

The Atmospheric Worlds of Cinema

Initiative: Postdoctoral Fellowships in den Geisteswissenschaften an Universitäten und Forschungsinstituten

in Deutschland und den USA

Ausschreibung: Postdoctoral Fellowships in den Geisteswissenschaften an Universitäten und

Forschungsinstituten in den USA

Bewilligung: 25.03.2019

Laufzeit: 1 Jahre

Cinema's popularity is indisputably dependent on its ability to embed its audience in atmospheric worlds. This project fundamentally reorients film narratology on the basis of the world-constitutive qualities of atmosphere. Here, the conceptualization of atmosphere in New Aesthetics as a spatially extended quality of feeling operating in the intermediary space between the object and the subject is important. This project argues that this intermediate space is essential for the storytelling capacities of film but that it remains obscured by theories that hold the cognitive subject to be isolated from bodily and ecological processes. Atmospheres shift the attention from representations to relations, more particularly to the dynamic interlinking of the medium and its user prior to any distinction of these. Here the experience of space is essentially a fusion of subject and object. Once we enter a space, the space enters us. This project proposes that the concept of atmosphere challenges the prevalent understanding of the filmic narrative as a mental representation that is the result of cognitive elaboration or the spectator's use of a disembodied semiotics. Instead, the film narrative is a relational entity that brings the environmental qualia and the embodied presence of the perceiving subject together. As a phenomenon that extends far beyond aesthetic concerns, the atmospheric must be central to any inquiries into the interrelation of our corporal-cognitive capacities and the world. Atmospheres shift attention away from the representational to the felt presence of things. Importantly, cinema does not just communicate that an atmosphere prevailed somewhere, it makes this atmosphere perceptible present. What are the stylistic means by which this is achieved? What does it reveal about the nature of the film experience and narrative comprehension? These are urgent questions for film narratology developed in this project.

Projektbeteiligte

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