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## **ComFor-ComicsForum.org-Columns 2014–2023**

Initiated in early 2014 in response to a request from Will Grady and Ian Hague, news editor and director of the British website *comicsforum.org*, a changing roster of authors from ComFor's editorial board and managing committee created a total number of 36 English column posts initially titled "The Bi-Monthly ComFor Update" over the course of one decade. *Comics Forum* was established in 2009 as part of Leed's annual sequential art festival "Thought Bubble" and quickly turned into a knowledge hub for interdisciplinary comic book scholarship. The idea of the ComFor-Column series was to make accessible to an international audience of comics scholars abroad what was happening in terms of comic book scholarship in the German-speaking parts of the world, mainly by summarizing, translating, and narrating what ComFor's editorial board team had been publishing weekly on ComFor's own website *www.comic-gesellschaft.de*. Aside from the authors of the English column, many more people were part of the general editorial team over the years. We are also grateful to Ralf Palandt, Paul Meyer, Alexandra Hentschel, and Katharina Serles. New posts were published at least twice a week for most of this time: overviews of new publications, calls for papers, conferences, workshops, university seminars, etc. While the focus was on covering academic topics with some relation to "German" comics scholarship (either in terms of language, institutional affiliation, or research focus), the ComFor website as well as the resulting columns also frequently covered events and topics related to comics studies from other countries as well as broader developments in the world of comics (fairs and festivals, awards, exhibitions, etc). All columns were written quite informally and displayed the personality of their respective authors; they contain quite a bit of "storytelling" about the institutional, cultural, social, and occasionally political developments in comic scholarship academia during these ten years. If nothing else, they provide proof that ComFor's perhaps most enthusiastic and inspiring activity consists in the tireless work of its website's editorial team(s) over time, which created close to 1.800 posts within these ten years – and continues to do so today. Compiling these, even if only sporadically, into the comprehensive array of English columns was a monumental amount of work to do on the side – or at least

often felt like it to the authors, especially considering that all of the time spent on these tasks was unpaid and done on top of all the demanding regular tasks of university staff. We are also especially grateful to the website editors of *ComicsForum* – in recent years Harriet Earle and Annick Pellegrin – who always double-checked the texts' language and contributed their own enormously valuable observations and suggestions. Closer to the present day, the series turned into the "trimonthly," and then into the "intermittent" ComFor update. The latest column from April 2023 was never published, as the *Comics Forum* website had gone on indefinite hiatus.

These 36 columns cover the ten years that have passed since ComFor was re-founded as a registered organization in 2014. We decided to republish them here in a more permanent form to hold on to this document of comic book scholarship. In the same spirit of documentation, the content has remained mostly unaltered, explaining the changing choices not only in "narrative voice," but also formatting and inconsistent translations (for instance, the "AG Comicforschung" of the German Society for Media Studies GfM was first translated as "Comic Studies Board," later as "Committee for Comics Studies"). The columns also document many changes in policy of ComFor's editorial teams, especially on what to include, exclude, and highlight in their surveys. All hyperlinks of the original columns are included as footnotes that have all been thoroughly checked in June 2024, sometimes updated where a modified website address was readily known to the editors (for the Bonn Online Bibliography of Comics Studies, for instance), otherwise marked as non-functional – in many cases, they could perhaps be reconstructed from the given URLs. The impressive number of 584 resulting footnotes within the following 80 pages provides proof of the growing interconnectedness of comics studies during that period and that, if nothing else, ComFor's main task has always been to help build such networks and interrelations and make them more visible within our expanding research field.

*Vanessa Ossa, Christina Meyer, Natalie Veith & Lukas R.A. Wilde*



Stephan Packard:

## February 2014

Today's short update begins a new column at Comics Forum: Every two months, one of the comics scholars in the German Society for Comics Studies, the Gesellschaft für Comicforschung or "ComFor", will give a brief overview of recent activities and developments from the German comics studies scene as well as an outlook at upcoming events that might be of interest to an international audience. We're grateful to Ian Hague for the opportunity and will try not to bore readers too much with local issues. These updates will probably draw mostly from the contents of our website, selected, refocused and translated into English.

2014 is ComFor's ninth year. The society was founded on February 11th, 2005, in Koblenz; its goals continue to be the coordination and promotion of comics scholarship in German (about comics in any language). Since 2006, ComFor has organized yearly academic conferences at various universities and has published near-yearly volumes of the research presented there. Our popular panel at the Erlangen Comic-Salon, the largest German comics exhibition and convention, has become a recurrent institution as well. ComFor also supports the **Bonn Online Bibliography on Comics Studies**,<sup>1</sup> and is driving plans towards a German Journal for Comics Studies. The main purpose and function of the society, however, remains the advancement of communication and collaboration among comics scholars, whose field is subject to a high degree of dispersion in German-speaking countries: At its best, it produces encounters between scholars from vastly differing disciplines that are brought together by their common interest in comics and continue to learn from one another. At its worst, it can lead to mutual isolation of parallel lines of research – this is what we're trying to work against. In the last few years, the field of German-speaking comics studies has grown, and grown more densely connected; a process from which the society profits greatly, and that we hope we have supported in our own way.

In September, a group of German comics artists, scholars, and readers published **Das Comic Mani-**

**fest at the International Festival of Literature in Berlin.**<sup>2</sup> The manifesto points out that while "German comics are celebrated in the features pages, are translated into numerous languages and receive prizes and awards at international festivals", "the comic illustrators, comic publishers and other actors [...] have gained recognition of the German comic practically without outside help". More than 70 of these have signed the manifesto, demanding "that the comic be afforded the same respect as literature and the visual arts and that it receive the corresponding funding", pointing out that like "all other art forms, the comic depends on state and private support"; they go on to call for "financial support [...] granted to comic projects" and most importantly, for "the establishment of a German Comic Institute that brings together artists, carries out academic study of their work and provides cultural education." Since the manifest's publication, a smaller group centred on Jens Meinrenken and Stefan Niehaus has founded the *Deutsche Comicstiftung*, the German Comic Foundation, to further these goals and work towards the establishment of such an institute.

ComFor's 8th annual conference on comics studies was held at Erlangen on November 15th to 17th, 2013. Through its main subject, "Comics and Science", Clemens Heydenreich's team brought together comics scholars, who are typically focused on disciplines from the humanities and social sciences, and scientists interested in interdisciplinary discussions about the didactics of sciences, as well as the depiction of science and scientists, in comics: From Dirk Vanderbeke's opening keynote on *Knowledge Drawn and Told* through panels on the presentation of scientific fact in factual comics, (meta)medial experiments, figurations of scientists and sciences, scientific discourses, and utopian and dystopian futures, to comic artist Ulli Lust's reading from her comic *Flughunde*, an adaptation of Marcel Beyer's fantastic novel about a sound-gathering scientist in the employ of Nazi Germany. Also included was the "Forum", an open workshop and ComFor specialty which allows scholars of all venues to present ongoing projects that they would like to discuss with their colleagues and for which they are looking for help, advice, or further inspiration. The conference was jointly hosted with Erlangen's ELINAS initiative,

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bobc.uni-bonn.de/> (link updated, June 7, 2024).

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.literaturfestival.com/comic/manifest> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).



a platform intended for exchange between literary studies and the natural sciences. – The conference also saw ComFor’s founding and longtime Presidium, consisting of Dietrich Grünewald, Nina Mahrt and Burkhard Ihme, pass their offices on to a new team of Stephan Packard, Felix Giesa, and Catherine Michel. Catherine, Felix, and I are greatly indebted to Dietrich and his team and will try to continue their excellent work by further increasing communication channels and professional cooperation with existing and new academic institutions.

Factual comics also take centre stage in an edited volume by Urs Hangartner, Felix Keller, and Dorothe Oechslin titled *Wissen durch Bilder: Sachcomics als Medien von Bildung und Information (Knowledge through Pictures: Factual Comics as Mediators of Education and Information)*. The volume collects contributions from comics scholars, art historians and theorists, and colleagues from various cultural studies and pedagogics, as well as psychologists and sociologists. Comics are also included in Guido Idekenmeier’s collection on the topic of *Interpiktoralität. Theorie und Geschichte der Bild-Bild-Bezüge (Interpictorality. Theory and History of Relations Among Images)*.

The two most prominent annual German publications on comics and comics studies also saw new issues this fall: The tenth volume of Eckart Sackmann’s yearbook on *Deutsche Comicforschung* takes the opportunity to present a review of the preceding decade’s development, as well as new research on comics during the First World War, the history of the Photo Comic, and the life of Rolf Kauka, who published the German comics magazine *Fix und Foxi*. Meanwhile, the 14th volume of the yearbook *COMIC!*, once more edited by Burkhard Ihme, focuses on a dossier on comics and football; with further contributions discussing 3D-comics and –movies, U-COMIX, and independent manga. As always, it also includes a large number of interviews and reports on comics and animation.

During fall and winter, the increasingly dense and varied landscape of comics studies in German brought forth a plethora of exhibitions, conferences, and publications either directed at comics, or including some aspects of comics studies among their topics. Current overviews of these are already presented in Martin de la Iglesia’s contributions to the **News Review column at Comics Forum**,<sup>3</sup> so I won’t

3 <https://comicsforum.org/2012/10/31/comics->

repeat them here. But I do want to point out a couple of Calls for Papers with outstanding deadlines: Wuppertal University will be holding its 5th Graduate Forum on Narratology – with an international cast and in English – from June 19th to 21st, this year’s topic of *Pop-Narratology. Social, Historical and Political Perspectives on Pop Cultural Narratives* practically crying out for some papers on comics studies from international researchers. **The deadline for abstracts is April 1st.**<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, Hildesheim University is holding a conference in German on Comic-Translations and Comic-Adaptations– Übersetzungen und Adaptionen von Comics – from October, 31st to November, 11th. **Abstracts are welcome up to the deadline of February, 28th.**<sup>5</sup>

I would like to especially emphasize, however, the Call for Papers for ComFor’s 9th annual conference, which will be held at Berlin on September 25th to 28th in Berlin. It will once more include panels in English for an international set of contributors and audience. Aside from the open Forum, the conference will focus on various perspectives on the concept of “borders” – between media, between disciplines, as crossed by migration and transnationality and as conceived in the ideas of borders of humanity, which can be crossed by representations and images of the human in comics’ spaces and pages. **The Call for Papers is open through March 31, 2014**<sup>6</sup> (scroll down for the English version). Please join us at Berlin – do say hello if you do – or return here for the next ComFor update in April.

[forum-news-review-an-introduction-by-will-grady/](https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2014/02/05/cfp-pop-narratology-social-historical-and-political-perspectives-on-pop-cultural-narratives/).

4 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2014/02/05/cfp-pop-narratology-social-historical-and-political-perspectives-on-pop-cultural-narratives/>.

5 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2014/01/28/cfp-ubersetzungen-und-adaptionen-von-comics/>.

6 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2013/12/31/cfp-grenzen-ziehen-grenzen-uberschreiten/>.



Lukas R.A. Wilde:

## April 2014

If the last weeks of winter and the early days of spring were any indication, the coming season should prove highly interesting for Comics Studies. As Stephan Packard did in February's column for the German Society for Comics Studies (ComFor), I will try to give a brief overview on recent developments in the German-speaking fraction of the world. Certain overlaps with Martin de la Iglesia's **News Review column**<sup>7</sup> cannot be wholly avoided, but I will try to keep those to a minimum.

While Stephan Packard mentioned the ComFor's general aim to advance plans for a German Journal for Comic Studies only two months ago, the Institute for *Neuere deutsche Literatur und Medien* (Current German Literature and Media) at Kiel University pushed forward and announced plans to launch the first issue of *CLOSURE* – the first German E-Journal for Comic Studies – no later than October 15th. Named after Scott McCloud's term for the principal cognitive operation bridging sequential 'gaps and gutters', *CLOSURE* is going to combine peer review with open access to provide a platform for a wide range of interdisciplinary perspectives and approaches. Abstracts for contributions to the journal's first issue, which will not yet be restricted to a specific topic, are very much welcome up until May 16th (in German, though). In addition to *CLOSURE*, plans for another independent online-magazine specializing in comic book culture were announced by ComFor's founding member Martin Frenzel: *Comicoskop* follows a more journalistic approach, however, intending to engage with a much broader audience on reviews, interviews, and cultural discussions. Plans aim the launch somewhere towards June.

With regard to online publications, a highly commendable **free online reader covering World War I in comics**<sup>8</sup> has been made available by the organizers of the LMU Munich's exhibition "*Tout le monde kaputt*" – *Der Erste Weltkrieg im Comic* (which ran from the 15th of January to April the 11th). The reader's editors, Sylvia Kesper-Biermann and Bettina

Severin-Barboutie from the university's Department of History Studies, also arranged a series of lectures surrounding the exhibition.

With regard to print publications, the ComFor is proud to announce yet another collection of its own: The close-to 500 page volume *Comics & Politik / Comics & Politics*,<sup>9</sup> edited by Stephan Packard (in the Ch. A. Bachmann publishing house). Including most of the contributions of ComFor's 7th annual conference in Freiburg 2012 as well as additional chapters from an international assortment of comics scholars, the collection addresses a wide range of phenomena relating graphic narration to political issues: the role of comic books is reflected to range from archive to agent, from resistance to propaganda. A considerable number of articles are in English, making this an essential contribution from an international perspective, as well.

This year's list of German publications on comics was opened up a few months earlier, however. Publishing house Reclam made the foray with Klaus Schikowski's 300-page 'global map' *Der Comic. Geschichte, Stile, Künstler*<sup>10</sup> (Its history, styles and artists). Schikowski, who oversaw the editorial board of the specialized magazine *Comixene* for some time, promises an international survey on 20th century comic book history (with a strong focus on artistic styles) as well as a take on recent phenomena such as digital and webcomics.

Speaking of which, the upcoming Erlangen Comic-Salon (from June 19th to 22nd), Germany's largest comics exhibition and convention, will not only host the recurrent ComFor panel – this year's focus being on World War I in comic books – but will also see a new focus on webcomics and online publishing. Already in 2013, about 150 German webcomic artists from more than 60 current online projects joined together to found *Comic Solidarity*, a network of independent online publishers working mainly on a non-profit basis. The Comic Salon's cooperation with *Comic Solidarity*, "Webcomics in Focus", will feature discussion panels, presentations, talks, and probably a series of academic lectures on emerging webcomic aesthetics as well.

7 <https://comicsforum.org/2012/10/31/comics-forum-news-review-an-introduction-by-will-grady/>.

8 [https://www.ngzg.geschichte.uni-muenchen.de/personen/l\\_siemann/kesper\\_biermann/reader/index.html](https://www.ngzg.geschichte.uni-muenchen.de/personen/l_siemann/kesper_biermann/reader/index.html) (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

9 [http://www.christian-bachmann.de/b\\_comfor4.html](http://www.christian-bachmann.de/b_comfor4.html).

10 [https://www.reclam.de/detail/978-3-15-020544-0/Schikowski\\_Klaus/Der\\_Comic](https://www.reclam.de/detail/978-3-15-020544-0/Schikowski_Klaus/Der_Comic) (link updated on June 7, 2024).



There have already been so many festivals and exhibitions on comic books during the last two months, that it has become quite challenging to keep track: from March 31st to April the 4th, Hamburg celebrated its third annual Graphic Novel Tage under the heading of *Sprechende Bilder* (eloquent images), featuring many internationally well-established artists. On the same weekend, April the 4th and 5th, you could also visit the *Comiciade* in Aachen and listen to Lars Banhold's lecture on the relation between comics and philosophy (*Das Sein in Bildern, das Denken in Blasen – Being in Pictures, Thinking in bubbles*). The renowned *Leipzig Book Fair* featured quite a huge *Manga Comic Con* from March 13th to 16th, and Dresden saw not one but two exhibitions on Jewish identity in comic books: One on French artist Joann Sfar in the Kunstfoyer, another on the more general topic of Jewish artists in Europe, the United States and Israel in the Kunsthau (the latter still running until the 4th of May). Our German-speaking neighbors celebrated some events well worthy of mention, too: for one, Switzerland's *International Comix-Festival Fumetto* in Luzern (from April the 5th up to the 13th), which has developed from a local event to one of the most important comic festivals of Europe; for another, Austria's only comic book exhibition, the *Nextcomic Festival*, which took place in Linz, Wels and Steyr from March the 20th to the 28th. If you missed all of those, there's still a chance to visit the one-day *Comicinvasion Berlin* on April 26th. While this is mainly intended as a newly established artist/publisher/fan-convention (2014 is only its second installment), the organizers also promise concerts, film screenings, and some cultural exhibitions.

Moving back to issues of scholarly interest, I would like to point to an upcoming conference which might be especially interesting to comics studies right now. Back in autumn 2013, Véronique Sina, Andreas Rauscher, Stephan Packard and Hans-Joachim Backe of the *Gesellschaft für Medienwissenschaft GfM* (the German Society for Media Studies) joined together to found the *AG Comieforschung* (Comic Studies Board). With an initial 15 members present at founding and growing quite rapidly since then, the workgroup is concerned with comics as a 'form of media'. Lest whatever that means exactly stays notoriously elusive, the Board is going to hold a two-day workshop on April 25th/26th at Ruhr University of Bochum. Under the heading "Comic studies meet Media Studies", the participants are going to discuss

approaches from media theory, transmedia narratology, gender theory, and other perspectives in a total of five lectures and lengthy discussion groups. Since I will be participating, you can see why I might be biased concerning my enthusiasm – but **check out the schedule online**.<sup>11</sup> Roger Dale Jones' presentation (as well as audience contributions, at discretion) will be in English.

Lastly, while there were too many German Calls for Papers that could be interpreted to include comics to name here, as well as a considerable number that *did* mention comics as possible references amongst other media, I would like to point out one upcoming conference that is especially salient to our topic: from November 14th to 15th, the University of Köln is going to host the interdisciplinary symposium *Mediale Zeitenwende* (media at a turning point), focusing exclusively on recent developments in visual narration. The conference's focus on digital 'revolutions', transmedia relations, and new approaches to the theory of visual narratives should render this an exciting event.

