

Diversity Chic?

Popular Culture between Empowerment and Exploitation

Digital workshop, 5 November 2021, 9:00-15:00

9:00-9:30	Welcome / Intro
9:30-10:00	Sabrina Mittermeier (U Kassel): "Queer Representation in US Television"
10:00-10:30	Florian Freitag (U Duisburg-Essen): "Princesses and Queens: Heteronormativity and Queer Practices in Theme Parks"
10:30-11:00	Coffee Break
11:00-11:30	Nathalie Aghoro (KU Eichstätt): "Afrofuturist Diversifications in <i>Black Panther</i> "
11:30-12:00	Luvena Kopp (U Bonn): "Spike Lee and the Interrelations of Identity and Class"
12:00-12:30	Robert Hyland (Queen's U, Kingston, Ontario): " <i>Raya and the Last Dragon</i> and Pan-Asianism"
12:30-13:30	Lunch Break
13:30-15:00	Concluding discussion

Registration If you are interested to participate, please get in touch with Paulina Petracenko at paulina.petracenko@tu-dresden.de.

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How does contemporary popular culture stage and recalibrate matters of diversity? Over the past few years, the relationship between popular culture, diversity, and (the politics of) representation has once again become a matter of lively debate shaped by those engaged in making, creating, and consuming popular culture in the United States and beyond as practitioners, actors, writers, and fans. Phenomena such as the hashtags #OscarsSoWhite, #TimesUpGlobes, #Gamergate, and #ComicsGate as well as the media hype over landmark movies such as *Black Panther* and *Crazy Rich Asians* attest to these debates. What this shows is that different forms of popular culture—cinema, television, music, comics, video games, theme parks, among others—are more than simple forms of entertainment. As significant cultural sites, they can reproduce dominant ways of thinking and legitimize structural hierarchies. In a more positive vein, they can also be seen as sites of envisioning alternatives and empowering people, for instance by telling them stories in which they may recognize themselves.

The workshop starts from the observation that popular culture has responded to increasingly audible calls by marginalized communities in recent years, overcome a visible lack of diversity, and embraced inclusion, thus providing a broader range of visions of possibility instead. The workshop asks how different formats in popular culture capture and make visible experiences that are generally underrepresented or misrepresented. It also seeks to move beyond a discussion of representational politics by addressing questions of institutional change with an eye to the dimensions of the production, distribution, sale, and consumption of diversity. In lieu of lauding the diversification of popular culture, participants will also discuss the potential pitfalls of the embrace of diversity in popular culture: when, e.g., do changes meant to empower marginalized people in and around popular culture turn into surface-level "diversity chic"? What, whom, and how do the producers of popular culture keep exploiting under the banner of what we might call "diversity chic"? The workshop seeks to take stock of these issues, discussing the status of diversity in popular culture, reflecting on the consequences of the embrace of diversity, and raising yet again general questions of the status of popular culture in the world and its relation to it.

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