

## **Bodies, Things and Movement - As the sense of balance likes it**

Colloquium on Psychological Aspects of Material Culture and Design

25<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2007

at Burg Giebichenstein, University of Art and Design, Halle (Saale)

organised by Burg Giebichenstein and the Society for Cultural Psychology

“Most people must have observed the sort of sense they have had, on being swiftly drawn in an easy coach, on a smooth turf, with gradual ascents and declivities. This will give a better idea of the beautiful, and point out its probable cause better than almost any thing else.”

(Edmund Burke, “A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful”, orig. 1757)

“Since physical exercise – the ignition of the human engine – is anathema to the passionate sitter, the opportunity was seized to endow the seat with motion. In other words, gymnastics, whether spontaneous or contrived most essential to human survival, were bequeathed to the chair. The latter, swollen with pride, gave birth to a freak called the rocking-chair.”

(Bernhard Rudofsky “Sparta / Sybaris”, 1987)

“The carousel (...) jolts and shakes the sloppy psyche into a delicious frappé.”

(Bernhard Rudofsky “Sparta / Sybaris“, 1987)

In all the world’s cultures, every activity imaginable has revolved and still revolves around our balance: attaining it, holding it; but also risking it, and even ridding ourselves of it. The world of things in which people arrange and orient their lives can also bear witness to this.

The sense of balance is, to paraphrase Paul Schilder, the sense that holds movement together with all the senses. The colloquium will examine how material culture challenges this sense and whether it asks too much, or indeed too little of it. What developments may be traced? What may be anticipated, desired, or projected?

Within both the classical theory of the aesthetics of static objects and today’s design education, ‘balance’ is a norm. Can one justify this from the perspective of the sense of balance? Does ‘balance’ as an attribute of appearance have anything at all to do with a bodily sense of balance?

Around 30 speakers will examine aspects of balance and Vertigo from the perspective of the natural and social sciences as well as from artistic and design standpoints. In addition, there will be scientific posters and student presentations on the theme. A programme of evening events is in preparation.

**Conference language: German** (Kathryn Geurts presents her paper in English)

Thursday, 25th October  
Registration from 17:00 on  
19:00 Conference opening and introduction to the theme

Christoph Asendorf: Vertiginous Attractions. Balance in the Aesthetics of Modernism

Friday, 26th October  
Morning

**Stand Up, Stay Up: Material Culture and Walking Upright**

Gudrun Ludwig: Finding your Balance – Development in the First Years of Life

Arturo Hotz: (Im)balance as the Balance Sheet of Equilibrium.  
Phenomenological Reflections with a Focus on Sports

Jacob Bachmayer: Balancing on Two Axels. From the Bobby Car to the High Tech Bike

Monika Kritzmöller: Balancing Act. High Heels as a Stage for the Body, the Torso and the Beholder

Kathryn L. Geurts: When You Cannot Headload: Balance, Mobility,  
and the Dis/abling of Sensibilities in Metropolitan Accra

Klaus Jahn: Out of Balance: the Sixth Sense and its Disruptions

Afternoon

**Soft Drugs – Hard Drugs: Techniques of Sedation and Arousal**

Sonja Windmüller: Swinging in to the Order of the World. Practices and Discourses of Rocking

Michael Suckow: Moving Children

Annette Tietenberg: Restful Movement. The Rocking-Chair as an Aesthetic Construct

Thomas Slunecko: Balancing – An Invitation to Trans-Dichotomy

Joachim Günther: An Example of the Design of Swinging Furniture

Robert Jütte: Turning Machines in Pre-Modern Psychiatry

Evening programme

Saturday, 27th October  
Morning

**Media, Vertigo and Balance**

Wolfgang Behringer: Bodies in Movement. Acceleration and Vertigo in Early Modern Times

Kurt Möser: Stable Machines – Driving, Flying and Balance 1900 - 1918

Josef Walch: Balance, Balance...

Ralph Sichler: From tranquillitate animi to the Work-Life Balance.  
On the Balance Metaphor in the Western Concept of the Conscious Lifestyle Choice

Rolf-Peter Janz: The Sublime and the Beautiful – Two Agencies of Sensory Confusion

Matthias Götz: Design and Vertigo

## Afternoon

### Media, Vertigo and Balance (Continued)

Vinzenz Hediger: The Reeling Gaze – Towards a Theory of Post-Panoptical Cinema

Fred Mast: Rotating, Balancing and Navigating in Real and Virtual Space

Podium Discussion: Vertigo as Cultural Pathology?

### Nicely Skewed? Balance in Aesthetic Theory, Design Theory and Architecture

Christian Allesch: The Sense of Balance and Aesthetics

Axel Seyler: Gravity, Balance, Symmetry

## Early evening

### Poster session

Digression: Christian Allesch: Between Empiricism and Normativity:  
A Look Back at the Congress of Aesthetics and Fine Arts in Halle, 1927

## Evening programme

## Sunday, 28<sup>th</sup> October

### Morning

Wulf Schneider: Balance – People and Design

Christian Rittelmeyer: The Sense of Balance in Perceptions of Architecture.  
A Research Project Report

Stefanie Lieb: The Twisting Line – Experiencing Space in Art Nouveau

Ralf Weber: The Aesthetics of Balance and Tectonics

Podium Discussion: How much vertigo do we need in design?

### Contact:

materialculture @ burg-halle.de

Prof. Dr. Rainer Schönhammer  
Psychologie der Gestaltung  
Hochschule für Kunst und Design Halle (Saale)  
Postfach 200 252  
06003 Halle (Saale)

For further information: [www.kulturpsychologie.de/](http://www.kulturpsychologie.de/)  
[www.burg-halle.de/](http://www.burg-halle.de/)