

# Mimesis and Composition

## Anthropological Perspectives on Technology and Art

Second Padua Summer School on Philosophy and Cultural Studies of Technology

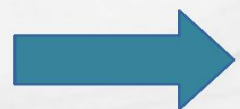
September 13-19, 2020



The making of a humanly built world involves many ways of weaving and drawing things together, of joining and splitting, molding and fitting. These invite perspectives from archaeology, cultural and cognitive anthropology, history and philosophy of technology, art theory, media studies, and STS.

*Mimesis and composition* – two principles of artful production in technology and the arts. Mimesis seeks patterns for imitation and repetition, creating affective routines somewhat as rituals or games do. Composition refers to a grammar of things. In painting and poetry, music and photography, in mechanical and software engineering composition appears inventive and “natural” at once as one finds the right way of putting things together. With mimesis and composition do we exercise a playful what-if or do we reproduce the life and liveliness of things?

*Anthropological perspectives on technology and art* – When it is said that we became human by virtue of technology, what are the pertinent modes of production, what kinds of thinking and social practice is implicated in mimetic and compositional tinkering, making, building? But also this: If humans and humanity shape and reshape themselves through technology and art, in which way are technological designs and aesthetic programs designs on human nature?



*Mimesis and composition* – complementary principles of artful production. And the priority of one over the other in the transition from animal to human being.

Arrival on Sunday, September 13, followed by five days of discussion, including two featured guest lectures, guided tours, and a free afternoon, departure on Saturday, September 19. Graduate students present works in progress, faculty members discuss theoretical positions.

The city of Padua offers numerous occasions and historical exemplars to stimulate our discussions. Thus the Summer School is framed by at least two historical sites and a museum.

*La Specola* and the *Teatro Anatomico* – the observatory in the city of Galileo and the anatomical theatre in the city of Vesalius – testify to the technological beginnings of modern science. They draw observers into the telescopic and microscopic interplay of stillness and motion, darkness and light. Are these built environments models for or models of vision, do they compose a relation of witnessing among and between people and things, do they thereby institute mimetic conditions of imitation and repetition? Machines for vision are the subject of Padua's *Museo dei Precinema*, its cabinet of the wonders of sight, its collection of toys that play with illusion and veracity.

Contributions that refer to these or other regional sites are most welcome.

#### **Faculty:**

Natascha Adamowsky (cultural studies, Siegen)

Jacopo Bonetto (archaeology, Padova)

Marcello Ghilardi (archaeology, Padova)

Fabio Grigenti (philosophy, Padova)

Kevin Liggieri (philosophy of technology, Darmstadt)

Alfred Nordmann (philosophy, Darmstadt)

Oliver Schlaudt (philosophy, Heidelberg, and cognitive archaeology, Tübingen)

Astrid Schwarz (philosophy and technoscience studies, Cottbus)

#### **Featured Guest Speakers:**

Tim Ingold (anthropology, Aberdeen)

Maria Muhle (philosophy, aesthetic theory, Munich)

*consulting:* Natalia Nikiforova (HSE Moscow)

If you are interested to explore in an interdisciplinary setting some aspect of mimesis and composition as anthropological dimensions of technology and art, send your application to [nordmann@phil.tu-darmstadt.de](mailto:nordmann@phil.tu-darmstadt.de) and describe your motivation and interest in English or German (two pages should be enough, plus a short CV). Deadline is 10th June 2020.

There are no costs for participation in the summer school. Accommodation and meals at the cafeteria will be covered. Participants need to make their own travel arrangements, however. The Summer School is open to advanced MA students, PhD candidates and postdocs from philosophy, archaeology, cultural and cognitive anthropology, history and philosophy of technology, art theory, media studies, STS, and related fields.

**Corona Notice:** We live in times of uncertainty. While we hope that this summer-school can take place as planned, a final determination will need to be made on July 15.