With regard to past conferences, it might be worth noting that the Graduate Academy of the University of Tuebingen hosted an international 5-days workshop on *Transmedia Storytelling in Convergent Media Culture*, organized by Jan-Noël Thon of the Department of Media Studies. Not only did it feature internationally renowned keynote speakers such as Marie-Laure Ryan (Boulder), Elizabeth Evans (Nottingham) and Espen Aarseth (Copenhagen), it also focused a whole day on the specific topic of comic books' relations to other media. Speakers included the ComFor-members Stephan Packard ("Closing the Open Signification: Transmedial Chronotopoi in Comics"), Laura Oehme ("The Transmedial World of/in *Watchmen*") and, of course, Jan-Noël Thon himself (with the opening keynote). Presentations were also given on "Remediation as (Simulated) Transmedia Franchise: The Case of *Scott Pilgrim*" (by Johannes Fehrle), "The Joker, the Bat and the Integrity of Transmedial Narration" (by Matteo Riatti), "'They are Everywhere!': *The Walking Dead* and Transmedia Worldbuilding" (by Hanns Christian Schmidt), and "Wandering the Panels, Walking Through Media: Zombies, Comics and the Transmedial Postapocalyptic World" (by Bernard Perron).

11 <https://agcomic.net/2016/10/09/programm-comicforschung-trifft-medienwissenschaft/> (link updated on June 7, 2024).



An extensive English conference report on all the presentations and discussions should be online soon, so expect that link in our next update in June.

*Nina Heindl, Laura Oehme & Lukas R.A. Wilde:*  
**June 2014**

While April's column on recent developments in German comic studies was dominated by news about fairs and festivals, the last months saw a bigger emphasis on exhibitions and art galleries. On May 30, Berlin's **Icon Gallery**<sup>12</sup> featured an exhibition on German artist Simon Schwartz, whose highly praised graphic novel *Drüben* is also available in French (translated as *De l'autre côté*). Munich's **Instituto Cervantes**<sup>13</sup> presented an exhibition on Spain's most famous comic artist Paco Roca throughout May and June, whose book *Arrugas* (engl.: *Wrinkles*) and its animated film adaptation received many awards around the world. Until July 27, you may visit an exhibition on "Graphic novel – Bande Dessinée: Gezeichnete Literatur aus Frankreich" ("Graphic Literature in France") in the **municipal library of Osnabrück**,<sup>14</sup> until August 3 on the German Democratic Republic-comic magazine *Mosaik* (and its stars, the Digidags) in the **Kulturbrauerei Berlin**,<sup>15</sup> as well as on German artist Ralf König in the **caricature museum**<sup>16</sup> in Frankfurt. And until August 31, the **Berlin Literary Colloquium**<sup>17</sup> will feature an exhibition on Finnish artist Ville Tietäväinen's controversial political comic book on EU immigration issues, "Näkymättömät kädet", which was recently translated into German by the Avant publishing house.

A similarly strong focus on international issues can be found with regard to speeches and talks. British Batman expert and cultural studies scholar Will Brooker visited the University of Cologne for a conference on "Understanding Transmedia" on May 17 to give a keynote on "The Batman Brand: The Dark Knight as Transmedia Icon" (the

12 <https://galerie-icon.de/news/> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

13 [https://munich.cervantes.es/FichasCultura/Ficha94380\\_25\\_4.htm](https://munich.cervantes.es/FichasCultura/Ficha94380_25_4.htm).

14 <https://www.osnabrueck.de/80306.asp> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

15 <https://www.hdg.de/berlin/museum-in-der-kulturbrauerei/ausstellungen/dig-dag-digedag-ddr-comic-mosaik/> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

16 <https://www.caricatura-museum.de/148.html> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

17 <https://lcb.de/home/> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).



conference discussed other comic-related topics as well, with ComFor-member Jan-Noël Thon giving a speech on transmedia characters in general). On May 13, French scholar Jean-Pascal Vachon visited the University Innsbruck to talk about one century of French *bande dessinée*, while American comic scholar and cognitive scientist Neil Cohn spoke at the **University of Freiburg**<sup>18</sup> on June 21 and the **University of Bremen**<sup>19</sup> on June 23/25, respectively. He elaborated in open workshops on his most recent and influential publication, *The Visual Language of Comics: Introduction to the Structure and Cognition of Sequential Images*, building on contemporary theories from linguistics and cognitive psychology.

Mentioning those exhibitions and talks separately feels somehow out of proportion, however, since the Erlangen International Comic-Salon features such a large number of comic-related issues within its four day schedule. Over 30 comic art exhibitions, more than 50 talks, round tables, lectures and discussions, as well as over 400 artists were present at Germany's biggest comic fairs from June 19 to 22. Since this column was written right before (or rather during) its final preparations, it isn't possible to provide any impressions of the event yet.

The conference "Comic Studies meet Media Studies" is hard to summarize, for completely different reasons – which have already been mentioned in the last column. Held at the Ruhr University in Bochum on April 25/26, the five talks and subsequent discussions pointed at very different perspectives on the "mediality" of comics. A round table discussion, which involved the audience of about 30 to 40 scholars to a great degree, addressed a lot of questions regarding the institutional, methodological and disciplinary contexts surrounding the study and teaching of comic books. While it remained vague on what might be understood by the term "mediality," the participants agreed on the fruitfulness of asking and negotiating the multiple aspects the term might encompass in a given case. The AG Comicforschung (Comic Studies Board) of the Gesellschaft für Medienwissenschaft GfM (German Society of Me-

dia Studies) is going to pursue some of those issues further with a panel at the GfM annual conference "Medien | Recht" (Media, Law and Rights), as well as with a subsequent workshop in 2015.

In terms of future events, it should be mentioned that there will be a workshop on "**Future Visions: Speculation and Anticipation in Graphic Narratives**"<sup>20</sup> at the University of Bayreuth on July 11, featuring a poster session where students present their own research projects, as well as three lectures by literary and cultural scholars on the primarily dystopian future visions in contemporary comic books. Also, the ComFor will hold its own annual conference from September 25 to 28 in Berlin on "Drawing Boundaries, Crossing Borders" with a lot of English presentations as well – **check out the conference program online!**<sup>21</sup> On November 14/15, the University of Cologne is going to host a conference on "Media at a Turning Point", which will focus exclusively on changes in visual narratives and includes ComFor-members Silke Horstkotte, Stephan Packard, Jan-Noël Thon, and Lukas R.A. Wilde among its participants.

We'd also like to mention a Call for Participation from the University of Hamburg on the topic "**Visual Narratives – Cultural Identities**",<sup>22</sup> pointing to a trans- and interdisciplinary conference on November 27 to 29 that focuses strongly on the visibility of cultures and culture-making in graphic narration (deadline for abstracts is July 31).

In a closing comment we'd like to point out that the ComFor has "re-invented" itself: the previously more or less informal pool of collaborators, which, for the last nine years, had primarily been united by their shared engagement in the coordination and progression of German comics scholarship, was officially reestablished as a registered association in April. Stephan Packard, Felix Giesa, and Catherine Michel were reelected as managing board.

18 <https://www.medienkulturwissenschaft.uni-freiburg.de/aktuellesordner/comicworkshop> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

19 <http://www.fb10.uni-bremen.de/bitt/vortrage-vortragsreihen/workshop-mit-neil-cohn-im-juni-2014/> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

20 [https://www.amerikanistik.uni-bayreuth.de/de/workshop\\_2014/index.html](https://www.amerikanistik.uni-bayreuth.de/de/workshop_2014/index.html) (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

21 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2014/06/19/programm-der-9-comfor-jahrestagung-in-berlin-grenzen-ziehen-grenzen-uberschreiten/>.

22 [http://www.kulturkundetagung.de/index\\_en.html](http://www.kulturkundetagung.de/index_en.html) (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).



Stephan Packard:

## August 2014

With most academic conferences in Germany clustered in spring and fall, the summer has been comparatively restful. So this column in our ongoing series on comics studies in Germany and at ComFor, the German Society for Comics Studies, will be comparatively short.

First off, the Roland Faelske Award for Comics and Animation has been announced for the third time in a row. Organised by the ingeniously named ArGL, the “Arbeitsstelle für Graphische Literatur” or “Workplace for Graphical Literature”, at Hamburg University, the prize rewards a best graduate and a best PhD thesis from the previous two years. Winners will be announced in November.

Continuing 2014’s ongoing remembrance of the First World War, the bilingual French and German publication *Tagebuch 14-18 / Carnets 14-18*<sup>23</sup> presents four stories from Germany and France in a comics format. Created by Alexander Hogh and Jörg Mailliet, the volume offers a “social panorama” of the time of the war from the perspective of its younger generations. From early August and continuing through September 3rd, **the work is also being exhibited in Troisdorf**,<sup>24</sup> alongside a greater exhibition on picture books and children’s books explaining the war.

Some further noteworthy exceptions to the summer lull included the annual Workshop of the Chair for American Studies at the university of Bayreuth in July, which focused on “**Graphic Narratives**”<sup>25</sup> this year. A part of a research project on risk fiction and cultures of speculation, the program presented talks on destiny concepts in X-Men: Days of Future Past, dystopian visions of technology in comics, and dystopian desires in graphic novels. Meanwhile, and providing a focus on comics studies in connection to a completely different topic, Dietrich Grünwald offered a look at “Ein Wert an sich – Geld im Comic”

23 <https://www.bpb.de/shop/buecher/schriftenreihe/186614/tagebuch-14-18?global=true&global-format-main=all&global-year=all&cc-license=all> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

24 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2014/08/04/tagebuch-1418-ausstellung-im-bilderbuchmuseum-troisdorf/>.

25 [https://www.amerikanistik.uni-bayreuth.de/en/workshop\\_2014/index.html](https://www.amerikanistik.uni-bayreuth.de/en/workshop_2014/index.html) (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

[‘Its own value: Money in Comics’] at the **award ceremony and vernissage**<sup>26</sup> of H-Team’s project on debt prevention for minors in June. The H-Team had organized a competition and exhibition for comics dealing with the subject in Munich.

Visual linguist Neil Cohn connected three stops on his German tour in early summer, moving from Saarbrücken through Freiburg to Bremen, where he was invited as part of the research project on transmedia textuality, organized by ComFor-member Janina Wildfeuer and her colleagues. In several workshops and talks, Cohn presented his ideas on a common deep structure shared by comic strips and lingual syntax, drawing on empirical and cognitive research as well as a generative model of the structure of comic strips. Discussion was lively, sometimes controversial, and always inspiring; and we’re happy to say that Neil will join us again in September for this year’s annual conference.

Some other events are still ahead of us. **The International Graphic Novel Salon at Hamburg**<sup>27</sup> on September 18th presents publications and translations of works by Philippe Ôtiè, Gabriella Giandelli, Sohyun Jung and Alfonso Zapico. The Cöln Comic Haus at Cologne draws attention to several events this fall, including a 24-hours-comic-day on October 4th, and an international fair for comics and novels on November 8th. All of the ongoing events at Cöln can be viewed on their website. Perhaps most prominently, the Frankfurt Book Fair, October 8th-12th, having recently announced the end of the well-established “Comic-Zentrum” as a part of its annual program, is now preparing to replace the centre with a more topically oriented, interconnected “**focus**”<sup>28</sup> on the artform, consisting of several joint presentations, events, and guest speakers.

Calls for Papers have prepared us for several conferences later this year: In mid-November, Cologne is planning to debate the “Mediale Zeitenwende”, the “turn of media eras” connected to the narrative turn in dealing with visual narrations (14th & 15th Nov); and Hamburg will host trans- and interdisciplinary

26 [https://www.h-team-ev.de/?page\\_id=623](https://www.h-team-ev.de/?page_id=623) (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

27 <https://harbourfront-hamburg.com/veranstaltung/graphic-novel-salon> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

28 [https://www.buchmesse.de/de/im\\_Fokus/weitere\\_themen/comic/](https://www.buchmesse.de/de/im_Fokus/weitere_themen/comic/) (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).



discussions on “Visuelle Narrative – Kulturelle Identitäten” [‘Visual Narratives – Cultural Identities’], at the end of that month (27–29th Nov).

But before all of these, we are getting ready for ComFor’s annual conference in late September. This year, we will meet in Berlin to discuss comics with a focus on “Drawing Borders, Crossing Boundaries”. Intermediality, interdisciplinarity, topics of migration and transnationality, and not least depictions of transhumanism present the four main focal points, with panels and talks in German as well as English. We are very happy that Roger Sabin and Neil Cohn have agreed to join us as keynote speakers; a public debate on transgressions of all kinds in comics and an open discussion on efforts surrounding transdisciplinarity in the practice of comics theory complement the program. **In a parallel event**,<sup>29</sup> Peter Lorenz and Matthias Harbeck will be discussing opportunities and challenges for archiving and presenting comics at libraries, an urgent topic not least due to the lack of strong comics collections at most German (and indeed, most international) academic libraries, and the need to preserve valuable private collections beyond the demise of their original owners. The conference is also coupled with a series of lectures and workshops on the use of comics in schoolrooms: **“Grenzenlos: Comics im Unterricht”**,<sup>30</sup> organized by the BDK – Fachverband für Kunstpädagogik, Berlin. The **full schedule**<sup>31</sup> for the ComFor 2014 conference can now be found online; international guests are very welcome. As always: Won’t you join us there?

29 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2014/06/23/vdb-fortbildung-comics-in-bibliotheken/>.

30 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2014/07/21/grenzenlos-comics-im-unterricht-fachtagung-in-berlin/>.

31 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2014/06/19/programm-der-9-comfor-jahrestagung-in-berlin-grenzen-ziehen-grenzen-uberschreiten/> (link corrected on June 7, 2024).

Laura Oehme:

## October 2014

Just like my predecessors, Stephan Packard and Lukas Wilde, I will use this fifth column of the German Society for Comics Studies (ComFor) in order to briefly summarize the latest news from the German comics studies scene. While all scholars seem to have been enjoying their summer break in August, September sounded the bell for a highly interesting fall season, full of conferences, festivals, and exhibitions.

### Conferences, Workshops, Symposiums

Germany’s capital appears to have become the current hub of comics studies events, starting with the undisputed highlight of this year’s midsummer: the **ninth annual conference of the German Society for Comics Studies**.<sup>32</sup> For four days (September 25–28), German and international comics scholars from various disciplines gathered at the Humboldt University in Berlin. Under the motto “Drawing Boundaries, Crossing Borders,” they discussed the transgressive potential of comics and their academic study. Whether media or genre conventions, geographical or political borders, the limits of medium or imagination – comics are bound to break them. The ComFor conference featured renowned comic scholars such as Roger Sabin, Neil Cohn or Michael Chaney and numerous established ComFor members, but also young scholars who are only beginning to explore the field of comics studies. Furthermore, participants were able to enjoy an exhibition by the Black Kirby artist group, an open forum that brought academia, publishers and artists together, and they also learned the latest news about *Closure*, the first German online journal for comics studies. Speaking of *Closure*,<sup>33</sup> the editorial team announced at the conference that the first issue of the journal will be available on their brand new website by November 5th. Also during the annual conference, the **new and improved ComFor website**<sup>34</sup> was released. Thanks to the new calendar tool and a gen-

32 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2014/06/19/programm-der-9-comfor-jahrestagung-in-berlin-grenzen-ziehen-grenzen-uberschreiten/#more-5464>.

33 <http://www.closure.uni-kiel.de/>.

34 <http://www.comicgesellschaft.de/>.



eral bilingualism, it is now easier than ever before to stay informed about the most important events and publications concerning comics studies in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

On September 26th, simultaneously to the ComFor conference, two other events took place in Berlin: the symposium “**Grenzenlos: Comics im Unterricht**”,<sup>35</sup> where participants discussed how comics may be integrated into the curriculum, and the special training “**Comics in Bibliotheken**”<sup>36</sup> for librarians. Both events are proof of increasing acceptance and acknowledgement of comics, not only in academia but also in the public sphere.

In mid-September, the research group “Digital and Cognitive Approaches to Graphic Narrative,” represented by Alexander Dunst and Jochen Laubrock, hosted the workshop “**Empirical Approaches to Comics**” in Berlin. Aiming to bring together American Studies and Cognitive Psychology, the workshop included talks by internationally acclaimed comics scholars such as Neil Cohn and Karin Kukkonen. Researchers Alexander Dunst and Rita Hartel also used the workshop to present a browser-based WYSIWYG-editor that allows for the easy commenting of scanned comic book pages on the basis of John A. Walsh’s “Comic Book Markup Language” (CBML). Even more complicated layouts, like those of Chris Ware, seem to work fine with algorithmic recognition of frames, balloons and characters.

Early this October, the “AG Comicforschung” – a research group for comics studies within the German Society for Media Studies (GfM), which Lukas already introduced in his April update – was represented at the annual GfM conference with a panel on “**Comics and Law**”.<sup>37</sup> Comics scholars Jakob F. Dittmar, Andreas Rauscher, and Hans-Joachim Backe addressed three dimensions of how law and/or justice figure in comics and the discourses surrounding them. Their papers investigated the fine line between plagiarism and appropriation in the process of making comics, the issue of authorship in the comics industry, and the aesthetic dimensions of the discourse(s) on justice in revisionist superhero

comics.

## Publications

Two important German publications in the field of comics studies this summer are an essay collection and a special journal issue. The volume ***Bildlaute & Laute Bilder: Zur “Audiovisualität” von Bilderzählungen***<sup>38</sup> (Image Sounds & Loud Images: About the “Audiovisuality” of Picture Stories), edited by Christian A. Bachmann, collects essays that deal with the intermedial strategies of making sound visible in the works of Carl Barks, Lyonel Feininger, Winsor McCay, Frank Miller, Alan Moore, Chris Ware, and many more. In August, a special “Comics” issue of the weekly journal supplement ***Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte***<sup>39</sup> (Politics and Contemporary History) was published by the Federal Agency for Civic Education. The 56-page booklet, which features contributions by internationally renowned scholars like Thierry Groensteen and many ComFor members, can easily be ordered or downloaded from the agency’s website.

## Festivals

On September 14th, the fourth **Graphic Novel Day**<sup>40</sup> took place as part of the International Literature Festival in Berlin. The festival is best known for last year’s release of the “comic manifesto.” This year, the four discussion rounds featured representatives from the German and European comics scene. Only four days later, the **International Graphic Novel Salon**<sup>41</sup> at the Hamburg Instituto Cervantes invited comic artists Philippe Ôtiè, Gabriella Giandelli, Sohyun Jung, and Alfonso Zapico, who came together to talk about their current graphic novels. Soon after, the **Comicfestival Hamburg**<sup>42</sup> (October 2–5) took place for the eighth time and again focused on Euro-

35 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2014/07/21/grenzenlos-comics-im-unterricht-fachtagung-in-berlin/>.

36 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2014/06/23/vdb-fortbildung-comics-in-bibliotheken/>.

37 <https://agcomic.net/2016/10/09/comics-und-recht/> (link updated on June 7, 2024).

