

All the Things You Are: Popular Music and Material Culture

31st Annual Conference of the

German Society for Popular Music Studies GfPM

in cooperation with the

Dept. of Art and Material Culture, TU Dortmund University

22 – 24 October, 2021

The material side of culture plays a crucial role for human acting and thinking; culture cannot be conceived of without the involvement of things. People permanently materialize their concepts about the world surrounding them, their *Lebenswelt*, and they (re-)form and (re-)arrange them in a constant process. The material and the immaterial, reification and idea mingle and form a constellation which is compatible with both sides. Things, be they prominent or commonplace, are constantly being invented, used and are object to signification; their multi-faceted compatibility is revealed in everyday practice.

Popular culture – especially popular music since the 1950s – and material culture have not only formed a strong nexus, but their connectedness has always been explicitly featured and shown. The exhibition of firm bonds to material aspects of culture served both as a distinction from and a rejection of hegemonial concepts as, for example, the European art music tradition. Pop culture melds pleasure with music, with things, with bodily performance and consumption. Aesthetics form the link between these aspects and help to bring forth a constant flow of different styles representing different values. Bands, stars, fans and audiences share these bodily habituated and reified stylizations of music via their outfits, their movements and their dancing. Even spatial concepts have changed in comparison to traditional settings of furniture and technical devices, or the showcasing of valued possessions.

The continual and rapid development of new technologies leads to their swift integration into cultural practices or brings forth new practices. For many technological artefacts, this is the first time that they are subject to signification processes. These significations often go so far as to diverge from their developers' intentions, as the examples of the distorted electric guitar sound and the use of turntables in the hands of DJs show.

Rooted in Cultural Studies, the exploration of things and the dialectic between action and reaction that renders them meaningful has found its own disciplinary tradition in popular music studies. The material turn, sociological practice theories, the Actor-Network Theory and Sounds Studies have fostered it and have contributed to its theoretical elaboration.

The cultural anthropology of fashion and clothing combines the studies of everyday culture, consumption, pop and youth culture. Its focus lies on interpretatively co-produced socialization via bodily actions and clothing. A joint perspective, field and methodology thus link cultural anthropology to those disciplines dedicated to music.

Things are in the focus of this year's conference, which is held in cooperation with the TU Dortmund University's Department of Art and Material Culture. The conference aims to address things in every aspect of their strong influence on pop culture, i.e.:

- in terms of clothing and styles, hairstyles and bodily practices
- in terms of collections and showpieces, e.g. posters, cover art, pins etc.
- in terms of technologies of sound recording and playback, as they appear in cultural practices of production and consumption alike
- in terms of new instruments, creative re-use of established instruments or non-musical artefacts repurposed as musical instruments
- in terms of canonized and museified artefacts
- in terms of revivals and retro sensibilities
- in terms of spatial and room concepts, furnishings and configurations, be it at home, in rehearsal rooms, festival stages or in virtual spaces
- and, last but not least, in terms of sounds which constitute the material object of audition and perception.

In which practices, discourses and power structures are these things involved? Which patterns and arrangements of meaning, signification and knowledge are tied to them? What is their role in educational contexts?

As always, we cordially invite all GfPM members (and all those who wish to become members) to present their current research as a free contribution, independently of the conference theme.

Please send proposal presentations of up to 400 words as a Word document to

gfp2021@popularmusikforschung.de

by **15 May 2021**. Please include a short CV (ca. 150 words max.)

Proposals sent in before the deadline will be evaluated in an anonymous peer review process, to be completed by 15 June 2021.

We are looking forward to seeing you in person at TU Dortmund University and are currently planning a conference on site. Further information and announcements will be found on

www.popularmusikforschung.de.

From approx. 1 June 2021 the terms of registration will be available there as well.

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