CONCEPT
The violence unleashed by natural disasters exposes human beings to the most elemental of borderline situations. Human will and capacities, poised on the precarious frontier between nature and culture – a frontier defined differently by each epoch and culture – are forced to undergo an ordeal of life and death. Disaster – viewed as a condition of emergency – becomes the site of survival or failure not only of individuals but of entire communities. The conference will investigate specific culturally formed patterns of action and collective ways of coping brought forth by catastrophic events. This makes all disasters, even those which unfold in the heart of “nature”, profoundly socio-cultural happenings. For survivors the experience of disaster can become a search for meaning: in what terms is the encounter with elemental violence perceived, interpreted, described and interiorized? In order to express that which defies description, cultures take recourse to visual media: verbal images, myths, signs, symbols and films. Representations of calamities domesticate and contain them as icon. Various dimensions of the event - signs of imminent danger, the shock of disaster, destruction and ruin, escape and rescue, overcoming danger, victory over the elements, help for the victims – have generated a repertoire of motifs with a view to portray disaster through a wide range of media, across time and history. The analysis of the ways disasters are imagined and visualized is the theme of this conference, in two senses. First, it will address methodological questions pertaining to a transcultural vocabulary and iconography of disasters and second, it intends to systematically analyze the event of disaster and its medial representation as a complex and composite socio-cultural process.

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For further information on the Cluster “Asia and Europe in a Global Context”, please visit www.asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de.


International Conference
IMAGING DISASTER
organised by
Prof. Monica Juneja and Prof. Gerrit Jasper Schenk

March 1 - 3, 2012

Venue:
Internationales Wissenschaftsforum
Hauptstrasse 242
D-69117 Heidelberg
Thursday, March 1, 2012
9.00 Welcome
Monica Juneja (Heidelberg), Gerrit Jasper Schenk (Darmstadt)

9.30 to 10.15 Keynote Lecture
Jörg Trempler (Berlin)
Pictures of Catastrophe and the Turning Point in the History of Images in the 18th Century

10.15 to 10.30 Discussion
10.30 to 11.00 Coffee Break

Section I: Sign, Prediction and Vision
Chair: Monica Juneja (Heidelberg)
11.00 to 12.00
Charles Zika (Melbourne)
Visual Signs of Imminent Disaster in the 16th-Century Zurich Archive of Johann Jakob Wick

Peter Parshall (Washington)
Pieter Bruegel the Elder and the Towers of Babel: An Aesthetics of Displacement
12.00 to 12.30 Discussion
12.30 to 14.00 Lunch Break
14.00 to 15.00
Alexa Weik von Mosser (Fribourg)
Disasters Foretold: Climate Change Documentaries and the Anticipation of Catastrophe

Birgit Schneider (Potsdam)
Red Futures in Climate Change Expert Graphics
15.00 to 15.30 Discussion
15.30 to 16.00 Coffee Break

Section II: The Event
Chair: Michael Falser (Heidelberg)
16.00 to 17.00 Perception
Peter Ludes (Bremen) and Jianxi Hao (Bremen)
Key Visuals of Catastrophes in Chinese and German TV Annual Reviews since 2008

Martin Döring (Hamburg)
Imaging Comets: A Study on Visual Representations of Comets in French Canards at the Turn of the 16th and 17th Century

17.00 to 17.30 Discussion
18.00 Dinner
20.00 “Disaster Films” Presentation by Sven Wasköning (ARTE)

Friday, March 2, 2012

Section II: The Event
Chair: Gerrit Jasper Schenk (Darmstadt)
9.00 to 10.30 Interpretation
Rosmarie Zeller (Basel)
„Kann uns der Himmel nicht bekehren, so soll uns doch die Erde lehren“. Reading Images of Natural Disasters in Wonderbooks and Prints of the Early Modern Period

Fabrizio Nevola (Bath)
Urban Responses to Earthquakes in Renaissance Italy: Images and Rituals

Nazrul Islam (Dhaka)
Natural Disasters as Depicted in Contemporary Arts of Bangladesh
10.30 to 11.00 Discussion
11.00 to 11.30 Coffee Break

Section III: Reaction (Relief, Solidarity, Coping)
Chair: Rudolf Wagner (Heidelberg)
11.30 to 12.30
Gabi Schlag (Frankfurt)
A Buddha to Protect. Nargis and the Visual Politics of Security

Kay Kirchmann (Erlangen)
Constructions of Otherness. Images of Pain, Suffering Stoicism during Japanese Disaster, 2011
12.30 to 13.00 Discussion
13.00 to 14.30 Lunch Break

Section IV: Memory
Chair: Diamantis Panagiotopoulos (Heidelberg)
14.30 to 15.30
Greg Bankoff (Hull)
The Ascetics of Danger: Seismic Architecture through the Ages

Daniel Levy (New York)
The Mediat(iz)ation of Disasters and the Cosmopolitanization of Time
15.30 to 16.00 Discussion
16.00 to 16.30 Coffee Break
16.30 to 17.30
Jennifer Weisenfeld (Durham)
Laughing in the Face of Calamity: Visual Satire after the Great Kantō Earthquake

Jeffrey H. Jackson (Memphis)
Narratives of Destruction and Recovery in the 1910 Paris Flood
17.30 to 18.00 Discussion
18.00 Dinner
20.00 Photo Exhibition with Aric Mayer and Kazu Ahmed. Venue: DAI Heidelberg

Saturday, March 3, 2012

Section V: Prevention
Chair: Dominik Collet (Göttingen)
9.00 to 10.30
Charles Schencking (Hong Kong)
Constructing Japan’s 1923 Earthquake Calamity for Relief and Reconstruction

Anna Andreeva (Heidelberg)
Divine Movers and Shakers: Conceptualising Disasters in Pre-modern Japan.
10.30 to 11.00 Discussion
11.00 to 11.30 Coffee Break
11.30 to 12.30 Final Discussion
12.30 Lunch
13.00 to 14.00 Discussion
14.00 to 15.00
Pattaratorn Chirapravati (Sacramento)
Inundations: Images of Disaster in Southeast Asian Art
15.00 to 15.30 Discussion
15.30 to 16.00 Coffee Break
16.00 to 16.30 Jennifer Weisenfeld (Durham)
Laughing in the Face of Calamity: Visual Satire after the Great Kantō Earthquake
17.30 to 18.00 Discussion
18.00 Dinner
20.00 Photo Exhibition with Aric Mayer and Kazu Ahmed. Venue: DAI Heidelberg