38 [http://www.christian-bachmann.de/b\\_bildlaute.html](http://www.christian-bachmann.de/b_bildlaute.html).

39 <https://www.bpb.de/shop/zeitschriften/apuz/189540/comics/>.

40 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2014/08/28/lib2014/>.

41 <https://harbourfront-hamburg.com/veranstaltung/graphic-novel-salon> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

42 <https://www.comicfestivalhamburg.de/>.



pean independent comics. Among the special focus areas this year were the Finnish comics scene, Luke Pearson, Till Thomas, Hamburg artist groups, the First World War, and the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Last but not least, this year's **Frankfurt Book Fair**<sup>43</sup> (October 8–12) eliminated its traditional "Comic Center," and instead incorporated various comics-related events into the general program. Among them were comic book readings, exhibitions, the finale of the German Cosplay Championship 2014, and the German Cartoon Prize.

## Outlook

Finally, and instead of elaborating on the numerous comics-related exhibitions that took place during the summer or are still ongoing, I would like to draw your attention to an upcoming show. For the first time, the travelling exhibition "**Holocaust in Comics**"<sup>44</sup> will be hosted by the university library in Bochum. From October 23rd until the end of January 2015, visitors can see examples of comics that grapple with the representation of the Holocaust, as well as numerous original drawings on the topic by German comic artists completely free of charge. The exhibition was originally put together by Ralf Palandt in 2001 and is now curated in Bochum by Nina Heindl and Véronique Sina. It will be accompanied by an interdisciplinary lecture series entitled "Representations of the Holocaust", which investigates the negotiation of the Holocaust beyond the medium of comics. By the way, an exhaustive overview of past and future exhibitions can be easily achieved by a new German information portal for comics by the name of "**Dreimalalles**,"<sup>45</sup> which only took off in July and features a very convenient calendar tool. More updates from the German Society for Comics Studies in December!

43 [https://www.buchmesse.de/en/Focus\\_on/more\\_topics/comics](https://www.buchmesse.de/en/Focus_on/more_topics/comics) (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

44 <http://www.holocaustimcomic-bochum.de/> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

45 <https://dreimalalles.info/>.

Nina Heindl:

## December 2014

It's the sixth and last column by the German Society of Comics Studies (ComFor) in 2014 and as in the previous five columns I'd like to give an overview on the last months' activities in German comics studies. In the following you'll find a potpourri of conferences and workshops, new publications and also exhibitions that took place in Germany and neighboring German-speaking countries.

### Conferences, Workshops, Presentations

In Hildesheim, the conference "**The Translation and Adaptation of Comics**"<sup>46</sup> was held from October 31st to November 2nd, 2014. The main question that ran through all the contributions was which possibilities and problems arise when translating comics with their non-verbal and para-verbal elements from one language and culture into another.

The Winter School "Transmedial Worlds in Convergent Media Culture" in Tuebingen already took place in February and was part of the April ComFor Update. Now the promised extensive English conference report written by Lukas R. A. Wilde is available at the *Journal of Literary Theory Online*.<sup>47</sup>

Keith Knight, the award-winning American indie cartoonist, **visited Germany for almost one month**. At different locations (University of Siegen, University of Bremen, University of Osnabrück, University of Bochum and Free University of Berlin) Knight presented his slide show "They Shoot Black People, Don't They?". The tour's last venue in Berlin served also as the opening of the Comics Collection at the Library of the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies on November 25th, 2014. Since 2013, the library of Berlin's JFK Institute has systematically developed its existing comic collection. Talks by Julia Mayer and Daniel Stein were also part of the opening event. They covered the importance of the collection within the wider field of German and international scholarship and the talks **can**

46 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/en/2014/09/18/fachtagung-hildesheim-uebersetzungen-und-adaptionen-von-comics/>.

47 <http://www.jltonline.de/index.php/conferences/article/view/653/1559>.



## be read on the ComFor website.<sup>48</sup>

Before the library opening, the JFK Institute also hosted the workshop “**Reading with Pictures. A Seminar on Comics in the (Academic) Classroom**”<sup>49</sup> with graphic-novelist Josh Elder on October 21st, 2014. Elder is the founder of the nonprofit literacy organization **Reading with Pictures**<sup>50</sup> and presented his goal to enhance student engagement, improve the efficiency of instruction, and increase overall educational efficacy with comics and graphic novels.

Finally, the department of Japanese studies in Cologne hosted the symposium “**Mediale Zeitenwende**” (“**Media at a Turning Point**”)<sup>51</sup> from November 14th to 15th, 2014. Scholars from media studies, narratology and Japanology investigated the range and effects of what has been described as a last decade’s “narrative turn,” with a focus on visual narratives. Comic books featured prominently as objects of inquiry, with presentations by ComFor members Silke Horstkotte, Stephan Packard, Jan-Noël Thon, and Lukas R.A. Wilde.

## Publications

The German field of comic studies offered some new publications in the past few months. Björn Hammel published an introduction to webcomics: *Webcomics. Einführung und Typologie*.<sup>52</sup> Hammel tracks the development of American and German webcomics and formulates a typology for this special kind of comics.

Also, the anthology *Visuelle Medien im DaF-Unterricht*<sup>53</sup> (*Visual Media in Classes for German as a Foreign Language*), edited by Marc Hieronimus, has

48 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/en/2014/12/04/eroeffnung-der-comic-sammlung-der-bibliothek-des-john-f-kennedy-institut/>.

49 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/en/2014/10/09/reading-with-pictures-ein-seminar-ueber-comics-im-akademischen-unterricht/>.

50 <http://www.readingwithpictures.org/> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

51 [https://japanologie.phil-fak.uni-koeln.de/sites/ostas/japanologie/Tagungen/2014\\_Nov\\_Symposium\\_Flyer\\_Mediale-Zeitenwende.pdf](https://japanologie.phil-fak.uni-koeln.de/sites/ostas/japanologie/Tagungen/2014_Nov_Symposium_Flyer_Mediale-Zeitenwende.pdf) (link updated on June 7, 2024).

52 [http://www.christian-bachmann.de/b\\_webcomic.html](http://www.christian-bachmann.de/b_webcomic.html).

53 <https://univerlag.uni-goettingen.de/handle/3/isbn-978-3-86395-174-0;jsessionid=727E7641A16074673CC41479A5804699>.

been published. Two essays in this volume deal with comics, one by ComFor member Ralf Palandt and another by linguist Chiara Cerri.

The first volume of *Closure*,<sup>54</sup> an open-access e-journal for comics studies that is published by members of the University of Kiel, came out in November 2014. Five members of the ComFor are involved in this first issue, namely Julia Ingold, Arno Meteling, Véronique Sina, Lukas R.A. Wilde, and Janina Wildfeuer. They contributed essays and reviews on comics and secondary literature. Issue #1.5 with an exclusive focus on reviews is planned for May 2015.

The 15th German comics yearbook *Comic! Jahrbuch 2015*,<sup>55</sup> edited by Burkhard Ihme, was published in early November 2014. This volume focuses on webcomics, the 16th International Comic Salon in Erlangen and the comics revolution in the 1960s, as well as interviews and reports on comics and cartoons.

Finally, Transcript recently published a collection on text-image-interrelations in graphic novels entitled *Bild ist Text ist Bild*<sup>56</sup> (*Image is text is image*) and edited by Susanne Hochreiter and Ursula Klingenberg. The many essays highlight a wide range of theoretical approaches, ranging from literature, media and gender studies to art history.

## Exhibitions

A number of comics exhibitions opened in autumn and winter: In mid-October, the exhibition “**Greetings from the war**”<sup>57</sup> started at the Valentin Karstadt Museum in Munich. The exhibition focuses on a graphic novel by comic artist Uli Knorr and archive footage of the First World War. From December 6th, 2014 until April 19th, 2015, there is also a show about “**war drawers**”<sup>58</sup> who were officially employed to draw war, which can be seen in the

54 <http://www.closure.uni-kiel.de/>.

55 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2014/11/20/15-comic-jahrbuch-erschienen/> (link corrected on June 7, 2024).

56 <https://www.transcript-verlag.de/978-3-8376-2636-0/bild-ist-text-ist-bild/>.

57 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2014/10/23/sonderausstellung-herzliche-gruesse-aus-dem-krieg-in-muenchen/>.

58 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2014/12/11/zwischen-reportage-und-graphic-novel-krieg-zeichnen-ausstellung-in-albstadt/>.



Städtische Galerie Albstadt. Artists like Gus Bofa, Frans Masereel, Joe Sacco and Jacques Tardi are part of the exhibition. On November 15th, 2014 **an exhibition about Joost Swarte's work**<sup>59</sup> opened at the Cartoonmuseum Basel. The Kunstverein Ludwigsburg shows **"Art Comics – artists' biographies as graphic novels"**<sup>60</sup> until February 2nd, 2015. British historian and curator Paul Gravett opened the exhibition with a talk about the art language of comics on November 23rd, 2014.

## Outlook

From January 15th to 18th, 2015 the city of Kassel is going to celebrate its second "Neue Wege" ("new paths") **festival of graphic novels**.<sup>61</sup> The five days of the festival will incorporate a wide program of talks, exhibitions and discussions, exploring where comics and graphic novels could be heading in the future.

With this overview about the last two months of what has been going on in Germany, we can look back on the first year of ComFor columns at comicsforum.org. In 2015, the German Society of Comics Studies will celebrate its 10th anniversary. It'll be exciting to see what the future holds in store for us and we will of course report on that in detail in next year's columns.

59 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/en/2014/10/06/joost-swarte-ausstellung-im-cartoonmuseum-basel/>.

60 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2014/11/06/ausstellung-kunst-comics-in-ludwigsburg/> (link corrected on June 7, 2024).

61 <http://www.festival-geks.de/> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

Lukas R.A. Wilde:

## February 2015

Welcome to 2015's first column of the German Society for Comics Studies (ComFor). Regardless that ComFor will be celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, due to holiday breaks and such you'd expect a relatively slow start for comic studies – with the biggest events comprised only of the traditional "must-read" lists and surveys on 2014's works (you'll find wonderful compilations of German and international "Top-X" lists on Christian Maiwald's comic infopage **Dreimalalles.info**,<sup>62</sup> including ComFor members' own thoughts on **interesting reads**<sup>63</sup>). Quite to the contrary, however, the last two months proved to be pretty eventful. I feel obliged to mention the shocking incidents at Charlie Hebdo first; not only because they overshadowed January, but also because they raised a lot of questions regarding the relation of cartoons and comics to politics – a topic that has been **critical**<sup>64</sup> to **some**<sup>65</sup> of ComFor's previous **annual conferences**.<sup>66</sup> While German scholars were as shocked and speechless as everyone else, some will try to think about a way to honor the contributors to Charlie Hebdo not only as victims but artists.

Despite that tragedy, there has been a lot of other really exciting and encouraging news for comics research. Charlie Hebdo wasn't the only international topic discussed in Germany, thankfully: All eyes and newsfeeds were fixed on France for a more pleasant reason as well, which would of course be the Angoulême festival. Quite a few German artists and their works (including Barbara Yelin, Jens Harder, Ulli Lust and Till Thomas) enjoyed recognition (and some award nominations) in what is certainly Europe's most important comic festival. Germany's own stand was organized by a collaboration of the Frankfurt Book Fair, the Deutscher Comicverein

62 [https://dreimalalles.info/page\\_not\\_found.html](https://dreimalalles.info/page_not_found.html) (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

63 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2015/01/05/comfor-leseempfehlungen-2014/>.

64 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2012/04/16/comics-politics-programme-for-2012-conference-published/>

65 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/en/2013/12/31/cfp-grenzen-ziehen-grenzen-uberschreiten/>.

66 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/en/category/comicgesellschaft/jahrestagungen/>.



and the Goethe Institute Paris. It was also announced that a renowned German prize for merits in literary translations, **The Christoph-Wieland-Übersetzungspreis**,<sup>67</sup> will focus exclusively on comic book translations this fall. The prize has been awarded biannually since 1979, but this is the first time that comic books have been considered instead of previous genres like lyric poetry (2009), short prose (2011) or world literature (2013). Also worth noting, Paderborn University's Department of English and American Studies announced a recruitment notice last month which focuses exclusively on comic book research: the sought-for associate is to work within Alexander Dunst's research group "**Hybride Narrativität: Digitale und Kognitive Methoden zur Erforschung graphischer Literatur**"<sup>68</sup> ("Hybrid narrativity: digital and cognitive methods for the research of graphic literature"), supported by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. Alongside such growing cultural and academic recognition, one of the largest German newspapers, Berlin's **Der Tagesspiegel**,<sup>69</sup> published yet another well-researched **article**<sup>70</sup> on the recent increase in comic scholarship and **specialized literature**.<sup>71</sup>

## Festivals and Fairs

If not in competition with Angoulême, some German festivals nevertheless deserve attention. Already announced in Nina Heindl's last column, the city of Kassel celebrated its second "**Neue Wege**"<sup>72</sup> ("new paths") festival of graphic novels from January 15th to 18th. In Switzerland we can look forward to the 25th installment of the renowned **Fumetto festival**<sup>73</sup> in Luzern (March 7th till 15th), certainly also one of the most important cultural events for comics in

67 [https://freundeskreis-literaturuebersetzer.de/?content\\_site=uebersetzerpreise#Wieland](https://freundeskreis-literaturuebersetzer.de/?content_site=uebersetzerpreise#Wieland).

68 <https://groups.uni-paderborn.de/graphic-literature/wp/> (link updated on June 7, 2024).

69 <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/>.

70 <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/comics/mit-superman-und-donald-im-lesesaal-6906541.html>.

71 <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/comics/auf-den-zweiten-blick-3606544.html>.

72 <http://www.festival-geks.de/> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

73 <https://www.fumetto.ch/> (link corrected on June 7, 2024).

Europe (the exhibition **program**<sup>74</sup> looks nothing short of spectacular). The **Buchmesse Leipzig**<sup>75</sup> (a huge book fair from March 12th to 15th), though not limited to comics, nevertheless offers fans a whole exhibition floor and a sensational **program**<sup>76</sup> – Scott McCloud will introduce the audience to his newest work, *The Sculptor*, to mention just one (if you are in Berlin, you also have the chance to meet him on March 11th/12th at the house of the **Berliner Festspiele**).<sup>77</sup> Alongside the Buchmesse, running on the same dates, Leipzig will also be the venue of **The Millionaires Club**,<sup>78</sup> an annual Comics & Graphics Festival taking place in the Gallery for Contemporary Arts. A wide variety of artists from Finland, Latvia, France, Poland, Slovenia, Germany and beyond will be participating, and many workshops, concerts and exhibitions are on offer! Decisively smaller is the two-day-festival of **Comic Invasion Berlin**,<sup>79</sup> which will take place in Germany's capital on April 18th/19th for the 5th time. The Comic Invasion will also present a newly-announced incentive award to support young artists, adding to the exciting news for comics mentioned above. Details about the competition will soon be available online, with the contest theme said to be "Berlin 2055".

## Exhibitions

It's getting increasingly hard to maintain an overview of the numerous comic-themed exhibitions. If you want to stay on top of these, we'd again suggest regularly checking Dreimalalles' amazing **calendar-tool**.<sup>80</sup> However, I've picked just a few noteworthy exhibitions here: From January 1st until 31st LE MONDE diplomatique and the Reprodukt

74 <https://www.fumetto.ch/de/programm-2015/ausstellungen.html> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

75 <https://www.leipziger-buchmesse.de/>.

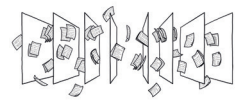
76 <https://www.leipziger-buchmesse.de/pressemitteilungen/comics-und-mangas-im-fokus/10384> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

77 [https://www.berlinerfestspiele.de/de/aktuell/festivals/specials/specials\\_programm/specials\\_veranstaltungsdetail\\_115606.php](https://www.berlinerfestspiele.de/de/aktuell/festivals/specials/specials_programm/specials_veranstaltungsdetail_115606.php) (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

78 <https://themillionairesclub.tumblr.com/>.

79 <https://comicinvasion.de/> (link updated on June 7, 2024).

80 <https://dreimalalles.info/kalender>.



publishing house celebrated LE MONDE'S (German edition's) 20th anniversary with the show "**Comics zur Lage der Welt**"<sup>81</sup> ("Comics on Today's Situation") at the Neurotitan Berlin, exhibiting some of the best works of the artists that published in LE MONDE from 2010 to 2014. The Comic Haus Cologne did a beautiful show on **75 years of Batman**<sup>82</sup> from November 11th until February 5th. ComFor members such as Martin Frenzel and Lars Banhold participated in presentations and discussions on the Dark Knight's history. Next up was the "**Nothing Special**"<sup>83</sup> exhibition in Mannheim (February 7th till March 8th), focusing on young artists' representations of everyday routines.

### Research and Conferences

While the winter was relatively quiet in terms of new publications, a few studies not mentioned before are worth looking into: Holger Wilmesmeier put together a didactic "comic laboratory", aiming at school use for children age 8+: *Kreativ lehren und lernen mit Comics*<sup>84</sup> (*Creative Learning and Teaching with Comics*). Eckart Sackmann continued his impressive work on early German comic book research in volume 11 (2015) of *Deutsche Comicforschung*<sup>85</sup> (*German Comic Studies*), featuring original articles on proto-comics before Wilhelm Busch, Lyonel Feininger's early work, and the role of "comics" in newspaper research pre-1945 (to name just a few). On January 1st, the Transcript publishing house released Stefan Meiers study on the discourses surrounding Superman, focusing on aspects of seriality and media changes: *Superman transmedial: Eine Pop-Ikone im Spannungsfeld von Medienwandel und Serialität*<sup>86</sup> (*Transmedial Superman: A Pop Icon between the Poles of Media Changes and Seriality*).

81 [https://neurotitan.de/Galerie/Archiv/2015/150109\\_lemonde.html](https://neurotitan.de/Galerie/Archiv/2015/150109_lemonde.html).

82 <https://coelncomic.de/batman-ausstellung> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

83 <https://www.zeitraumexit.de/programm/nothing-special> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

84 <https://www.beltz.de/fachmedien/paedagogik/produkte/details/29149-kreativ-lehren-und-lernen-mit-comics.html> (link updated on June 7, 2024).

85 <https://www.comicforschung.de/index.html>.

86 <https://www.transcript-verlag.de/978-3-8376-2968-2/superman-transmedial/>.

