



# FG GESCHLECHTER STUDIEN

## **membra(I)nes**

12. Gender Studies Association Annual Conference  
June 15–17, 2023

Burg Giebichenstein Kunsthochschule Halle and Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst Leipzig

Organized by

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### **Call for Contributions**

Every living being comes with cell membranes. The membrane represents a common feature of unicellular organisms, plants, and human and non-human animals. Can the concept of the membrane therefore help us overcome anthropocentric thinking? And if so, how does it allow to address hierarchies and power imbalances among humans? Can it mobilize decolonial critiques of a posthumanist discourse as a model to thinking in gender studies and feminist science and technology studies? Will a queer understanding of desire or a Black feminist understanding of eroticism help us to draw new, unexpected connections between these relationships and environments?

Does the membrane thus have the potential to function as a concept-metaphor or model in scholarly and artistic investigations? The conference "membra(I)nes" poses this question as a starting point to open up intersectional and transdisciplinary approaches and to pursue them in an experimental way.

At the same time, by writing "membra(I)nes" we direct epistemological attention towards the brain and intellectual capacities. Through this connection, we raise the question of how processes of subject constitution or the formation of an "I" can be investigated and negotiated amidst a sweeping dissolution of rigid boundaries between humans, plants, and animals. In this context, we wonder if even the brain could be figured as a membrane, and thus thinking would constitute a capacity of separation and oscillation, of envelopment and permeability? How could this idea bring into focus sensory and affective, technological and media-cultural, performative and artistic dimensions, as they are shaped by relationships and environments?

The conference is interested in biological and physical aspects of the membrane as well as in the membrane as a conceptual metaphor for social, cultural, and political processes: Various processes of exchange and boundaries, touching and movement – through barriers – can be

interrogated across species in terms of these different dimensions. What does the membrane as a selective barrier, but also in the sensory-acoustic dimension of vibrating skin, tell us about how we perceive the world, how we perceive gender, sexuality and bodies, desire and intimacy? How is (gender) knowledge – membrane-mediated – gained and produced? In which ways can thinking with, or thinking as a membrane, influence our understanding of social worlds and political processes?

In addition to biological membranes, there are numerous artificial membranes: Some originate from everyday life, some take on highly technological forms; some are used industrially or connect to living beings. In simple form, namely as a vibrating skin membrane, they are part of an ancient tradition of musical and sound instruments. Clothing and fashion function as membranes between bodies, protecting, communicating, and negotiating social values. Artistic practices use membranes as a material as well as a tool and engender productions of knowledge beyond the verbal. Regarding the materiality of membranes, we are confronted with questions of sustainability, not only in artistic practice, but in everyday life, too. In dealing with clothing, packaging, and all other envelopes (cars, airplane cabins) whose porosity in the sense of their evaporation or microplastic contamination is constitutive for climate change, the membrane is present. Here again the question arises to what extent the metaphor of the membrane is suitable for de- or re-coding the present world: For with every permeability, something also starts to vibrate, generating resonances whose potentialities need to be figured out.

The pictorial quality of the membrane, but also the playful aesthetic attempt of the annual conference theme "membra(I)nes" issues an invitation to approach submissions in an equally experimental way. Scholarly, artistic, cultural, and activist approaches come together on equal terms. Both organizationally and through the call for contributions, we are looking for formats and proposals that support this encounter. Scholarly submissions can therefore also be sonic or performative, artistic ones in turn research oriented. It is possible to design panels as sit-ins, or dialogues as dance duels, individual lectures can be drag performances and podiums a staging. Artistic works may be a lecture, photographs an scholarly picture series, etc.

We look forward to your participation in the first annual conference in the history of the society that takes place at two different locations. Being furthermore hosted by a Kunsthochschule (art school, instead of a university) and in the former East for the first time, the conference in a way works itself on borders, between cities, political systems, and academic spaces.

Contributions may take up or exceed the following subjects:

- Membrane as border regime: exclusion, selection, encounter, exchange
- Rethinking Race: skin as a transfer zone of racialization and its displacement
- Body/gender histories of the membrane: hymens, foreskins, cells, etc.
- Partially permeable politics of evidence (under critique: blood communities, obligation to provide evidence in the context of sexual violence, juridification of trans and intersex)
- Gendered, sexualized, racialized, and eugenic biologies of the brain
- Affective, sensory knowledge of artificial intelligence / queer-feminist critique and potentials of artificial intelligence as sensing/affective media
- Artistic practices and materials in which the qualities of the membranous are invoked
- Artistic practices that work with resiliencies, infiltrations or filters

- Desire as a process based on permeability between the physiological, symbolic, social and imaginative
- Gendering of infrastructure / queer-feminist re-codings of the infrastructure of work, institutions, digitality, transportation
- Membrane as in-between spatiality & in-between temporality / re-configurations of queer time, safe space, etc.
- Membrane as space of in-between: What's queer after non-binary?

Please submit your proposal for single-contributions, workshops, panels (with titles of the papers presented), and experimental formats as abstract (300 words max.; applications through visual material should not exceed five pages of a compressed PDF-file) until **Dec 15, 2022**, to the following address: [membraines\(at\)gender-queer.de](mailto:membraines(at)gender-queer.de)

