



Universität
Basel

Research Project

Visual Culture in Urban Africa II

Third-party funded project

Project title Visual Culture in Urban Africa II

Principal Investigator(s) Förster, Till ;

Project Members Egloff, René ; Förster, Till ;

Organisation / Research unit

Departement Gesellschaftswissenschaften / Visuelle und politische Ethnologie (Förster)

Department

Project Website http://www.unibas-ethno.ch/forschung/forschungsprojekte/visual_culture_in_urban_africa_II.php

Project start 01.03.2008

Probable end 28.02.2011

Status Completed

Summary

The application aims at the continuation of term I of the project Visual Culture in Urban Africa. It starts from the findings of term I, in particular that the novel visuality that emerged in urban Africa may neither be attributed to local "tradition" nor to global "influence". Visual culture is embedded in an everyday practice offering a space for plural realities that coexist and often are in conflict with each other. They are the expression of an urban culture that stimulates the exchange of pictures and images in a wide variety of media. The project thus examines more deeply the circulation of images and the visualising of things that are not necessarily visual with regard to three media: photography, painting and now also the internet. As many genres extend over more than two media, a comprehensive understanding of intra- and intermediality in the context of visual urban culture needs a broader basis for comparative research. A particular focus of term II is hence on the relationship of the visual to urban culture in general. By analysing and theorising our findings with regard to the underlying modes of societal and cultural articulation, we hope to contribute to a better understanding of urban Africa in general.

Key questions

The key questions enlarge the scope of research toward a deeper understanding of the visual in African urban culture. In addition to the basic question of term I, we now address the following questions on the visual in urban culture in general:

- How do actors as individuals and as members of the urban society of Bamenda engage with media?
- How do pictorial genres relate to the urban culture as a whole and to its visual side in particular?
- How are they embedded in discursive regimes that transcend the visual culture?

Methodology

The general approach is based on the findings and experiences of term I and continues the interactional analysis which consists of two cross-cutting perspectives:

- an object-centred perspective that looks at how certain pictures move through three media: photography, painting, and in addition to term I, the internet and mobile phone as new media,
- an action-centred perspective that looks at how pictures are embedded in social practice and how images are created or transformed by them (mental images and representations).

The approach has been presented and discussed at international conferences and has proved to generate stimulating results that improve our understanding of the interaction of pictures, media and visual

aesthetic practice (several publications, some still in print).ä

Empirical Research will be conducted by two PhD candidates and the head of the project in Bamenda, Cameroon. [Till Förster](#) and [René Egloff](#) will continue with their studies on painting and photography which are closely linked by many intermedial ties.

Cooperation and significance

The project will be embedded in the new Centre for Competence in Research on the African City of the University of Basel. It is also integrated into the already existing research partnerships with African universities, in particular with Yaoundé.

Keywords photography, Africa, Cameroon, media, visual culture, art, intermediality, urban culture

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Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF)

Follow-up project of [5426 Visual Culture in Urban Africa I](#)

Add publication

Published results

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Specify cooperation partners