While Andreas Veit, Johannes Noldt, Simon Klingler and Johannes Schmid continued to host Hamburg's **Comic Colloquium**,<sup>87</sup> an open and interdisciplinary forum to discuss comic research in all stages, there were no conferences related to comic studies in winter – with the exception of Tuebingen's Winter School, "**Mediality and Multimodality across Media**".<sup>88</sup> Organized by Klaus Sachs-Hombach and Jan-Noël Thon, the three-day-conference featured internationally renowned experts on the theoretical foundation of the buzzword "multimodality": Covering wide areas of media and discourse – from film, television and the novel to non-verbal and online communication – ten keynote speakers and twelve junior researchers investigated the disciplinary and methodological assumptions of multimodality. Charles Forceville gave an in-depth presentation on the variety of multimodal communicative aspects of comic books, while Benoit Crucifix, Fabian Gregori, Evelyn Chew and myself pursued the concepts in question through specific (print and digital) comic cases and applications.

Tuebingen is additionally going to stay on the radar for a while longer: Jan-Noël Thon and myself are looking forward to organizing the 2nd Workshop of the AG Comicforschung (Comic Studies Board) of the Gesellschaft für Medienwissenschaft GfM (the German Society for Media Studies) with support from the Institutional Strategy of the University of Tuebingen (German Research Foundation, ZUK 63). From April 24th to 26th 2015, we'd like to offer the chance to discuss the "**Materiality and Mediality of Contemporary Comics**",<sup>89</sup> focusing on how this relationship has changed in the context of digitalization and an increasingly convergent media culture. The keynote speakers Daniel Merlin Goodbrey (Hertfordshire), Ian Hague (Comics Forum), Karin Kukkonen (Turku), Véronique Sina (Bochum) and Daniel Stein (Siegen) will chair additional paper presentations, which will all be in English. If you'd like

87 [https://www.facebook.com/groups/comic.kolloquium/?ref=br\\_tf](https://www.facebook.com/groups/comic.kolloquium/?ref=br_tf).

88 <https://uni-tuebingen.de/en/fakultaeten/philosophische-fakultaet/fachbereiche/philosophie-rhetorik-medien/institute-of-media-studies/news/news-einzelansicht-aktuelles/article/winter-school-mediality-and-multimodality-across-media/> (link updated on June 7, 2024).

89 <https://agcomic.net/2016/10/09/mediality-and-materiality-of-contemporary-comics/> (link updated on June 7, 2024).



to join in, have a look at our **Call for Papers**<sup>90</sup> which is still open until March 15th.

Until our next column in April, I'd like to recommend some links which might be of interest to stay updated: While ComFor's Martin Frenzel is still working on the **Comicoskop**<sup>91</sup>-online journal I've already mentioned in my last column, he and his team are also doing a terrific job at the **Comicoskop Facebook**<sup>92</sup>-installment: Updates on articles, reports and newscasts that are relevant to comics are given almost daily. Of even greater scholarly interest might be the Facebook-group **Comicforschung/comic studies**<sup>93</sup> initiated by publisher Christian Bachmann some years ago. With over 300 members now, it has become an increasingly valuable environment to discuss questions, ask for educated guesses on current research projects, or just to stay informed on new publications and CfPs. You'd have to ask for registration, but as long as you don't post (non-scholarly) advertisement, you should be fine. Return here for our next ComFor column in April!

90 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/en/2015/01/16/cfp-mediality-and-materiality-of-contemporary-comics/> (link updated on June 7, 2024).

91 <https://www.comicoskop.com/>.

92 <https://www.facebook.com/groups/404332916376371> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

93 <https://www.facebook.com/groups/comicforschung>.

*Stephan Packard:*

## April 2015

As German universities are about to return for their summer semesters, I find that the previous seasons of comics research in Germany hardly seem to apply any longer; an onslaught of publications, conferences, and exhibitions seems to continue throughout the year. Giving an overview of all of them no longer appears feasible, but here are some of those that kept us busy during the last two months, with apologies to anyone whose projects I might have missed. Do let me know.

We're currently gearing up for the workshop on **The Mediality and Materiality of Contemporary Comics**<sup>94</sup> at Tuebingen between April 24th and 26th. This second workshop of the AG Comicforschung, the panel for comics research, of the German Society for Media Studies (Gesellschaft für Medienwissenschaft) will be organised by Jan-Noël Thon and Lukas Wilde. The program boasts keynotes by Daniel Stein, Karin Kukkonen, Ian Hague, Daniel Merlin Goodbrey, and AG founder Véronique Sina, and will combine these with shorter paper presentations on topics ranging from the treatment of history in comics to analyses of individual comics by Warren Ellis, John Byrne, Scott McCloud, Brian Fies, and several others.

Meanwhile, the **Call for Papers for ComFor's Annual Conference**<sup>95</sup> has been published. Under the auspices of Bernd Dolle-Weinkauff, the tenth conference (!) will tackle issues of History in Comics as well as the History of Comics from September 4th to 6th at Frankfurt University. Papers on the conference subject as well as contributions to the open workshop format are welcome in German as well as English; the deadline for submissions is May 15th. If you're looking to discuss comics histories and historiographies in an international crowd and with an added opportunity to see a wide selection of German comics research, please do come along.

ComFor's tenth anniversary is also marked by its first panel at **Munich's Comic Festival**<sup>96</sup> (June 4th

94 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/en/2015/03/26/workshop-programm-the-mediality-and-materiality-of-contemporary-comics/>.

95 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/en/2015/03/05/cfp-geschichte-im-comic-geschichte-des-comic/>.

96 <https://comicfestival-muenchen.de/>.



to 7th) with its typically varied and rich program. Dedicated to an overview on the State of German Comics Studies, it will feature a discussion among Bernd Dolle-Weinkauff (Forschungsstelle Kinder- / Jugendbuchforschung, Universität Frankfurt); Astrid Böger (Arbeitsstelle für Graphische Literatur, Universität Hamburg); Andreas Rauscher (AG Comicforschung der Gesellschaft für Medienwissenschaft); Janina Wildfeuer (Comiclinguistik, Universität Bremen); Joachim Trinkwitz (Bonner Online-Bibliographie für Comicforschung); Burkhard Ihme (ICOM and Comic-Jahrbuch); and myself. Marie Schröer will chair.

But of course, the Comic Festival goes way beyond our little panel. Well over 20 international and 30 German comics artists will be attending, and research as well as fan panels and several vernissages beckon. See the link above for the most recent news on the ever-growing program.

Meanwhile, several recent and upcoming events are keeping us going during the spring. Not least, concurrent to the Munich Comic Festival, Horst Berner's exhibition *Die Beatles im Comic*<sup>97</sup> promises several well-selected pieces, among them originals by Arne Bellstorf. David Schraven's and Jan Feindt's critical comic on right-wing terrorism, *Weisse Wölfe*,<sup>98</sup> will be presented at a vernissage and subsequent exhibition starting April 15th at the Schauspielhaus in Dortmund. Journalist Brigitte Helbling and artist Sarah Burrini are offering insight into "Graphic Novels in Print and Web"<sup>99</sup> at Stuttgart's city library on April 14th. And also in mid-April, Berlin's comic festival **Comic-Invasion**<sup>100</sup> (April 18th/19th) will include an accompanying program with a huge variety of readings, lectures, panels, and exhibitions. An exhibition on **Belgian Independent Comics**<sup>101</sup> has already opened at Pe-

97 <https://comicfestival-muenchen.de/190> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

98 <https://www.theaterdo.de/detail/event/vernissage-zur-ausstellung-weisse-woelfe/> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

99 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2015/02/26/von-graphic-novels-in-print-und-web-in-stuttgart/> (link corrected on June 7, 2024).

100 <https://comicinvasion.de/> (link updated on June 7, 2024).

101 <https://peterweisshaus.de/veranstaltung/2015-03-28-er-ffnung-der-ausstellung-belgische-independent-comics-zwischen-alltagskult> (original link, no longer valid on June 7,

ter Weiss Haus in Rostock and will continue to be available until April 19th; another on the work of Ralf König, titled *Rotznasen*,<sup>102</sup> will continue until May 17th at Caricatura in Kassel. The last of three readings by König on May 6th is still upcoming. On May 23rd, the exhibition on Manfred Schmidt's Nick Knatterton comics previously shown at Saarlouis will move on to **Bamberg**,<sup>103</sup> where it will stay until August 16th.

Keeping track of new publications on comics studies has become a challenge of its own. ComFor's Publication Monitor does its best to keep up and has published two instalments recently on the **previous**<sup>104</sup> year as well as the **first months of this year**.<sup>105</sup> While Comics Forum readers will know about most of the international publications mentioned, they might be interested to learn about some of the German projects: Florian Trabert's, Mara Stuhlfauth-Trabert's and Johannes Waßmer's *Graphisches Erzählen* promises a collection of "new perspectives on literature comics", meaning adaptations of literary texts in comic format. Jörn Ahrens', Frank T. Brinkmann's and Nathanael Riemer's edited volume on *Comics – Bilder, Stories und Sequenzen in religiösen Deutungskulturen* presents overviews and analyses on religious graphical narratives, as well as their and other comics' religious interpretations. Meanwhile, Stefan Maier's monography on *Superman transmedial* considers the existence of the character, figure, and body image across media.

Let me also point out that the paperback edition of Daniel Stein's and Jan-Noël Thon's much-celebrated volume *From Comic Strips to Graphic Novels: Contributions to the Theory and History of Graphic Narrative* has finally arrived, giving a wide and – in this columnist's opinion – excellent and exhaustive panorama of current narratological approaches to comics studies.

ComFor was proud to publish **Daniel Stein's**

2024).

102 [https://caricatura.de/aktuelle\\_ausstellung.html](https://caricatura.de/aktuelle_ausstellung.html) (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

103 <https://museum.bamberg.de/stadtgalerie-bamberg-villa-dessauer/ausstellungsdetail/news/kombiniere-nick-knatterton-co-zeichnungen-von-manfred-schmidt/> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

104 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2015/02/16/monitor-12-neue-publikationen-201415/>.

105 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2015/04/13/monitor-13-neue-publikationen-2015/>.



**conversation with American cartoonist Keith Knight**<sup>106</sup> (in English), creator of *The K Chronicles*, *(Th)ink*, and *The Knight Life*, “About Comics and Police Brutality”. Daniel Stein is Professor for North American Literary and Cultural Studies at the University of Siegen and a member of ComFor. They discuss both the stereotypes and the resistant powers of comics art, and go on to distinguish the different attitudes of divergent genres, such as autobiographical comic strips as opposed to single-panel political cartoons. The thought-provoking interview concludes on an elaborate description of needs but also hopes for change.

March also saw the publication of *Comic Solidarity’s Webcomics im Fokus I*<sup>107</sup> (in German), which documents the talks, discussions, readings, and presentations given on webcomics at the Comic Salon in Erlangen in 2014. Comic Solidarity, founded in 2013, represents web artists working on comics. The most recent publication was edited by ComFor-member (and contributor to this column) Lukas Wilde; its entries range from questioning a specific aesthetics of webcomics, through photo comics and distinctions between comics and journalism online, to spotlights on ten selected webcomics. It also includes a documentation of the roundtable discussion that centred the talks at Erlangen.

In closing, I would like to draw readers’ attention to the project **Visual History**.<sup>108</sup> At home at Potsdam’s Zentrum für zeithistorische Forschung, the network of researchers aims to bring together various methods and disciplines working on historical studies into pictorial media. The rich and growing online resource has recently added an elaborate article by Christine Gundermann on **Comics as a Historical Source**<sup>109</sup> (in German).

Beyond that, there are no closing remarks; work continues, and I have no doubt that the next column will be at least as full as this one.

106 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2015/03/16/a-conversation-about-comics-and-police-brutality-with-american-cartoonist-keith-knight/>.

107 [https://c4daabee-e8ec-47a9-ae0d-9bd4ac9944cc.filesusr.com/ugd/c77767\\_97f6f69ae47d4970a070335eb6d223ef.pdf](https://c4daabee-e8ec-47a9-ae0d-9bd4ac9944cc.filesusr.com/ugd/c77767_97f6f69ae47d4970a070335eb6d223ef.pdf) (link updated on June 7, 2024).

108 <https://visual-history.de/>.

109 <https://visual-history.de/2015/01/26/comics-als-historische-quelle/>.

Laura Oehme:

## June 2015

As Stephan Packard stated in his last update, the abundance of comics-related events, publications, and exhibitions has become overwhelming. As a member of the ComFor online editing board, I know first-hand how much we are struggling to keep up with the numerous announcements of upcoming events that are received almost daily. This, of course, is not only a good sign for the future of comics studies, but also hints at the fact that the public perception of comics continues to grow.

I would like to start off this month’s column by congratulating Stephan Packard for receiving the **Heinz Maier-Leibnitz Prize 2015**.<sup>110</sup> The prize is awarded each year by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) and the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). The ComFor’s much-valued President received the prize on May 5th in Berlin and is, after Daniel Stein, only the second comics scholar to receive it yet.

With the summer semester well underway, the last two months have been busy for German comics scholars. In May, the University of Bonn invited two ComFor members to give **guest lectures**<sup>111</sup> on autobiographical comics: Joachim Trinkwitz talked in general about self-portrayal in the comics medium and Rolf Lohse introduced the audience to the tradition of autobiographical comics in France. This year’s comics symposium in Saarbrücken focused on **“Comics in Space”**<sup>112</sup> and invited many German and French comic authors to talk about their works. The research colloquium **“Literature and Illustration”**<sup>113</sup> at the University of Hannover, which is still short of two guest lectures on comics, will take place on

110 <https://www.dfg.de/en/funded-projects/prizewinners/maier-leibnitz-prize/2015>.

111 <https://www.iglk.uni-bonn.de/en> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

112 <https://www.xmlab.org/projects-select?relevanz=xm:lab> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

113 [https://www.germanistik.uni-hannover.de/singlenews\\_interpaed11.html?&tx\\_ttnews\[backPid\]=688&tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=7987&cHash=fd59268838154efe0be7b4e7b1cba09d](https://www.germanistik.uni-hannover.de/singlenews_interpaed11.html?&tx_ttnews[backPid]=688&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=7987&cHash=fd59268838154efe0be7b4e7b1cba09d) (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).



June 24th and July 15th. Similarly, the workshop series “**Comics als Metageschichte**”<sup>114</sup> at the University of Cologne will put on its third and final workshop on June 26th, focusing on the circulation of comics and featuring presentations by Christina Meyer and Jeff Thoss. The series will be topped off by a comics reading with Christina Plaka and Barbara Yelin on July 15th.

Most notably, since April, the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) has announced funding a **research cooperation**<sup>115</sup> between the University of Paderborn and the University of Potsdam on the subject of “Hybrid Narrativity”. By combining methods from the cognitive sciences and digital humanities with narratology and literary history, this project “aims at a richer and empirically robust understanding of graphic literature” and thus presents an intrinsically interdisciplinary approach to comics studies.

This month, the ComFor’s **14th Publication Monitor**<sup>116</sup> was published and I would like to emphasize the two German publications it lists: *Graphisches Erzählen von Adoleszenz: Deutschsprachige Autorencomics nach 2000* by Felix Giesa (publisher: Peter Lang) and *Die Kunst des Comic-Sammelns* by Alex Jakubowski and Sandra Mann (publisher: Edition Lammerhuber). Felix Giesa’s study of comics dealing with the subject of adolescence traces the historical development of the genre and provides close readings of six contemporary German comics. Alex Jakubowski’s and Sandra Mann’s edited volume of portraits and photographs provides insight into 15 unique comic collections and their owners.

Summertime is festival-time! First and foremost, the **Comic Festival in Munich**<sup>117</sup> took place from June 4th to 7th, which Stephan Packard has already dealt with it at length in the last column. A video of the ComFor’s panel discussion on the state of German comics studies is now available on **Splashcomics’ website**<sup>118</sup> (in German). Apart from the second

largest comic event in Germany, comics were also a topic at this year’s **Stuttgart International Festival of Animated Film**<sup>119</sup> (May 5th to 10th), featuring a panel discussion asking “After Charlie?”, a one-day symposium on “Color in Animation, Comics and Literature”, a two-day comic workshop with Davor Bakara, and presentations by Harri Röpötti about comics and animation. Also, the **Hamburg Graphic Novel Days**<sup>120</sup> took place at the Literaturhaus from May 18th to 22nd for the fourth time.

Beyond the many ongoing exhibitions that were listed in the last update, some more have opened in the past two months. In cooperation with Cross Cult publishing house, the city of Asperg presented the art exhibition “Comic made in Germany” in May. The traveling exhibition “**Going West!**”<sup>121</sup> has moved to Dortmund and will be on tour until June 2016, also stopping off in Hannover and Saarbrücken. In Bad Wildungen, an exhibition of the **Caricatura Kassel**<sup>122</sup> shows the works of the cartoonist Burkhard Fritsche, alias BURKH, until August. From June 6th to October 4th, the Sommerpalais in Greiz hosts the eighth **Caricatures Triennial**,<sup>123</sup> entitled “Everything under Control.” On June 12th an exhibition series on “**Abstract Comics**”<sup>124</sup> opened in Bremen, with the first showing the works of the Swiss collective Hecatombe.

I would also like to mention that the online magazine *Bookster* has published a comprehensive portrait of **Bernd Dolle-Weinkauff**,<sup>125</sup> co-founder of the ComFor and organizer of this year’s annual ComFor

114 <http://comicforschung.phil-fak.uni-koeln.de/22271.html> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

115 <https://blogs.uni-paderborn.de/graphic-literature/projekt-2> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

116 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2015/06/08/monitor-14-neue-publikationen-2015/>.

117 <https://comicfestival-muenchen.de/>.

118 [https://www.splashcomics.de/php/messen/berichte/1662/zum\\_stand\\_der\\_comicforschung\\_film](https://www.splashcomics.de/php/messen/berichte/1662/zum_stand_der_comicforschung_film).

119 <https://www.itfs.de/en/>.

120 <http://www.literaturhaus-hamburg.de/content/%C2%BBsprechende-bilder%C2%AB-%E2%80%93-hamburger-graphic-novel-tage> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

121 [https://www.dortmund.de/de/freizeit\\_und\\_kultur/museen/mkk/veranstaltungen\\_3/mkk\\_vk\\_1.jsp?eid=348949](https://www.dortmund.de/de/freizeit_und_kultur/museen/mkk/veranstaltungen_3/mkk_vk_1.jsp?eid=348949) (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

122 <https://caricatura.de/unterwegs.html> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

123 <http://www.sommerpalais-greiz.de/nc/en/programm/titel/ausstellung-alles-unter-kontrolle-8-triennale-der-karikatur-1> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

124 <https://kulturbuero-bremen.de/en/finissage-abstrakte-comics-2-hopkins-huet/> (link updated on June 7, 2024).

