

## CFP Television Conference

Date: Thursday-Friday, July 5-6, 2012.

Venue: KunstQuartier, Bergstraße, Salzburg, Austria

### "Auteur TV: Resurrecting Quality through Trash?"

In his bestseller of 1985, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Neil Postman claimed that the creative potential of a once culturally productive civilization is more and more diminishing and in turn especially television represents the climax of an entertainment culture that renders people stupid. Contrary to such a claim, however, television proved to release multifarious creative energies. Ever since HBO's famous slogan "It's Not TV, It's HBO" launched in 1996, so-called quality television (Thomas Elsaesser) has reached a new level of marketing, recognition, and indeed quality. With other networks imitating the formula, the "HBO effect" (Marc Leverette) took hold and triggered a wave of creative output.

This turn to quality set off two secondary shifts: (a) Contemporary television staged the resurgence of the *auteur*, and thus through aesthetic interaction high-end US TV became a repository of many trademarks associated with European art cinema (Toby Miller). (b) With the digital revolution in full swing, television became faster, cheaper, and yet better. America transformed into an "on-demand nation" (Gary Edgerton), indulging in junk food television.

This auteurist turn to trash will be discussed in the framework of a two-part symposium with an initial workshop specifically dedicated to series like *Breaking Bad*, *Hung*, *Californication*, *Arrested Development*, etc. Papers might address but are not limited to the following questions:

- How does the resurgence of the *auteur* in such series introduce a line of demarcation within contemporary quality TV?
- Is their appeal primarily induced by trashy images? How does this aesthetic relate to *auteur* cinema?
- "Exploding the family structure" (Tania Modleski) and contesting heteronormativity: Is there a new role of Lifestyle-TV?
- How do these series represent the decline of social welfare that accompanies the crisis of consumer capitalism?
- What popular genres are reactivated here and how are they transformed?
- How does the turn to nostalgia correlate to trash aesthetics?
- Role of opening credits in the formation of receptive attitudes?
- How do the specific formats, 30 minutes or 60 minutes respectively, influence the *auteur*-trash nexus as well as patterns of consumption and reception?
- What kinds of publicness form themselves around these series? How do these publics relate to social strata?
- Markets and Merchandise: role of identity-constituting function triggered by the series and thus by identification with trash?

### SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

Paper proposals in English or German are welcome and should include a title, an abstract (500 words maximum), and a brief personal biography of no more than 150 words.

Please send your proposal to [ralph.poole@sbg.ac.at](mailto:ralph.poole@sbg.ac.at), [florian.sedlmeier@sbg.ac.at](mailto:florian.sedlmeier@sbg.ac.at), or [susanne.wegener@sbg.ac.at](mailto:susanne.wegener@sbg.ac.at) by March 31, 2012.