts, from activism to government oppression. Today, performance in the digital world offers complex constructions of social behaviours and character types, as well as cultural, political, and ethical understandings.

Philosopher and cultural critic Slavoj Žižek argues that the digital space allows individuals to construct online fantasy personas, thus blurring the distinction between real and virtual real. The new identity is a construct of personal desires inspired by audiovisual media and projected onto oneself,¹ which would, with the development of artificial intelligence (AI), interconnect with a virtual world. Images have taken over the digital space, promoting particular politics which further the financial interests of a small establishment that controls the shape of public opinion through large-scale violent performative events. As Naomi Klein states, “extreme violence has a way of preventing us from seeing the interests it serves”.²

Technological developments in the last few decades have shifted the narrative from mainstream media (TV, newspapers, radio) to the personalised space of the digital world. The real world and the virtual world are now interchangeable as an experience and, since COVID-19, the digital world appears to dominate, with its internet platforms and visual telecommunication. By the 2020s, the new reality generated by AI has more than just supplemented human activities. AI can create its aesthetics, as machine-generated creativity becomes indistinguishable from that originated by humans. And, as the leading digital cultural theorist Lev Manovich has shown by turning cultural processes into computational data and using visualisation as an analytical tool,³ it may become indistinguishable or even better than human creations.

Themes: Under the term digital world, we include all aspects of contemporary online and hybrid artistic and cultural expression: multimedia, electronic media, social media, YouTube, gaming, live theatre and film. The topic also allows for further exploration of the comparatively uncharted terrain of the performativity of political narratives in digital media and within the structures of the digital space. From the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia to the use of WMD, from Covid-19 to Ukraine and Gaza to the US elections, we are witnessing the use of performativity in setting up and controlling narratives, characters, spaces and interpretations for global audiences through digital media, arts and culture.

Our invitation to international scholars and practitioners in interdisciplinary performance areas and digital media is to propose papers on themes linked to the performativity of politics in digital culture/arts, including but not limited to the following:

- Political Performing and Performing Politics in Interdisciplinary Arts Contexts

¹ See Žižek, Slavoj (1997) *The Plague of Fantasies* (Verso).

² Klein, Naomi (2008) *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (Penguin).

³ See Manovich, Lev (2020) *Cultural Analytics* (The MIT Press)

- Pedagogies of Performative Politics in the Digital World
- Humane, Un-humane, Post-humane and Trans-humane Performative Narratives in the Digital World
- Myths, Legends and Imaginary Histories of Political Narratives on Digital Media
- Rituals and Spectacles of Emerging Communities and Civilizations
- Performativity of Collective Identities, Post-truth and the Manufacturing of Public Consent
- Censorship and Digital culture
- From Representation to Engineering of Conflicts in the Digital World
- AI and the Future of Performing Global Conflicts
- Creation of Events, Places and Stories in digital performance of politics
- Performativity in the Politics of Peace, War and its Aftermath
- Staging Compassion for Mediated Suffering
- Culture as actant in political performance
- Reconstructions of History, Memory and Collective Forgetting
- Performative Creation of the Past as Nostalgia and Heritage
- The Impact of Live and Online Performance in the Popularisation of National Histories
- Decolonial and Postcolonial Narratives in Social Networks
- Use of Facebook Revolution and the Dark Web in Arab Spring and other political movements

Abstracts of 300 words, with your name and affiliation and under the subject 'Performativity of Politics', should be submitted by 30 June via email to:

art.conference@arts.bg.ac.rs

with copy to:

Sofia Buravaia,
Conference Administrator
sofiia.brv@gmail.com

All submissions will be reviewed anonymously by the conference programme committee.

Conference Convenors:

Professor Aleksandar Dunjderović
Professor Ivan Pravdić
Dr Paola Botham