125 <https://www.bookster-frankfurt.de/bernd-dolle-weinkauff.html>.



conference at the University of Frankfurt (September 4–6, 2015). Finally, I would like to join my predecessor in predicting an equally well-filled column in August and hope that the exciting interest in the German comics studies scene continues.

*Lukas R.A. Wilde:*

## August 2015

It feels a bit like cheating for me to write this column, taking turns for our bi-monthly ComFor updates on German comics scholarship. July and August have been comparably quiet, due to what must be a holiday breeze, but a regular storm of conferences, festivals and events appears to be looming on the horizon. So consider this more of a teaser trailer for September and October – and most of all for the ComFor’s own annual conference on **History in Comics – History of Comics**<sup>126</sup> in Frankfurt/M. from September 4–6 (more about that later).

First, as a quick follow-up to Laura Oehme’s last column, and the news about the successful funding of a research cooperation between the University of Paderborn and the University of Potsdam on the subject of **Hybrid Narrativity**.<sup>127</sup> the research group, combining approaches from the cognitive sciences, digital humanities and narratology, remains prominent in the German spotlight. One of the founders, Alexander Dunst, recently gave a lecture on the topic of **Reading Comics – Contributions of Empirical Humanities**<sup>128</sup> at the University of Göttingen to present some preliminary results already. There have been some discussions of the project from outside academia as well (notably within regular newspaper columns and in online discussion groups), asking for more information about the aims and methods of the project than can be found on the public website of the group. An extensive and very informative (albeit German-language) **interview with Dr. Dunst**<sup>129</sup> was published on Christian Meiwald’s comics-newsblog **Dreimalalles**,<sup>130</sup> while Hybrid Narrativity-member Oliver Moisch of Paderborn University composed a short (Geman-lan-

126 <https://www.comicesellschaft.de/en/2015/07/23/programm-der-10-comfor-jahrestagung-in-frankfurtm/>.

127 <http://blogs.uni-paderborn.de/graphic-literature/projekt-2> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

128 <https://www.uni-goettingen.de/de/%C2%BBcomics-lesen%C2%AB---vortrag-von-alexander-dunst-am-11-juni-2015/498886.html>.

129 <http://www.dreimalalles.info/news/neue-comicforschung-interview-mit-dr-alexander-dunst> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

130 <https://dreimalalles.info/>.



guage) **project introduction**<sup>131</sup> for the ComFor. Since it is sometimes compared to (or contrasted with) Bart Beaty, Benjamin Woo and Nick Sousanis' **What Were Comics?**<sup>132</sup> by the University of Calgary and Carleton University, the ComFor editorial board followed up with a short **interview with Bart Beaty**<sup>133</sup> (in English), in which he explains more about the backgrounds of, and possible connections between, both approaches. On a further note, the Hybrid Narrativity group will be organizing a **Master Class with renowned media scholar Lev Manovich**<sup>134</sup> in Potsdam on September 23, doubtless deepening these discussions.

If you were browsing through German newspapers and magazines last month looking for news on comic books, you were most likely to stumble across the name of Erika Fuchs. On August 1, a museum in her name celebrated its opening in Schwarzenbach an der Saale, and the event was widely covered beyond local press and newspapers. If you are wondering why you have never heard about this artist, the answer is easy: she wasn't one (at least not in the usual sense). Dr. Erika Fuchs is a bit of a German curiosity: Working as an ingenious and brilliant translator of Carl Barks' classic Disney comics for many decades, she not only influenced contemporary German language significantly, but actually received recognition for this (which is, not surprisingly, pretty rare within this invisible craft). So it is only fitting that, after many delays, her hometown of Schwarzenbach will finally welcome visitors to the **Erika Fuchs Haus**<sup>135</sup> – dedicated not only to her life's work, but also to the art of language in comics in general. And if that isn't enough for you, it also features a more or less life-size money bath, Uncle Scrooge-style!

In terms of festivals and conventions, I won't go much into details about the *two* upcoming German

Comic Cons – **German Comic Con**<sup>136</sup> in Dortmund (December 5/6, 2015) and **Comic Con Germany**<sup>137</sup> in Stuttgart (June 25/26, 2016) – that were announced recently (if you include other German-speaking countries, the **Vienna Comic Con**<sup>138</sup> on November 21/22 2015 should be mentioned as well). A growing commercial interest in comics (or rather comic fans) as a viable business resource is certainly noteworthy from an economic and sociological point of view (and also where practices of transmedia storytelling and marketing are involved). However, other upcoming festivals and fairs that have a larger focus on cultural topics might be of more immediate interest to comic studies as an endeavour of humanities.

On September 5, Leipzig opens its **Comicgarten**<sup>139</sup> mini-festival; the international literature festival Berlin (ilb) invites its guests to participate in its **Graphic Novel Day**<sup>140</sup> once more (September 12–13). For September 18–20 we are looking forward to the ever-growing **Connichi**<sup>141</sup> manga festival in Kassel, organized by Animexx. Vienna will be hosting the **Vienna Comix 2015**<sup>142</sup> festival on October 3–4, while Hamburg is preparing for the **International Graphic Novel Salon**<sup>143</sup> on October 10. Despite some major changes in its presentation of comics, the upcoming **Frankfurt Book Fair**<sup>144</sup> (October 14–18) is certainly going to be an important event again, and finally the **MMC**,<sup>145</sup> the Anime- and Manga-Convention in Berlin, will be held on October 23–25.

While both these festivals and a number of con-

131 <https://www.comicesellschaft.de/2015/07/20/projektbeschreibung-hybride-narrativitaet-ankuendigung-masterclass-with-lev-manovich/> (link corrected on June 7, 2024).

132 <https://www.whatwerecomics.com/>.

133 <https://www.comicesellschaft.de/en/2015/07/06/kurzinterview-mit-bart-beaty-zu-what-were-comics/>.

134 <https://blogs.uni-paderborn.de/graphic-literature/2015/07/13/masterclass-on-cultural-analytics-with-lev-manovich/> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

135 <http://www.erika-fuchs.de/>.

136 <http://www.germancomiccon.com/en/> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

137 <https://www.comiccon.de/en/>.

138 <http://www.vienna-comiccon.com/en/>.

139 <https://comicgarten-leipzig.de/> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

140 <https://literaturfestival.com/programm/specials/graphic-novel-day> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

141 <https://www.connichi.de/>.

142 <https://viennacomix.at/aktuelles-programm/>.

143 <https://harbourfront-hamburg.com/veranstaltung/internationaler-graphic-novel-salon> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

144 <https://www.buchmesse.de/de/fbm/NeuesMessekonzept/> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

145 <http://www.mmc-berlin.com/>.



ferences seem right around the corner, some prior academic events also deserve some attention: First and foremost, on July 3/4 the German Kinemathek Berlin invited us to reflect upon the aesthetic, narrative and technological aspects of **Storyboarding: Bild – Text – Bewegung**<sup>146</sup> (*Image – Text – Movement*). Within this dialogue between literature and cinema studies, as well as art history, comics emerged as a special nexus point, critically examined by Kalani Michell's (Frankfurt) presentation on "Petzold's Comic Storyboard Constructions" and Jens Meinrenken's (Berlin) investigation of "Sequential Art: The Relationship between Comic, Storyboard and Film."

We have already mentioned (twice!) the workshop on the **Mediality and Materiality of Contemporary Comics**,<sup>147</sup> organized by Jan-Noël Thon and myself on behalf of the **AG Comicforschung (Comic Studies Board)**<sup>148</sup> of the German Society of Media Studies (GfM), so we won't bother you with details again. However, Stephan Packard and Christian A. Bachmann composed a detailed English **workshop report**<sup>149</sup> for **ZfM online**<sup>150</sup> (online Journal of Media Studies) which can be accessed freely. This includes not only the keynote speeches by Daniel Merlin Goodbrey (Hertfordshire), Ian Hague (Comics Forum), Karin Kukkonen (Turku), Véronique Sina (Bochum) and Daniel Stein (Siegen), but also 10 additional paper presentations, as well as discussions and recurring questions are covered in some depths – thanks for that!

The next event organized by the AG Comicforschung (this time round by Véronique Sina and Hans-Joachim Backe) will be part of the **GfM's annual conference**<sup>151</sup> from September 30 to October 3, 2015. Hosted by the University of Bayreuth, the conference asks for **mediatised visions of "Utopia"**<sup>152</sup> and the possibilities of societal transforma-

tion, comprising an impressive amount of almost 50 panels with hundreds of presentations by scholars from all over the field(s) of media studies. Within that context, **the AG Comicforschung brought together**<sup>153</sup> Jeanne Cortiel (Bayreuth), Stephan Packard (Freiburg) and Véronique Sina herself, to discuss the relations between (post)apocalyptic and utopian visions in Robert Kirkman's *Walking Dead* (Cortiel), the transgressions (and semiotic irritations) of what can be considered human in *Superior Iron Man* (Packard), as well as the subversion of gender-images in Enki Bilal's dystopic *La Trilogie Nikopol* (Sina).

Now we finally approach the point I can spread some excitement about the ComFor's own annual conference with our grand anniversary. As the title **History in Comics – History of Comics**<sup>154</sup> indicates, organizer Bernd Dolle-Weinkauff and his team at the University of Frankfurt/M. will focus on comics and graphic literature with a double perspective. As the conference's call for paper's explains: "One field of interest will consist of the historical topics and subjects, ranging from antiquity to contemporary history, that are depicted in works of sequential art from all over the world and attract the attention of a broad readership [...] Another field of interest – closely linked to and in correspondence with the aspects mentioned above – consists of the historicisation of the phenomenon 'comic', its contemporary varieties and its readership(s) as well as the analysis of its international developments." The event, held from September 4 to 6, will be the biggest ComFor conference ever, featuring about 55 presentations (many of them in English) in three parallel tracks; participants include Anne Magnussen (Odense) and artist Barbara Yelin (*Irmina*). So, come and join us in the centre of Germany to celebrate our anniversary of ComFor conferences, which have certainly come a long way from their first instalment 10 years ago.

In the arena of new publications that we constantly struggle to keep track of in our **Monitor column**,<sup>155</sup> I'd like to highlight two new releases especially. Firstly, Juliane Blank published her dis-

146 <https://arthist.net/archive/10575>.

147 <https://www.comicesellschaft.de/en/2015/03/26/workshop-programm-the-mediality-and-materiality-of-contemporary-comics/>.

148 <https://agcomic.net/> (link updated on June 7, 2024).

149 <https://zfmedienwissenschaft.de/online/mediality-and-materiality-contemporary-comics>.

150 <https://zfmedienwissenschaft.de/>.

151 <https://gfmedienwissenschaft.de/jahrestagung> (link corrected on June 7, 2024).

152 <https://medienwissenschaft.uni-bayreuth.de/>

[gfm2015/](https://www.comicesellschaft.de/en/tag/monitor/).

153 <https://agcomic.net/2016/10/09/utopien-des-comics/> (link updated on June 7, 2024).

154 <https://www.comicesellschaft.de/en/2015/07/23/programm-der-10-comfor-jahrestagung-in-frankfurtm/>.

155 <https://www.comicesellschaft.de/en/tag/monitor/>.



sertation on **Literaturadaptionen im Comic**<sup>156</sup> (literature adaptations in comics) with the Christian Bachmann publishing house. Blank draws on the methods and concepts of cinema studies, art history and picture theory, proposing an analytical model which considers the source material and the medial transformation into the realm of comics of equal importance. Speaking of ‘translations’, Nathalie Mälzer edited a Frank & Timme volume on **Comics – Übersetzungen und Adaptionen**<sup>157</sup> (translations and adaptations). Comprising some of the contributions of **last year’s international conference**<sup>158</sup> at the University of Hildesheim, the collection sheds (interdisciplinary) light on the interplay of linguistic translation and regionalisation on the one hand and medial transcoding processes on the other. Not a German publication at all, I’d nevertheless like to direct your attention towards Daniel Merlin Goodbrey and Jayms Nichols’ special-themed issue of **Networking Knowledge: Digital Comics**.<sup>159</sup> Out of the six articles focusing specifically on the relationship between comics and digital media two investigations were contributed by ComFor-members: Matthias Bremgartner’s article on the interplay of theatre and digital comics, as well as my own investigation of the difficulty to assess the mediality of [digital] comics.

All things considered, not bad for a summer break fill-in! Enjoy the rest of your holidays, make your way to Frankfurt if you can, and we’ll be back to cover some of it in 60 days!

156 [http://www.christian-bachmann.de/b\\_bn1.html](http://www.christian-bachmann.de/b_bn1.html).

157 [https://www.frank-timme.de/de/programm/produkt/comics-uebersetzungen\\_und\\_adaptionen](https://www.frank-timme.de/de/programm/produkt/comics-uebersetzungen_und_adaptionen).

158 <http://www.uni-hildesheim.de/media/fb3/uebersetzungswissenschaft/Comictagung/Tagungsprogramm.pdf>.

159 <https://ojs.meccsa.org.uk/index.php/netknow/issue/view/47>.

*Nina Heindl:*

## October 2015

After Lukas deviated from our usual look back on the last two months of German activities regarding comics and outrageously announced diverse activities in September and October (yes, Lukas, this was cheating!) we would like to recommend the re-reading of Lukas’ column and add some updates on events that have not been mentioned yet.

First of all our annual ComFor conference entitled **“History in Comics – History of Comics”**<sup>160</sup> was held at the University of Frankfurt/M. from September 4 to 6. Although we are excited about each annual meeting, this year’s get-together was a special one: the ComFor celebrated its 10th anniversary. With a record high of 17 panels and roughly 50 talks in three days, the annual meeting in Frankfurt was one of the largest ComFor conferences so far. The four keynotes by Anne Magnussen (University of Southern Denmark, Odense), Stephan Packard (Freiburg), Dietrich Grünewald (Reiskirchen), and Christina Gundermann (Köln) at the beginning set the tone for a conference full of thought-provoking talks, controversial debates, and inspiring conversations among fellow comics scholars.

One month after the ComFor’s annual meeting, the Berlin symposium **‘Science meets Comics. The Anthropocene Kitchen: Designing the Future of Food’**<sup>161</sup> took place from October 5 to 6. Experts in comics theory and comics practice, science communication and nutritional sciences came together and discussed the importance of comics for science communication, intercultural education, and visions of future nutrition. The results of the symposium will have direct effect on the creation of an info comic about the nutrition of the world (‘The Anthropocene Kitchen – Visualizing the Future of Food’).

In Bayreuth, from September 30 to October 3, the annual meeting of the Society for Media Studies (GfM) took place. The conference reconciled different approaches and branches of media studies under the title “Utopias. Ways out of present”. **The AG Comicforschung arranged a panel re-**

160 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/en/2015/07/23/programm-der-10-comfor-jahrestagung-in-frankfurtm/>.

161 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2015/09/24/symposium-science-meets-comics-in-berlin/> (link corrected on June 7, 2024).



**garding utopia in comics**<sup>162</sup> moderated by Laura Oehme (Bayreuth) and with talks by Jeanne Cortiel (Bayreuth), Stephan Packard (Freiburg), and Véronique Sina (Bochum). Since the founding of the AG Comicforschung in 2013 it was the third successful and well attended panel at the annual meeting of GfM in a row.

Besides these academic conferences two other events took place in September that had quite an interesting focus on comics. The first was a **one-day workshop**<sup>163</sup> for teachers about comics as topic for school lessons at the University of Paderborn. Such workshops show the great interest in the integration of comics into classrooms. Discussions about this topic also exist within the ComFor and will be the topic of the next annual meeting in 2016 at the University of Duisburg-Essen. The second event was the **first 24 hour cartoon reading festival**,<sup>164</sup> which took place in Berlin from September 5 to 6. At first glance it might sound odd to read out cartoons we are more used to reading by our own. However, readings of cartoons by their creators – all of them well-known German cartoonists – are adding a whole new dimension to the funny drawings.

Out of a bunch of exhibitions that started in September there are two on German comic artists that are worth emphasising in particular. The exhibition **‘Ruthe – Sauer – Flix: Das ist doch keine Kunst**<sup>165</sup> started just recently in Oberhausen. It can be visited until 17 January 2016 and shows works of the three well-known German comic artists Ralph Ruthe, Joshua Sauer, and Flix. Also an **exhibition on the German underground comic artist Gerhard Seyfried**<sup>166</sup> will be displayed until January 2016 at the Caricatura Museum in Frankfurt/M.

162 <https://agcomic.net/2016/10/09/utopien-des-comics/> (link updated on June 7, 2024).

163 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2015/09/14/comic-lehrerfortbildung-an-der-universitaet-paderborn/> (link corrected on June 7, 2024).

164 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2015/08/31/1-24h-cartoon-lese-festival-in-berlin/>.

165 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2015/09/17/ruthe-sauer-flix-das-ist-doch-keine-kunst-ausstellung-in-oberhausen/> (link corrected on June 7, 2024).

166 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2015/09/28/gerhard-seyfried-ausstellung-in-frankfurt-a-m/>.

Laura Oehme:

## December 2015

Following up on Nina’s update from October, I am providing the sixth and last ComFor update on current developments in German comics studies for 2015. However, before I concentrate on the last two months of 2015 in Germany, I would like to point out that **the first academic position for “Graphic Fiction and Comic Art”**<sup>167</sup> (connected to a PhD program) at Lancaster University also attracted much interest with the German press. The professorship marks a milestone in comics studies worldwide and, hopefully, the beginning of a trend, as the Scottish University of Dundee also uploaded a **job advertisement**<sup>168</sup> for a lecturer in comics studies. It is still a long way to an interdisciplinary department solely dedicated to comics studies, but every little step counts. Congratulations to French graphic novelist Benoît Peeters for his appointment are in order!

### Conferences, Workshops, Symposiums

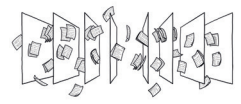
Since the fall season for conferences has already passed, the last two months of 2015 brought only a few academic events focusing on comics to light. On November 24, ComFor member Daniel Stein organized a workshop with Björn Hammel titled **“Mediamorphose: Die mediale Transformation der Graphic Novel TearTalesTrust”**<sup>169</sup> (“Mediamorphosis: The Medial Transformation of the Graphic Novel *TearTalesTrust*”) at the University of Siegen. A few days later, on November 27–28, an interdisciplinary student conference on **“The Rise of Sequential History: Historische Comics in Theorie und Praxis”**<sup>170</sup> (Historical Comics in Theory and in the Field) took place at the LMU in Munich. On De-

167 <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/news/articles/2015/lancaster-university-appoints-tintin-scholar-as-uks-first-professor-of-graphic-/>.

