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COMICS AND FEMINISM

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

COMICS AND SOCIETY:
RESEARCH, ART, AND CULTURAL POLITICS

NORDIC SUMMER UNIVERSITY WINTER SYMPOSIUM

19-21 FEBRUARY 2020
SÖDERTÖRN UNIVERSITY, SWEDEN

Organized in collaboration by Nordic Summer University
and the Subject of English at Södertörn University

We invite scholars, students, artists, and other professionals working with comics to the third symposium of the network Comics and Society: Research, Art, and Cultural Politics (2019-2021). Comics and Society is an interdisciplinary three-year initiative that aims to cultivate our understanding of comics as a social and socially defined phenomenon and to strengthen the status of comic art and comics scholarship in the Nordic-Baltic region. Through academic discussion, artistic work, and social engagement we explore how comics take part in making sense of societies, social phenomena, and societal changes especially, but not exclusively, in the Nordic and Baltic countries.

In the third symposium, the focus is on transnational perspectives on comic art and feminism, particularly in the Nordic countries and the Baltic Sea region. Given that comic art has always been an international form, it is no surprise that comics should also reflect and respond to trends of globalization. If the rise of graphic narrative genres in multiple national contexts may in itself be seen as an effect of cultural globalization, comic art is, at the same time, deeply enmeshed in local histories and contexts. In the Anglo-American context, the emergence of women's comic art and graphic narratives was closely associated with second-wave feminism, "which enabled a body of work that was explicitly political to sprout" (Chute 2010:20). At this time, self-published, underground 'comix' were proliferating, which gave rise to comics with a decidedly feminist orientation (Robbins 1999), albeit as "more a reaction to [underground comix] than their outgrowth" (Sabin 1993:224). Women's underground comix thus paved the way for contemporary feminist comic art, and a growing number of contemporary comics are continuing to explore themes of feminism by creating new discursive spaces for problematizing gender, gender roles, and social norms. Indeed, many women creators in particular have achieved mainstream recognition thanks to the expanding graphic novel market and the popularity of autobiographical comics.

The symposium aims to explore, on the one hand, how the relationship between comic art and feminism has been shaped by global, transnational, and local trends, and on the other hand, how salient national features and transnational commonalities characterize feminist comic art. Included papers will illuminate defining features of aesthetics, materiality, and thematic content

as well as recurring strategies of visualizing and narrating female experiences. Particularly welcome are papers which offer analyses of multinational comic art that encompasses themes of gender, sexuality, power, vulnerability, assault, abuse, taboo, and trauma, often expressed with humorous undertones of self-reflection or social criticism.

Ideally, papers will also endeavor to broaden the research perspective of feminist comics to include national comics cultures peripheral to the cultural centers of US-American, Franco-Belgian, and Japanese comics. To this end, the symposium takes as a point of departure the comic art landscape of Sweden, where feminist comics that explore the political through the personal have established comics artists as influential social commentators. The success and popularity of Swedish feminist comic art warrants an exploration of local reverberations and transnational trends in feminist comic art both in and around Sweden, including marginalized or under-explored countries. For this reason, the transnational focus of the symposium applies to comic art or comics artists from the Nordic countries and those of the surrounding the Baltic Sea region.

Theoretical, conceptual, or empirical papers from a wide range of disciplines or interdisciplinary approaches are invited, and may relate to the overall theme of comic art and feminism by addressing questions such as (but not limited to) the following:

- How can the dominant narrative or history of canonical works be challenged or deconstructed by local histories of comics and feminism and their transnational connections?
- How do local histories complement or challenge our understanding of the relationship between feminism and comic art?
- In what ways are feminist ideas expressed thematically, visually, or linguistically through the comics medium?
- How are constructions of corporeality, sexuality, or gender called into question or renegotiated in comics?
- What kind of local, transnational, or digital communities do feminist comic artists form?

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Dr. Elisabeth El Refaie (Cardiff University)

Dr. Leena Romu (Tampere University)

ARTIST ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANTS

Ingrīda Pičukāne (Latvia)

H-P Lehkonen (Finland)

Sofia Olsson (Sweden)

Moa Romanova (Sweden)

Nina Hemmingsson (Sweden)

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

Generally, symposium sessions will consist of participants' individual 20-minute presentations plus 10 minutes of discussion. However, alternative forms of participation, such as panels or roundtables, are possible. We welcome contributions from academics, artists, and other professionals interested in comics. Please submit your proposal (max 300 words) and a short bio (max 100 words) to the organizers at comics2020@sh.se. If you would like to attend the symposium without presenting, please email a short bio and some information about your interests in participating.

The deadline to submit proposals is November 30, 2019. Decisions of acceptance will be sent by December 15, 2019.

REGISTRATION AND FEE

Students, freelancers, unemployed: Conference fee 400 SEK + NSU membership fee 100 SEK
Academic faculty or affiliates: Conference fee 500 SEK + NSU membership fee 250 SEK

The conference fee includes lunches, coffee breaks, symposium dinner as well as materials. The Nordic Summer University (NSU) annual membership fee facilitates the existence of NSU, which is a volunteer-based organisation. As a member you can sign up for all events organised by NSU, take part in the democratic decision-making process on which NSU is based, and become part of the extensive network of NSU.

We encourage participants to apply to their institutions, art councils, local foundations or sponsors to have their travel and accommodation costs covered. For those who cannot get any financial support elsewhere it is possible to apply to NSU for partial travel funding. Please provide a brief description (max 100 words) of your financial situation and an approximation of the travel costs, to be submitted with your proposal.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE NORDIC SUMMER UNIVERSITY

The Nordic Summer University (NSU) is a Nordic network for research and interdisciplinary studies. NSU is a nomadic, academic institution, which organises workshop-seminars across disciplinary and national borders. Since it was established in 1950, Nordic Summer University has organised forums for cultural and intellectual debate in the Nordic and Baltic region, involving students, academics, politicians, and intellectuals from this region and beyond.

Decisions about the content and the organisational form of the NSU lay with its participants. The backbone of the activities in the NSU consists of its thematic study circles. In the study circles researchers, students and professionals from different backgrounds collaborate in scholarly investigations distributed regularly in summer and winter symposia during a three-year period.

NSU builds on the values of equality, inclusion, and sustainability by combining two traditions: the continental ideals of learning and cultivation of the self, and the Nordic heritage of *folkbildning* and self-organization, with its investments in open-access education and collaboration through participation and active citizenship. For more information: www.nordic.university

Organizing committee

Södertörn University (funded by The Foundation for Baltic and East European Studies):

Kristy Beers Fägersten (kristy.beers.fagersten@sh.se)

Anna Nordenstam (anna.nordenstam@lir.gu.se)

Margareta Wallin Victorin (margareta.wallin-wictorin@kau.se)

Nordic Summer University

Anna Vuorinne (ahvuor@utu.fi)

Laura Antola (lahean@utu.fi)