

**International Research Conference
University of Avignon and the Vaucluse
[*Université d'Avignon et des Pays du Vaucluse*]**

24-27 May 2011

Organised by Centre Norbert Elias (EHESS¹, CNRS², UAPV³), the Georges Friedmann research laboratory (Paris 1-CNRS), the LHIVIC⁴ (EHESS) and the GRANEM⁵ (University of Angers)

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**Artistic work and creativity in the digital era:
Images and Sounds**

I/ Conference topic:

Developments having been induced by digital technologies (notably by the internet and mobile telephony) are today fuelling an abundance of publications. Those that examine the field of culture focus primarily on the reorganisation of the industrial sector and the adoption of new economic models on the one hand; and entirely new ways for audiences to receive and use digital content – audiences who are led to assume traditionally unrelated roles, such as

¹ École des hautes études en sciences sociales: Higher Education Institute for Social Sciences

² Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique: National Scientific Research Institute

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⁴ Laboratoire d'histoire visuelle contemporaine: Contemporary Visual History Research Laboratory

⁵ Groupe de Recherche Angevin en Economie et Management: Economics and Management Research Group in Angers

⁶ Agence Nationale de la Recherche: National Research Institute

those of producers, prescribers, broadcasters, consumers – on the other hand. Research led in this domain has notably focussed attention on the stakes represented by the digital era in the organisation of various sectors, as well as primary stakeholders, on the distribution of value and methods of remuneration – with the crucial issue of developments in royalties -, on new promotion and distribution strategies, and on the structural particularities of each sector concerned (musical, cinematographic, photography, publishing, etc.). Existing research also covers the economic characteristics of demand for cultural goods and determinants of consumption, notably highlighting the relationship between the digital revolution and piracy as recently illustrated by the Hadopi Act. All of this has naturally led researchers – and stakeholders in the sectors concerned – to ask questions as to the effects, and also the opportunities presented by digital technologies in terms of the diversification of commercialisation methods for music, cinema, etc., in addition to the ways of resisting or, concurrently, adapting to such developments.

In comparison, the question of just how artists and cultural producers themselves actually adopt these new technological tools constitutes a research area left largely unexplored, as demonstrated by existing research into the ethnography of artistic works, and into new economic models in the cultural industries, areas in which there were very few contributions focussing on the relationship between producers and digital technology. In the field of photography, research undertaken by art historians has admittedly enabled issues such as the emergence of “new amateurs” or even buzz phenomena, etc. be discussed. But once more, there is a whole area left unexplored in terms of the disappearance or reduced status of certain professions (printers, iconographers, etc.), or the diversity of behaviours in the face of technological innovations. And this exploration of artistic works in the midst of the digital era seems all the more pertinent since the digital universe itself instigates particularly effective myths or beliefs which can confuse their sociological explanation: the notion of direct competition between amateurs and professionals in the photography sector, and new modes of apotheosis by social networks in the musical sector are particularly pertinent illustrations of the confusion which can arise following the “ambitious claims about digitisation” induced by digital technologies and the true scope of technological innovations.

When all is said and done, focussing on the manner in which digital technologies impact artistic work involves asking questions as to the identification of different postures of artistic professions confronted with innovation, falling ticket prices for events which the internet can supposedly offer, the ability to bypass traditional gatekeepers, the

democratisation of creative practices, the emergence of new collaborative organisation via networks, the surge in the emergence of entirely new aesthetic forms, the resistance to change, new methods of gaining a reputation or of creating added-value, and the redefinition of “professionalism”, etc.

II/ Topics for discussion:

This international research conference aims to focus on the panoply of issues relating to artistic creation in the digital era, focussing notably on the photography, cinema, audiovisual and musical sectors. The areas proposed for discussion and analysis are as follows:

1) The evolution of professions in sectors related to image and sound

How have artistic professions experienced the digital revolution in terms of their identity, practices and revenues? How have they adopted digital technologies? How have they evolved? Which professions have disappeared as a result, and which others have emerged? How have the required professional skills developed? Have the methods of cooperation between the core professions forming a single sector evolved and are we witnessing a new distribution of responsibilities? Is the digital era leading to new forms of professional regulation?

2) Technological innovations, standards and aesthetic conventions

How have technological innovations affected aesthetic standards? How do artistic creators adopt or withstand new technologies? How are criteria used in appreciating quality and the hierarchical organisation of talents and creative works changing? What interactions are taking place between the emergence of technological standards and aesthetical standards?

3) New profiles of amateurs?

Is digital technology blurring/redefining the traditional boundaries between amateurs and professionals, and between consumers and producers? Is digital technology democratising artistic creation, notably via the reduction of costs for purchasing material and equipment, the cost of learning instruments, the cost of broadcasting creations? What are amateurs seeking when broadcasting works via the internet: artistic recognition, commitment towards collaborative projects claiming authorship, access to a particular professional status, etc.?

4) Transformation of economic and organisational models

Is digital technology inducing new economic models? What sort of reorganisation of the markets are we experiencing: a horizontal concentration versus a niche marketing strategy, long-tail versus block buster, vertical integration versus outsourcing of the production sector, the appearance of new market leaders? What effects are resulting from new methods of payment, and notably from the widespread presence of free supply? What are the new strategies being adopted for reaching audiences (viral marketing, buzz, etc.)?

5) Myths and ideologies of the digital era

Each major technological development is accompanied by ambitious claims about digitisation which may or may not be true: for example, a weakened position of major commercial actors on the market favouring independents and even favouring a world of free supply as led by creative individuals, a triumph of the distribution of creative work free of copyright, cultural diversity via sharing networks, etc. What is the mythological, ideological and strategic dimension of the discourses conveyed regarding digital technologies? How did such discourses emerge? How are they related? What effect do they have on a social level? Do they have any power to lead to self-creation in themselves?

III/ Call for papers: requirements and schedule

This multidisciplinary and international research conference will be held at the University of Avignon between 24 and 27 May 2011.

Proposals for papers should be sent to the selection committee prior to 20 November 2010 at the very latest. All proposals, in French or in English, should be saved as RTF and sent to:

- leguern@aol.com (Philippe Le Guern, Professor, University of Avignon)

Proposals must include the following information:

- name of author and institution, email address, title and an abstract not exceeding one page.
- Notification of acceptance of papers shall be issued by 15 December 2010, along with all useful information regarding the conference, reception and accommodation for participants.
- All final versions of selected papers should be sent to the steering committee by 30 April 2011.

Oral presentations may be given either in French or in English; however, so as to facilitate communication between researchers from different countries, conference speakers are requested to provide a power point presentation along with their paper outlining the major points discussed during the presentation (in English for French-speaking presenters and in French for English-speaking presenters).