168 [https://www.jobs.ac.uk/search/?academicDisciplineFacet\[0\]=languages-literature-and-culture&subDisciplineFacet\[0\]=cultural-studies&academicDisciplineFacet\[1\]=creative-arts-and-design&subDisciplineFacet\[1\]=other-creative-arts&expired-job-redirect=true](https://www.jobs.ac.uk/search/?academicDisciplineFacet[0]=languages-literature-and-culture&subDisciplineFacet[0]=cultural-studies&academicDisciplineFacet[1]=creative-arts-and-design&subDisciplineFacet[1]=other-creative-arts&expired-job-redirect=true) (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

169 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2015/11/19/workshop-mediatorphose-mit-bjoern-hammel/>.

170 <https://comics.hypotheses.org/242>.



ember 4, the University of Kiel hosted a study day on “**Comic & Kunstgeschichte**”<sup>171</sup> (Comics & Art History). I would also like to mention the new PhD program “**Die Arbeit und ihre Subjekte**”<sup>172</sup> (Work and its Subjects) at the University of Duisburg-Essen that explicitly touted for comics projects, for which applicants were able to get funding for three years beginning in 2016.

## Publications

In November, the second issue of the very first German-language e-journal for comics studies *Closure*<sup>173</sup> was released. It focuses on “the dark side” of comics, introduces the new category “ComicKontext,” and includes articles and reviews by numerous ComFor members. Additionally, as every December, two classical yearbooks went into print: *Deutsche Comicforschung 2016*,<sup>174</sup> edited by Eckart Sackmann, and the *Comic-Jahrbuch 2016*<sup>175</sup> of ICOM, edited by Burkhard Ihme. Furthermore, Julia Abel and Christian Klein edited one of the first German-language introductions to comics and graphic novels with J.B. Metzler (*Comics und Graphic Novels: Eine Einführung*).<sup>176</sup> It covers a wide area of disciplinary perspectives and features contributions by eight ComFor members

## Festivals

Comics are slowly finding their way into more and more festivals and October and November 2015 have been very fertile months for comics at festivals all over Germany. From October 8 to 11, the world-wide biggest trade fair for nonelectronic games, the *Spiel* in Essen, featured with the “**Comic Action 2015**”<sup>177</sup> a special section devoted to comic artists,

171 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2015/11/26/studententag-comic-kunstgeschichte-in-kiel/>.

172 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2015/10/29/promotionskolleg-die-arbeit-und-ihre-subjekte-an-der-universitaet-duisburg-essen/>.

173 <http://www.closure.uni-kiel.de/>.

174 <https://www.comicforschung.de/index.html>.

175 <https://www.comic.de/2015/12/das-comic-jahrbuch-2016/> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

176 <https://www.amazon.de/Comics-Graphic-Novels-Einf%C3%BChrung-Neuerscheinungen/dp/3476025535>.

177 <http://www.comicaction.de/> (original link, no

publishers, and distributors. On the same weekend, Hamburg hosted its **ninth comic festival**.<sup>178</sup> This year’s Frankfurt Book Fair (October 14–18) dedicated a special area and program to comics again, although both are usually clearly dominated by manga and cosplay. However, the independent group of artists Comic Solidarity organized an autonomous comic festival called “**Comic Satellit Frankfurt**”<sup>179</sup> (see also **this article**<sup>180</sup> from the *Frankfurter Neue Presse*) that focused on web comics and took place from October 15 to 18. The eighth **Anime and Manga Convention**<sup>181</sup> (MMC) in Berlin opened its gates from October 23 to 25 and, for the first time, also welcomed other comic forms than manga. From October 23 to November 1, Freiburg held its second biennial “**Festival für Illustration**”<sup>182</sup> (Festival for Illustrations). In November, Cologne hosted the first “**Comicfestival Köln**”<sup>183</sup> (November 12–14), which featured well-known German comics artists, such as Flix and Ralf König, as well as young talents, workshops, discussions, and presentations. Another festival première took place in Dortmund where the **first German Comic Con**<sup>184</sup> was held from December 2 to 4, 2015.

## Exhibitions

In the context of the “**Comicfestival Hamburg**,”<sup>185</sup> fans could inspect several exhibitions of comic art within only one week (October 3–9). In September, two exhibitions were opened: one with **the works of Line Hoven**<sup>186</sup> in Ottobrunn (September 23–Oc-

longer valid on June 7, 2024).

178 <https://cargocollective.com/comicfestivalhamburg>.

179 <https://evejay.wixsite.com/comicsatellit>.

180 <https://www.fnp.de/fehlerseite/index.html> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

181 [https://www.mmc-berlin.com/mmc\\_goes-comic/](https://www.mmc-berlin.com/mmc_goes-comic/) (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

182 <http://illueins.hkdm.de/> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

183 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2015/11/09/comicfestival-koeln/>.

184 <https://www.germancomiccon.com> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

185 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2015/10/01/comicfestival-hamburg-ausstellungen/>.

186 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2015/10/08/linehoven-ausstellung-in-ottobrunn/>.



tober 24) and the “**Duckomenta**”<sup>187</sup> in Mannheim (September 13–April 24). Furthermore, Berlin offered two comic exhibitions until early January 2016: “**Redrawing Stories from the Past**”<sup>188</sup> (November 6–January 10) and “**Comics, Bilder und Geschichten**”<sup>189</sup> (December 5–January 9).

## Outlook

In 2016, we can be looking forward to many more great comics events. Among them the annual media studies winter school in Tübingen (February), the 17th International Comic Salon in Erlangen (May), possibly another panel of the AG Comicforschung at the annual conference of the German Society for Media Studies in Berlin (October), the annual conference of the ComFor at the University of Duisburg-Essen (November), and many many more. I hope you all had restful holidays and on behalf of the ComFor’s online editorial team and the society as a whole, I wish you a happy new year, full of great new comics and fascinating comics research!

Stephan Packard:

## February 2016

The new year starts with preparations for 2016’s annual ComFor conference, which will be held at Duisburg-Essen from November 16th to 19th. This year, we will focus on didactics, offering workshops and talks about implementing comics and comics studies into school curricula and lessons. Organized by Markus Engels alongside Ulrike Preußner and Clemens Kammler, the conference will discuss basic concepts of comics analysis with a focus on examples that topicalize school within comics; and then turn that around to focus on comics in schools for the longest part. As usual, the conference will also include an open forum for current plans and intermediate reports from unfinished projects in comics studies that are looking for feedback or simply encouragement – my favorite part of each of our conferences. The **call for papers**<sup>190</sup> was published recently and the deadline for abstracts is set at April 1st, 2016.

Another recent call for papers asks for proposals for the third edition of Germany’s new and highly acclaimed journal for comics research, **CLOSURE**.<sup>191</sup> The first two issues collected fascinating pieces of scholarship as well as students’ reviews of comic books old and new and earned great praise. The most recent **CFP**<sup>192</sup> is headlined “stuff matters” and asks for contributions focusing on objects and material design within comic books, topically and aesthetically. The deadline is March 11th.

As for completed publications, Véronique Sina’s long-awaited PhD thesis on comic adaptations in film under a gender perspective, aptly titled **Comic – Film – Gender**,<sup>193</sup> is finally available from Transcript. The monograph uses Bolter and Grusin’s concept of remediation to analyze the roles of gender in Frank Miller’s *Sin City*, Enki Bilal’s *Immortel*, and Matthew Vaughn’s *Kick-Ass*. Regular readers will recognize Véronique as the founder and president of the German Society for Media Studies’ extremely active sec-

187 <https://www.rem-mannheim.de/ausstellungen/aktuell/duckomenta/ausstellung/> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

188 <https://redrawingstoriesfromthepast.com/>.

189 [https://neurotitan.de/Galerie/Archiv/2015/151205-Comics\\_Bilder\\_Geschichten.html](https://neurotitan.de/Galerie/Archiv/2015/151205-Comics_Bilder_Geschichten.html).

190 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/02/07/comfor-cfp-comics-in-der-schule-schule-im-comic/>.

191 <http://www.closure.uni-kiel.de/>.

192 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/01/30/cfp-closure-kieler-e-journal-fuer-comicforschung-3-november-2016/>.

193 <http://www.transcript-verlag.de/978-3-8376-3336-8/comic-film-gender>.



tion on comics studies.

Meanwhile, Markus Engels and Ulrike Preußner have also been busy editing the most recent issue of *literaturkritik.de*, an online journal for book and media reviews. **2016's first issue is focused on comics**,<sup>194</sup> with discussions on German comics and graphic storytelling, literary adaptations in comics, Franco-Belgian BDs, and international comics with a special focus on the US. The edition's editorial also uses the opportunity to remember the murderous attacks on *Charlie Hebdo* in January last year.

While we usually only talk about German publications in this column, let me add a quick shout-out to Neil Cohn's *Visual Narrative Reader*, which has garnered praise and discussion in German comics studies and not least contains a unique overview of German media linguistics' approaches to the field from Janina Wildfeuer and John Bateman, a resource that has been sorely missing, especially for work from those decades produced before the recent upswing in academic comics analysis. A lot of the most fascinating work from German comics studies probably comes from early linguistic treatises from 1970 onwards; it is invaluable to see it collected and summarized in one easily accessible article.

Moving from research and reviews to comics and comic art, the ComFor webpage started 2016 with recommendations from some members on their best picks for comics from 2015, continuing a tradition begun last year. Ole Frahm, Dietrich Grünewald, Max Höllen, Lukas Wilde and myself recommend that you run, not walk, to your nearest comic book store or internet terminal and get a hold of any or all of **these volumes from the German, American, British, Turkish and international scene**.<sup>195</sup>

On tumblr, a special project collecting politically engaged German comics and caricatures has started under the moniker of **Bildkorrektur – Bilder gegen Bürgerängste**,<sup>196</sup> which roughly translates as "Correcting Images – Pictures Against Citizen's Fears". The co-operation by 16 renowned German comics artists depicts, discusses and presents information on what they consider the top 15 of German

citizens' current fears, intending to battle a fear-based media circuit and political landscape.

Finally, here is a short selection from the plethora of exhibitions and conventions available for travelers in Germany so far: the main attraction, as always in even-numbered years, is the **Comic Salon at Erlangen**,<sup>197</sup> which will take place from May 26th to 29th. While we are still waiting to find out this year's topical focus, we are already looking forward to the biggest and most elaborate convention on the German scene, for fans, artists, and scholars alike. As for the previous salons, expect to see ComFor panels on this year's main topics as well as general comics research in the final program once published.

US comics artist Ben Katchor and his French colleague Nicolas Wild are offering courses on comic book design and art at the **Sommerakademie in Salzburg in July and August**;<sup>198</sup> enrolment will continue through April 8th. Exhibitions include "**Berliini Suomix**",<sup>199</sup> on Finnish comics, in Berlin, from February 26th to March 3rd; an ongoing exhibition on **Richard McGuire in Frankfurt**,<sup>200</sup> which will continue through September 11th; an exhibition dedicated to **The Myth of Eternauta**,<sup>201</sup> on Héctor Germán Oesterheld's SF comic and its relation to the Argentinian military regime, to continue through April 15th; and at the Schwule Museum Berlin, the exhibition **SuperQueeroes**<sup>202</sup> will begin in late February and stay open until June 26th.

194 [https://literaturkritik.de/public/rezension.php?rez\\_id=21519&ausgabe=201601](https://literaturkritik.de/public/rezension.php?rez_id=21519&ausgabe=201601).

195 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/01/07/comfor-leseempfehlungen-2015/>.

196 <https://bildkorrektur.tumblr.com/> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

197 <http://www.comic-salon.de/>.

198 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/02/11/comic-kurse-bei-der-sommerakademie-in-salzburg/>.

199 <https://www.vierraumladen.de/> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

200 <https://www.museumangewandtekunst.de/de/museum/ausstellungen/zeitraum/> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

201 <https://www.literaturhaus-stuttgart.de/event/3269-2-der-mythos-eternauta> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

202 [https://www.schwulesmuseum.de/ausstellung/superqueeroes-unsere-lgbti-comic-held\\_innen/](https://www.schwulesmuseum.de/ausstellung/superqueeroes-unsere-lgbti-comic-held_innen/).



Lukas R.A. Wilde:

## April 2016

Welcome back to ComFor's quick update on comic studies-news related to the German-speaking corners of the world. The big news, here as probably everywhere else, was arguably the first membership drive of the Comic Studies Society (CSS). We were even more excited to learn about the plans of the CSS to launch a new comic scholarship Journal in 2017 (announced aptly as the *Journal of the Comics Studies Society*) – fascinating times to be a comics scholar, indeed!

In Germany, the early spring was initially all about wonderful festivals and fairs: from March 10 to 20, our Austrian neighbors in Linz and Steyr celebrated their **Nextcomic Festival**,<sup>203</sup> with an inspiring range of international guests and ambitious exhibitions. During the same time (March 12), Hamburg opened up its first **Comic and Manga Convention**,<sup>204</sup> and Berlin became the place to be for the **Comicinvasion Festival**<sup>205</sup> (April 16 to 17). The satellite program of the Comicinvasion kicked off more than two weeks prior to the festival, with lots of exhibitions and some highly interesting lectures and talks on comics in various venues across the city. If Berlin was too far north from wherever you are residing, there was the option to head for Switzerland instead: the **25th Fumetto Festival**<sup>206</sup> in Luzern was celebrated for a whole 10 days (April 10 to 20), featuring not only a range of renowned artists and exhibitions as well (one right in the streets of Luzern), but also a program that seemed targeted at scholars as much as at connoisseurs: a lecture series on comics by some true masters of the art (such as Ben Katchor, Joost Swarte or Matt Madden, to name just a few). In addition, there was an international symposium titled "**Drawing as Language and how Comic Artists Teach it**".<sup>207</sup> The symposium asked some of the most renowned artists how they share

203 <https://www.nextcomic.org/> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

204 <https://www.comicconvention-hamburg.de/>.

205 <https://comicinvasion.de/> (link updated on June 7, 2024).

206 <https://www.fumetto.ch/> (link corrected on June 7, 2024).

207 <https://drawingaslanguage.illustration-fiction.ch/> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

their experiences in teaching, in encounters with students, children and even refugees.

Similarly of interest to scholars and fans alike is certainly the **Stuttgart International Festival of Animated Films**<sup>208</sup> to be held on April 27, which is also the host of an academic symposium on "**Narrative Structures and Visual Storytelling**"<sup>209</sup> (organized in collaboration with the Society of Animation Studies, the School of Art, Design and Media at Nanyang Technological University Singapore, the Institute of Media Studies at Eberhard Karls University Tübingen, the AG Animation and the Literaturhaus Stuttgart). Before this cues the topic of scholarly conferences without any "carrier festivals", let me quickly mention the upcoming **DoKomi**<sup>210</sup> event from April 30 to May 1st: Düsseldorf's hugely popular Manga and Anime Convention set a new visitor's record of about 19.000 people last year, so the organizers reacted by expanding the venue by 20.000qm. The biggest event in Germany will, of course, certainly be the upcoming **Comic-Salon Erlangen**,<sup>211</sup> from May 26 to 29. As usual, ComFor is also going to host a lecture series there, this year on the Comic Salon's topic "Comics from other Cultures": "Gezeichnete Grenzgänge. Comic-Kultur(en) international" ("Drawn Borderline Walks. Comic Culture(s) Internationally"). Expect a detailed announcement on the specific presentations any day now on our ComFor homepage. The webcomic initiative **Comic Solidarity**<sup>212</sup> is also renewing its "Webcomic in Focus"-supporting program (again with many talks, discussions and workshops on digital comics) and, of course, the main program of the Salon should certainly be a highlight of the year 2016 by itself. For the increasingly unmanageable number of exhibitions all over Germany in the past and in the future, I'd like to refer you again to Christian Maiwald's indispensable calendar at **dreimalalles.info**.<sup>213</sup>

This year's range of academic conferences kicked off from February 23 to 26, with Jan-Noël Thon inviting to participate in Tübingen University's Winter School on "**Transmedial Narratology**:"

208 <https://www.itfs.de/>.

209 <https://www.literaturhaus-stuttgart.de/event/3370.html>.

210 <https://www.dokomi.de/en/>.

211 <https://www.comic-salon.de/de>.

212 <http://www.comicsolidarity.de/>.

213 <https://dreimalalles.info/kalender>.



**Theories and Methods**.<sup>214</sup> The conference was concerned with how narratives across media can be analyzed in the context of a “media-conscious” narratology. It thus featured not only, amongst others, internationally renowned keynote speakers such as Werner Wolf (Graz), Marie-Laure Ryan (independent scholar), Irina O. Rajewsky (Berlin) or Jan Alber (Aarhus) but set also an extensive focus on comic book narration: Karin Kukkonen (Oslo) opened up with her keynote presentation “Transmedial Narratology and Comics Storytelling”, contrasting Wittgenstein’s discussion of the “Duck-Rabbit-Picture” against various forms of ambiguity on different levels within comics. Anne Rüggeheimer (Heidelberg) followed up with a presentation titled “‘I pose for all the characters in my book’: The Multimodal Processes of Production in Alison Bechdel’s *Are you my mother?*” in which she proposed an extensive analysis of self-referentiality and media-reflexivity within Bechdel’s work. Finally, Franziska Gößling added a presentation on “Mediality and Narrative Perspective of the Graphic Novel: Nicki Greenberg’s *The Great Gatsby – A Graphic Adaptation*”, in which she presented a detailed model of narratorial and authorial levels, contrasted not only against Greenberg’s original novel but also against its film adaptations.

The Folkwang University of the Arts in the city of Essen organized “a kind of conference” (“Eine Art Tagung”) from April 12 to 13 on the topic “**Spricht Form? Fragen zu Verhältnissen von Form und Erzählen in der visuellen Narration**”<sup>215</sup> (“Does Form Talk? Questions on Relationships between Form and Storytelling in Visual Narration”), hosted by Martin tom Dieck. ComFor member Ole Frahm was one of many scholars invited. Frahm’s presentation “Signaturen. Was erzählt im Comic?” (“Signatures. What is Narrating in Comics?”) discussed apparent differences between narratological and semiotic approaches to comics, questioning especially the narrative function of the drawn line. From May 27 to 30, the University of Leipzig is going to host the conference “**Geschichte und Mythos in Comics und Graphic Novels**”<sup>216</sup> (“History and Myth in Comics and Graphic Novels”), organized by art

historians Tanja Zimmermann und Kerstin Borchardt. Among the many presenters to reflect about the relation between historical and mythical forms of narration, between the factual, the fictional and various hybrid forms in between, are ComFor members Felix Giesa (Köln), Bernd Dolle-Weinkauff (Frankfurt a.M.), Nina Heindl (Bochum) and Véronique Sina (Köln). Finally, I myself am very much looking forward to a presentation together with artist and webcomics expert Björn Hammel on June 13. The cultural studies institute Essen (Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut Essen) is inviting us to talk, both from a theoretical and a practical point of view, about “**Comics, Webcomics and Humor on the Internet**”.<sup>217</sup> Finally, it is certainly worth mentioning that the **Comic Colloquium Berlin**<sup>218</sup> is once again inviting to participate in an exciting summer program of eight presentations by well-known German scholars.

I’d also like to draw your attention towards some future conferences, which might still be looking for participants at the time of this text’s publication: a certainly sensational announcement came from the highly acclaimed academic comics journal *Closure*:<sup>219</sup> the editors are going to host a conference of their own from September 9 to 11 in Kiel. “**Opening Sequence, Origin Story und Reboot**”<sup>220</sup> will be reflecting about all kind of “starts” and “openings” within comics, ranging from historical to theoretical conceptualizations. Participants are invited to submit proposals for presentations in English, which are destined to be published in the upcoming issue #4 of *Closure*. The call for paper is open until April 30. There is some more time left for another deadline which inspires a lot of enthusiasm: next spring, from February 7 to 9, Bremen University is planning to host an international conference on “**The Empirical Studies of Comics**”.<sup>221</sup> Organized by Janina Wildfeuer (Bremen) and the Early Career

214 [https://uni-tuebingen.de/securedl/sdl-eyJeVTransmedial\\_Narratology\\_Theories\\_and\\_Methods\\_Poster.pdf](https://uni-tuebingen.de/securedl/sdl-eyJeVTransmedial_Narratology_Theories_and_Methods_Poster.pdf) (link updated on June 7, 2024).

215 <https://visuellenarration.folkwang-uni.de/>.

216 <https://www.hsozkult.de/event/id/event-80452>.

217 <https://www.wissenschaftsstadt-essen.de/events/vortrag-comics-webcomics-humor-im-netz/> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

218 <http://www.comic-kolloquium.de/ss-2016/>.

219 <http://www.closure.uni-kiel.de/>.

220 [http://www.closure.uni-kiel.de/data/pdf/closure\\_conference2016\\_cfp.pdf](http://www.closure.uni-kiel.de/data/pdf/closure_conference2016_cfp.pdf).

221 <https://blogs.uni-paderborn.de/graphic-literature/2016/03/04/call-for-papers-the-empirical-study-of-comics/> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).



Research Group, “Hybrid Narrativity: Digital and Cognitive Approaches to Graphic Literature” aims to advance empirical research on comics, bringing together internationally renowned keynote speakers such as Bart Beaty (Calgary), Neil Cohn (Tilburg), John Walsh (Indiana) and John Bateman (Bremen) amongst others. If you want to participate with a presentation of about 20-minutes, abstract submissions are open until May 31. Finally, we’d like to remind you about ComFor’s own annual conference, coming up on November 16 to 19. Organized by Markus Engels at Duisburg-Essen, it will explore the didactic potentials of the medium. Expect an update on the full lineup of presentations soon on the ComFor website or in the next column here at Comicsforum.org.

As a closing remark, the **Christian A. Bachmann publishing house**<sup>222</sup> has been very busy these last few months. A variety of studies vital to comic scholarship was released. Lino Wirag, author of *Comiczeichnen. Figurationen einer ästhetischen Praxis*<sup>223</sup> (*Drawing Comics. Figurations of an Aesthetical Practice*), investigates something easily overlooked: the actual processes, practices and techniques of the artist(s), but still from cultural, philosophical and phenomenological perspectives—how can we start to conceptualize these processes in the first place? Regina Rosenfeld takes a look back and engages with the historical research of *Comic-Pioniere. Die deutschen Comic-Künstler der 1950er Jahre*<sup>224</sup> (*Comic-Pioneers. The German Comic-Artists of the 1950s*). The postwar years (and the artists from that era) are still mainly unknown to the public and many scholars alike and Rosenfeld sheds some light on visionaries such as Klaus Dill, Johannes Eduard Hegenbarth (Hannes Hegen), Wilhelm Hermann ‘Bob’ Heinz, Walter Kellermann, Willi Kohlhoff, Roland Kohl-saat, Helmut Nickel, Manfred Schmidt and Hansrudi Wäscher. Christian Bachmann himself published his long-awaited PhD thesis titled *Metamedialität und Materialität im Comic: Zeitungscomic – Comicheft – Comicbuch*<sup>225</sup> (*Metamediality and Materiality of Comics. Newspaper Strip – Comic Magazine – Comic Book*). His monograph focuses on the many material aspects of

comics’ publications in various forms, reflecting especially on self-referential strategies in the works of artists such as Mort Walkers and John Byrne, Scott McCloud and Brian Fies, Art Spiegelman and Chris Ware. Soon, the Bachmann house will also be releasing a collection titled *Comics in Poland – Poland in Comics*,<sup>226</sup> edited by Kalina Kupczynska and Renata Makarska. Finally, I’d like to draw your attention to Achim Heschler’s monograph *Reading Graphic Novels. Genre and Narration*,<sup>227</sup> published in English by DeGruyter. Drawing on the narratological vocabulary of François Jost and others, the author presents an analytical framework for the analysis of graphic novels that focuses especially on issues of narrative complexities.

222 <http://www.christian-bachmann.de/>.

223 [http://www.christian-bachmann.de/b\\_bn3.html](http://www.christian-bachmann.de/b_bn3.html).

224 [http://www.christian-bachmann.de/b\\_pioniere.html](http://www.christian-bachmann.de/b_pioniere.html).

225 [http://www.edition-bachmann.de/b\\_bn2.html](http://www.edition-bachmann.de/b_bn2.html).

226 [http://christian-bachmann.de/b\\_bn4.html](http://christian-bachmann.de/b_bn4.html).

227 <https://www.degruyter.com/database/GERMANISTIK/entry/ogerm.01783b94-6e7e-4169-8271-b48c0737d93a/html> (link updated on June 7, 2024).



Nina Heindl:

## June 2016

The first half of 2016 has passed and it is time for a new bi-monthly update on comics studies-related news from Germany. Let me start with one of the biggest and certainly one of the highlights regarding comics-related events in Germany, the 17th **Erlangen International Comic-Salon**,<sup>228</sup> which took place from May 26 to 29. A central part of the Comic-Salon is the trade fair with more than 150 exhibitors. Among the many simultaneous exhibitions was one dedicated to manga artist Jiro Taniguchi, one about comics and satire in Turkey, and one on Indian comics. As in past years, the ComFor contributed a lecture series to the supporting program. Organized by Clemens Heydenreich, five comics scholars gave talks on different aspects of the general topic “**Drawn Borderline Walks. Comic Culture(s) Internationally**”.<sup>229</sup> The webcomic initiative **Comic Solidarity**<sup>230</sup> also had an astonishing program, entitled “Webcomic in Focus” and directed by Lukas R.A. Wilde and organized by Eva Junker, with talks, discussions, workshops on digital comics, and book-signing sessions.

Half time for 2016 also means time for a new issue of the German online journal for comics studies “**Closure**”.<sup>231</sup> Issue no. 2.5, like all half-year issues, is dedicated to reviews of primary material and secondary literature. Moreover, the new category “ComicKontext” takes a closer look at comics and their didactic dimensions. Comics in didactics and comics in school are topics that will continue to be of concern to German comics studies this year. 2016’s annual ComFor conference will be held from November 16th to 19th at the University of Duisburg-Essen and will also focus on didactics and comics in school. Organized by Markus Engels alongside Ulrike Preußner and Clemens Kammler, there will be workshops, talks, and discussions on the topic. A detailed announcement on the specific program will soon be available on the ComFor website.

228 <https://www.comic-salon.de/de>.

229 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/04/28/die-comfor-auf-dem-17-internationalen-comic-salon-in-erlangen/>.

230 <http://www.comicsolidarity.de/>.

231 <https://www.closure.uni-kiel.de/closure2.5/start>.

But before we take a closer look into the near future, I would like to mention a comics workshop that took place recently: From May 26 to 27, the working group “*Weiter sehen. Dresdener Beiträge zur interdisziplinären Serienforschung*” and the ERC research group “*The Principle of Disruption*” hosted the workshop “**The Walking Dead und die Hölle der Serialität**”<sup>232</sup> at the TU Dresden. The workshop focused on seriality and different concepts of post-humanity, politics, and social constructs.

Besides the Erlangen Comic-Salon, many more (mostly smaller in scale but nevertheless) terrific festivals and cultural events involving comics took place over the past few months. It’s a natural course of action to mention the 5th annual **Graphic Novel Days**<sup>233</sup> in Hamburg in this context, which took place from May 9 to 12. Furthermore, the symposium “**Worlds Collide – When Comics verfilmt werden**”<sup>234</sup> (“*Worlds Collide – When Comics become Films*”) took place from June 17 to 16 as part of the 1st Mannheim design festival “*Uncover*.” In Erlangen, Barbara Yelin was awarded the Max & Moritz Prize 2016 as Best German-language Comic Artist. A few weeks earlier, Uli Oesterle received the Comicbuchpreis of the **Berthold Leibinger Stiftung**<sup>235</sup> for his comic “*Vatermilch*” (Father’s Milk).

There are also diverse exhibitions on comics and comic art in Germany beyond the aforementioned festivals. Just to pick some of a wide range, in Frankfurt just started an exhibition on pioneers of the comic strip at the **Schirn gallery**.<sup>236</sup> Together with the ongoing exhibition on Richard Mc Guire’s “**Here**”<sup>237</sup> at the Museum for Applied Arts Frankfurt currently has a lot to offer for comics fans. In Hamburg the

232 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/05/12/workshop-the-walking-dead-und-die-hoelle-der-serialitaet-in-dresden/>.

233 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/05/02/5-hamburger-graphic-novel-tage/>.

234 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/05/30/symposium-wenn-comics-verfilmt-werden-in-mannheim/>.

235 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/04/25/comicbuchpreisverleihung-der-berthold-leibinger-stiftung-an-uli-oesterle-fuer-vatermilch/>.

236 [https://www.schirn.de/en/exhibitions/2016/pioneers\\_of\\_the\\_comic\\_strip/](https://www.schirn.de/en/exhibitions/2016/pioneers_of_the_comic_strip/).

237 <https://www.museumangewandtekunst.de/de/museum/ausstellungen/zeitraum/> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).



“**Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe**”<sup>238</sup> presents its rich collection of Japanese woodcuts, contemporary manga, anime and video games. Another exhibition, that I am really excited about, is the one hosted from June 11 to July 2 at the Coelln Comic Haus about **Belgian Independent Comics**.<sup>239</sup> For an overview on comics exhibitions in Germany, I’d like to recommend Christian Maiwald’s formidable calendar at **dreimalalles.info**.<sup>240</sup>

So much from my compact ComFor Update for June 2016. For the second six months of the year, we can again expect plenty of interesting conferences, lectures, festivals and exhibitions. Besides the annual ComFor meeting in November, which I already mentioned, there will be a comic-specific panel and workshop at the annual meeting of the **German Society of Media Studies**<sup>241</sup> at the end of September, and an exciting conference entitled “**Ästhetik des Gemachten in Animation und Comic – Interdisziplinäres Symposium deutschsprachiger Animations- und Comicforschung**”<sup>242</sup> hosted by the AG Comicforschung (Comics Studies Working Group) and the AG Animation (Animation Working Group) of the German Society of Media Studies in November. Expect an update on these events on the **AG’s website**.<sup>243</sup>

238 <https://www.mkg-hamburg.de/en/exhibitions/upcoming/hokusai-x-manga.html> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

239 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/05/23/vernissage-belgische-independent-comics-zwischen-alltagskultur-und-avantgarde/>.

240 <http://dreimalalles.info/kalender>.

241 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/05/05/panel-und-workshop-der-ag-comicforschung-auf-der-gfm-2016/>.

242 <https://portal.volkswagenstiftung.de/search/projectDetails.do?ref=91497>.

243 <https://agcomic.net/> (link updated on June 7, 2024).

Laura Oehme:

## August 2016

As usual, July and August have been comparably quiet months for German comics studies, but there were some interesting developments nevertheless. We, the online editorial team of the German Society for Comics Studies (ComFor), still managed to publish two posts each week about conferences, publications, exhibitions, and other developments concerning comics studies in Germany with lots of information I don’t want to keep from you, starting off with some very sad and some very good news.

The very sad news reached us only days before the deadline of this column: Unfortunately, Christian Maiwald discontinues his German-language comics blog “**dreimalalles**”.<sup>244</sup> Maiwald’s thorough documentation of anything connected to comics enriched Germany’s comics landscape tremendously and often served as a source for our own ComFor posts. In the name of the whole ComFor editorial team, I would like to take the opportunity to thank Christian Maiwald for two years of hard work and dedication to the comics community.

On a much lighter note, “**Comics und Comicforschung**”<sup>245</sup> (“comics and comics studies”) have only recently entered the most widespread German-language classification scheme for scientific libraries, the so-called “Regensburger Verbundklassifikation” (RVK), with their own category. Following a suggestion of the ComFor, Dr. Angelika Steinmaus-Pollak (Regensburg), Matthias Harbeck (HU Berlin), and Michael Franke-Maier (FU Berlin) developed a distinct classification of comics and comics studies that spans the shelfmarks AP 88500 to AP 89999, as a subcategory of media and communication studies.

## Conferences, Workshops, Symposiums

July and August had only a few academic events up their sleeves, one of them being a one-day workshop on “**Uncertainty and Speculation in Contemporary American Comics**”<sup>246</sup> at the University of

244 <http://dreimalalles.info/>.

245 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/07/25/comics-und-comicforschung-in-der-regensburger-verbundklassifikation-ap-88500-89999/>.

246 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/06/16/blood-in-the-gutter-workshop-in-bayreuth/>.



Bayreuth that I hosted myself. Held on July 15, the English-language workshop presented the climax of an American studies research seminar by the same title in which students developed their own projects only to present them in a lively poster session at the end of the semester. The workshop was complemented by contributions from Karin Kukkonen (Oslo), Jeanne Cortiel and Christine Hanke (Bayreuth), and Johannes Fehrle (Mannheim). The end of June saw the conference “**Emoticons, Emoji and Kaomoji – The Transformation of Communication in the Digital Age**”,<sup>247</sup> which was organized by the Japanese studies department at the Free University of Berlin and featured at least one comic-related paper by our very own Lukas R.A. Wilde (Tübingen) who talked about “Japanese ‘Working Characters’ as Semiotic Hybrids of Emojis and Pictograms.”

### Publications

Over the past two months, Lukas Wilde published two of his famous “**Monitor**”<sup>248</sup> posts, which collect recent publications with relation to comics studies from (German- and English-speaking countries) all over the world, and number 24 of his publication monitors featured two new publications by German authors: First, Tim Eckhorst’s biography *Gus Dirks: Käfer, Kunst & Kummer* (*Gus Dirks: Bugs, Art and Suffering*), which was published with Christian A. Bachmann in Mai 2016 and deals with the life and works of Rudolph Dirks’ less famous younger brother. The second publication is the essay collection *Novel Perspectives on German-Language Comics Studies: History, Pedagogy, Theory*, which came out in June 2016 with Rowman & Littlefield and was edited by Lynn M. Kutch. Its international contributors represent a multitude of methods, subject matters, and approaches that are united by the common research object of German-language comics. While the last bi-monthly ComFor column, written by Nina Heindl, announced the opening of the Frankfurt exhibition “**Pioniere des Comics**”<sup>249</sup> (pioneers of the comic), Lukas’ next Monitor post will feature

247 <http://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/06/13/tagung-emoticons-emoji-and-kaomoji-an-der-fu-berlin/>.

248 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/07/04/monitor-24-neue-publikationen-2016/>.

249 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/05/26/pioniere-des-comic-ausstellung-in-frankfurt/>.

an overview **work by the same title**,<sup>250</sup> published by Hatje Cantz and edited by Alexander Braun and Max Hollein.

### Festivals

After the big Erlangen Comic-Salon in May (again, see Nina Heindl’s last column), German comic festivals took a summer break in July and August, but I would like to point you to two supplementary services from past festivals. For one, (almost) all the talks from the ComFor lecture series at the Erlangen Comic-Salon were recorded and are now **available on the “Splashcomics” YouTube channel**.<sup>251</sup> In a similar fashion, the Lucern University of Applied Sciences and Arts uploaded numerous interviews with renowned comic artists who participated in the symposium “**Drawing as a Language**”<sup>252</sup> this spring. The symposium took place during the 25th edition of the International Comix-Festival Fumetto in April this year.

### Exhibitions

While everyone else take their summer holidays, German museums do not take a break from comic exhibitions. Since the beginning of July, the Wilhelm Busch Museum in Hannover shows “**Lachen auf Französisch. Karikaturen von Jacques Callot bis Charlie Hebdo**”<sup>253</sup> (Laughing in French. Cartoons from Jacques Callot to Charlie Hebdo), which is still open to visitors until November 6, 2016. About three hundred kilometers to the south-east, the municipal museum of Gera presents a special exhibition on “**Comic in der DDR**”<sup>254</sup> (Comics in the GDR) that takes place from August 6, 2016 to February 19, 2017. Another exhibition in Hamburg

250 [https://www.hatjecantz.de/products/17853-pioniere-des-comic?variant=45526268379400&\\_pos=1&\\_psq=pioniere+des+comic&\\_ss=e&\\_v=1.0](https://www.hatjecantz.de/products/17853-pioniere-des-comic?variant=45526268379400&_pos=1&_psq=pioniere+des+comic&_ss=e&_v=1.0) (link updated on June 7, 2024).

251 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/06/23/die-comfor-beitraege-auf-dem-comic-salon-2016-als-videos/>.

252 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/07/11/interviewsammlung-drawing-as-a-language/>.

253 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/06/30/ausstellung-karikaturen-von-jacques-callot-bis-charlie-hebdo-in-hannover-2/>.

254 <http://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/07/28/comic-in-der-ddr-ausstellung-in-gera/>.



is slowly coming to a close on September 11, but not before a last guided tour through the exhibition “**Raymond Pettibon. Homo Americanus**”<sup>255</sup> with an expert on the US-American artist. A lot more exhibitions, which were already announced in the last columns, are still under way, so that every comics enthusiast will find something to do during the summer break.

## Outlook

The rest of the year promises to be much more eventful with regard to comics events and comics studies. Among others, we are looking forward to the sixth **Graphic Novel Day**<sup>256</sup> at the International Literature Festival Berlin on September 11, as well as **a conference on superheroes and their religious implications**<sup>257</sup> at the end of September, also in Berlin. Most importantly, however, the next annual ComFor conference is coming up in November and, as Nina Heindl already announced in the last ComFor update, it will focus on comics and/in school. We will soon provide more information about the program on the ComFor website. Although the conference will not take place until after the next ComFor update, I would already like to cordially invite you to our eleventh annual meeting at the University of Duisburg-Essen. Enjoy your summer vacation and the remaining four months of a great year for comics enthusiasts!

255 <http://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/08/08/raymond-pettibon-ausstellung-mit-sonderfuehrung-in-hamburg/>.

256 <http://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/08/01/programm-des-6-graphic-novel-day-auf-dem-ilb/>.

257 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/07/18/tagung-superhelden-superschurken-neue-mythen-und-ihre-religioesen-sinnangebote/>.

*Stephan Packard:*

## October 2016

It has been a comparatively quiet summer for comics studies in Germany, but that is about to change with autumn, as several conferences, exhibitions and projects get back into gear.

**The German Society for Comics Studies' (ComFor) annual conference**<sup>258</sup> will be held in Essen this year from November 16th to 19th. Dedicated to the use of comics in schools—teaching comics and teaching other subjects through comics—the conference takes up an array of topics that have attracted increasing attention for the last several years. The conference starts with the popular workshop format, in which comics scholars present ongoing and planned projects for joint discussion and feedback. For this year's topic, many of these presentations will be from young scholars studying to be teachers; they will consider possible uses of comics in school settings. During the next three days, speakers will examine several dimensions of comics' didactic uses and challenges, from issues of mediality and materiality through visual literacy and language acquisition, on to philosophical and historical treatments in comics to specific didactic programs and projects. As always, anyone interested in the topic is welcome to join in the discussion; see full program and information about registration here.

A week before we meet in Essen, a co-operation of two commissions of the German Society for Media Studies (GfM) brings to us a symposium on the aesthetics of artificiality in animation and comics, at Herrenhausen near Hannover from November 9th to 11th. **The extremely rich program**<sup>259</sup> was put together by Hans-Joachim Backe, Julia Eckel, Erwin Feyersinger, Véronique Sina and Jan-Noël Thon; and is funded by a generous grant from the Volkswagen Foundation.

The Comic-Colloquium at Berlin will resume its not-quite-weekly sessions on October 12th, starting with a visit from Simon Grennan, Roger Sabin and

258 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/09/19/programm-der-11-comfor-jahrestagung-an-der-universitaet-duisburg-essen/>.

259 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/09/15/symposium-zur-aesthetik-des-gemachten-in-animation-und-comic/>.



Julian Waite. The full program can be found **here**.<sup>260</sup>

Among the many comics exhibitions in Germany, let me mention but a few: **Entenhausen** >>>> **Oberhausen**<sup>261</sup> (September 25th to January 15th in Oberhausen) boasts pictures and paintings by Barks, Gottfredson, Taliaferro, Gulbransson, Rosa and Ulrich Schröder (after all, Entenhausen is the German name for Duckburg, where those artists' stories are set). The Wilhelm Busch Geburtshaus, the museum established in the house where Busch was born, **presents the artists who won the recent Max & Moritz Prize**<sup>262</sup> (Wiedensahl, September 4th, 2016 to May 28th, 2017): Barbara Yelin; Claire Bretécher; Birgit Weyhe; Mariko and Jilian Tamaki; Luz; and Mikiko Ponczek. Moreover, the exhibition **ComiXconnection**,<sup>263</sup> collecting comics from the transnational comics scene in South East Europe has returned from its tour there and is now showing at various stops in Germany. During its stay here in Freiburg in January, February and March 2017, I am happy to report that we will mark the occasion with a symposium bringing together artists and comics scholars under the topic of transnational comics scenes on February 20th and 21st. Watch this space for more news.

I usually try to give an overview of pertinent publications from German-speaking countries, be they in German or English. This is becoming increasingly difficult to do comprehensively, as the field continues to grow. However, here is an attempt to highlight some interesting editions and collections:

Contributions from a previous GfM-comics studies workshop on the “Mediality and Materiality of Contemporary Comics” held in Tübingen have been collected, along with other comics-related essays from the Tübingen winter schools on “Transmedial Worlds” and on “Transmedial Narratology”, in a special issue of the **Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics (7.3)**,<sup>264</sup> edited by Jan-Noël Thon and Lukas Wilde.

260 <http://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/09/29/berliner-comic-kolloquium-im-ws-201617/>.

261 <https://www.ludwiggalerie.de/de/ausstellungen/vorschau/> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

262 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/08/25/schon-wieder-comic-max-und-moritz-preistraeger-im-wilhelm-busch-geburtshaus/>.

263 <https://comixconnection.eu/>.

264 <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rcom20/7/3>.

Continuing in German, Alexander Braun, Max Hollein and David Currier have published a volume titled *Pioniere des Comics*, describing “a different avant-garde” ranging from McCay through Heriman and Sterrett to King and Feininger (**Berlin: Hatje Cantz**).<sup>265</sup> Meanwhile, German publishing house Reclam has launched a whole new series of slim volumes, 100 pages long each, on various topics related to culture and media; two of the first volumes deal with Astérix and superheroes respectively (by Jörg Fündling and Dietmar Dath).

A topic adjacent to comics is covered in the new volume on *Visuelle Satire*, edited by well-known German comics scholar Dietrich Grünewald (**Berlin: Bachmann 2016**).<sup>266</sup> It collects contributions to a symposium which was held under the same name at Stift Oberkirchen in 2015 to mark the 150th anniversary of the publication of Wilhelm Busch's Max & Moritz. An idol of visual satirists in the various phases of German history, Busch is a point of departure for the chapters in this volume that discuss the conditions, ideas and experiences of satirical artists in the past and present.

Finally, the **Bonn Online Bibliography for Comics Studies**<sup>267</sup> has passed the amazing mark of no less than ten thousand entries, each representing one scholarly book or article on comics from a vast array of different languages. A project at Bonn University headed by Joachim Trinkwitz and supported by ComFor, the bibliography has grown incredibly since its establishment in 2008 and has long become a resource for international rather than merely for German researchers interested in comics. No examination of any issue in our field can be complete without checking the database of this rich and impressive collection. May it continue to grow for a long time!

265 <https://www.hatjecantz.de/products/17853-pioniere-des-comic>.

266 [http://www.christian-bachmann.de/b\\_vissat.html](http://www.christian-bachmann.de/b_vissat.html).

267 <https://www.bobc.uni-bonn.de/> (link updated on June 7, 2024).



Laura Oehme:

## December 2016

Looking back on 2016, I have to say that it was a great year for comics studies in Germany. The past two months in particular were yet again full of academic events and publications, but also festivals and exhibitions around the comics medium. From a distinct ComFor perspective, the annual ComFor meeting in November was certainly a highlight of the year. As Stephan already mentioned in his last update, this year's ComFor conference focused on comics' didactics and brought together academia and teachers in very productive ways.

Speaking from an even more specific perspective of the ComFor online editorial team, the past two months have seen two very particular novelties. For one, we asked all ComFor members to let us know about their lectures and seminars with a comics focus in the winter semester 2016/17 and collected them in an unprecedented **overview post**<sup>268</sup> on the ComFor website. Secondly, we were lucky enough to gain two new members for our (still rather small) editorial team, but also lost one of our core editors who has been a beloved team member for many years now. Thus, to use a rough translation of a German idiom "with one sad and two cheerful eyes", we say a heartfelt "goodbye and farewell" to Nina Heindl (Art History, University of Cologne), and welcome Alexandra Hentschel (museum's director, Erika-Fuchs-Haus) as well as Julia Ingold (German literature, University of Kiel) to the team! We are very grateful for all the hard work that Nina has invested over the years and we are looking forward to the "breath of fresh air" that our newest team members will certainly bring to the ComFor website!

### Colloquiums, Lecture Series, Talks

As I already announced above, the past two months saw an abundance of academic events (and particularly talks) that dealt with the comics medium. The semester started off with a presentation on "**Patho-Graphic Embodiment: Ethics, Politics, and the Visual Representation of Disability**"<sup>269</sup> by Thom-

268 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/10/10/comic-lehrveranstaltungen-im-wintersemester-201617/>.

269 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/10/03/>

as Couser (New York) at the Free University of Berlin. The University of Kiel started a lecture series on "**Graphic Novels und Ihre Verfilmungen**"<sup>270</sup> (Graphic Novels and Their Screen Adaptations) that will continue until February 7. Apart from the Berlin Comic Colloquium (that Stephan already mentioned in his last update), the **Hamburg Comic Colloquium**<sup>271</sup> also resumed its regular program of presentations on individual projects that deal with comics. Both colloquium series will continue until February 2017.

On November 9 to 11, the symposium "**Zur Ästhetik des Gemachten in Animation und Comic**"<sup>272</sup> on the aesthetics of artificiality in animation and comics took place near Hannover. As Stephan already mentioned in his October update, the event was a co-operation of two commissions of the German Society for Media Studies (GfM), namely the AG Comicforschung and the AG Animation, and was organised by Hans-Joachim Backe, Julia Eckel, Erwin Feyersinger, Véronique Sina, and Jan-Noël Thon.

ComFor member Véronique Sina also gave a talk on "**Die Thematisierung des Holocaust in der sequenziellen Kunst**"<sup>273</sup> (The Holocaust in Sequential Art) at Cologne's Cöln Comic Haus in late November, as well as a presentation on "**Die mediale Beschaffenheit des Comics**"<sup>274</sup> (The Medium-Specific Qualities of Comics) at the University of Augsburg in early December. The former was part of the supporting program for the traveling exhibition "Holocaust im Comic" (The Holocaust in Comics), which also saw a presentation by the most recent ComFor addition Tillman Courth who talked about "Der 'Führer' in US-Comicheften der 1940er Jahre"

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vortrag-ethics-politics-and-the-visual-representation-of-disability-an-der-fu-berlin/.

270 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/10/13/kieler-vorlesungsreihe-graphic-novels-und-ihre-verfilmungen/>.

271 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/10/24/comic-kolloquium-hamburg-im-ws-201617/>.

272 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/09/15/symposium-zur-aesthetik-des-gemachten-in-animation-und-comic/>.

273 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/11/07/vortrag-die-thematisierung-des-holocaust-in-der-sequenziellen-kunst-in-koeln/>.

274 <http://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/11/17/vortrag-die-mediale-beschaffenheit-des-comics-in-augsburg/>.



(The “Führer” in U.S. Comic Books of the 1940s), and a talk on “Braune Comics?! Bildergeschichten von Rechts” (Brown Comics?! Comic Strips from the Right) by Ralf Palandt; both held in November.

The conference “**Praktiken medialer Transformationen**”<sup>275</sup> (Practices of Medial Transformations) on December 9–10 at the University of Hamburg included two papers on comic-related topics. Vanessa Ossa focused on superheroes in her talk “Metalepse und Partizipationskultur” (Metalepsis and Participatory Culture) and Lukas R. A. Wilde presented on “Digitale Comics: Zur Medialität und Ästhetik des Interfaces” (Digital Comics: The Mediality and Aesthetics of the Interface).

## Publications

When it comes to publications, the bi-annual **Roland Faelske-Preis**<sup>276</sup> is the most prestigious award for comic studies theses in Germany. On December 2, this year’s Faelske-Preis was awarded to Johannes C. P. Schmid for his master thesis *Shooting Pictures, Drawing Blood: The Photographic Image in the Graphic War Memoir* (Ch. A. Bachmann, 2016) and to Christian A. Bachmann for his dissertation *Metamedialität und Materialität im Comic. Zeitungscomic – Comichefte – Comibuch* (Meta-Mediality and Materiality in Comics; Ch. A. Bachmann, 2016). In **Monitor No. 27**,<sup>277</sup> Lukas Wilde pointed to Nina Mahrt’s monograph on *Die Darstellung realer Kriege in Comics* (The Representation of Real Wars in Comics). The beginning of December saw the publication of *Closure*,<sup>278</sup> which is already the fourth instalment of Germany’s first and only e-journal for comics studies. What is more, the traditional yearbooks *COMIC!-Jahrbuch 2017*<sup>279</sup> (ICOM, 2016) and *Deutsche Comicforschung 2017*<sup>280</sup> (Ed. Eckart Sackmann, Patrimonium, 2016)

275 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/11/28/comic-beitraege-auf-der-tagung-praktiken-medialer-transformationen/> (link corrected on June 7, 2024).

276 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/10/17/roland-faelske-preis-2016/>.

277 <http://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/11/10/monitor-27-neue-publikationen-2016/>.

278 <http://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/12/08/closure-3-erschienen/>.

279 <http://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/12/01/comic-jahrbuch-2017-erschienen/>.

280 <http://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/12/15/>

were published just in time for the new year.

## Comic Festivals

Festival season is almost over, but as usual, the German comic scene came together once more at the Frankfurt Book Fair and the accompanying “**Comic Satellit**”<sup>281</sup> in October, and again on November 5 for the **80th International Comic Fair**<sup>282</sup> in Cologne.

## Exhibitions

Among the many comics exhibitions currently underway, I would like to simply mention three exhibitions that opened in November: “**Fix und Foxi**”<sup>283</sup> (12.11.16–26.3.17, Hannover); “**Leibnix – Das Universalgenie im Mosaik**”<sup>284</sup> (13.11.16–2.4.17, Leipzig); “**dr. Zep & mr. Titeuf**”<sup>285</sup> (26.11.16–23.4.17, Basel). December then saw the opening of the exhibition “**Fakten und Fiktionen**”<sup>286</sup> (Facts and Fictions) in Minden, which features a rich supporting program on the topic “**Gewalt und Krieg im Comic**”<sup>287</sup> (Violence and War in Comics) that can be explored until March 2017. I am glad to announce that from now on Alexandra Hentschel, one of our new editorial team members, will keep us posted about all comics-themed exhibitions in German-speaking countries on the ComFor website.

## Outlook

So far, the year 2017 promises to be an equally successful year for German comics studies. While the ComFor is already looking forward to its next annual

[monitor-29-neue-publikationen-2016/](http://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/11/29/monitor-29-neue-publikationen-2016/).

281 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/10/06/comics-auf-der-frankfurter-buchmesse-2016/>.

282 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/10/31/80-internationale-comicmesse-in-koeln/>.

283 <http://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/12/05/fix-und-foxi-ausstellung-in-hannover-mit-ausstellungskatalog/>.

284 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/12/07/leibnix-das-universalgenie-im-mosaik/>.

285 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/12/07/dr-zep-mr-titeuf/>.

286 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/11/24/fakten-und-fiktionen-ausstellung-in-minden/>.

287 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/12/12/veranstaltungsreihe-minden-gewalt-und-krieg-im-comic/>.



meeting in late September at the University of Bonn, the new year will start off with an international conference on “**The Empirical Study of Comics**”<sup>288</sup> in Bremen and the third workshop of the AG Comicforschung on “**Formen der Selbstreflexivität im Medium Comic**”<sup>289</sup> (Forms of Self-Reflexivity in the Comics Medium) at the University of Cologne. Hence, we are looking forward to an exciting and diverse year for comics studies in Germany. For now, however, I wish you all a peaceful holiday season with enough spare time to enjoy the latest comic books, webcomics, and graphic novels!

Lukas R.A. Wilde:

## February 2017

The ComFor editorial team concluded the last year – which already feels like ages ago – with a more detailed **self-introduction of our new staff**<sup>290</sup> and started off again with the 2016/17 installment of comic book **reading recommendations by some of ComFor’s members**.<sup>291</sup> Shortly after, an extensive and long-awaited ComFor-publication was released by the Christian A. Bachmann publishing house: **Comics an der Grenze. Sub/Versionen von Form und Inhalt**<sup>292</sup> [*Comics Crossing Borders. Sub/versions of Form and Content*], edited by Matthias Harbeck, Marie Schröer and Linda Heyden. This collection of 25 articles (with a sensational cover illustration by Paul Paetzel) collects some of the papers presented at ComFor’s 9th annual conference held in Berlin in 2014. Scholars from various fields question, on the one hand, the many medial, cultural, national, generic and disciplinary boundaries that are crossed by comics as a form, as well as, on the other hand, the representations of threshold conditions of gender, bodies and borders within individual works. Five of the contributions are in English, including a must-read conversation with Black Kirby (an artist collective comprised of John Jennings and Stacey ‘Blackstar’ Robinson) that created a spectacular exhibition on the intersections of Black history, AfroFuturism and comic book culture.

While many major conferences are still ahead of us, January already saw a variety of smaller lectures, colloquiums and talks in many German locations. On January 21, the university of Siegen hosted an undergraduate student conference on the topic “**Made of Flesh and Blood: The Bodies of Superheroes**”.<sup>293</sup> ComFor members Daniel Stein (Siegen) and Véronique Sina (Cologne) presented keynote speeches on gender, race and sexuality in comics, while other contributors questioned the role of disability, or the function of the burka as a po-

288 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/10/27/programm-der-konferenz-the-empirical-study-of-comics-in-bremen/>.

289 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/10/20/formen-der-selbstreflexivitaet-im-medium-comic-3-workshop-der-ag-comicforschung-2/>.

290 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/12/19/die-neue-comfor-redaktion-stellt-sich-vor/>.

291 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2017/01/09/comfor-leseempfehlungen-2016/>.

292 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2017/02/06/comfor-tagungsband-erschieden-comics-an-der-grenze-2/>.

293 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/12/22/studierendenkonferenz-the-bodies-of-superheroes-in-siegen/>.



litical symbol within superhero narratives. In Tuebingen, the German-American Institute (d.a.i.) cooperated with ComFor in order to invite Alexander Klähr for a talk on a “**Newsflash on the American Comic Scene**”<sup>294</sup> on January 26, while, on that same day, Jürgen Mohn (Basel) presented a lecture about “**The Transfer of Religion within the Comics’ Medium**”<sup>295</sup> in Hamburg University’s continuous colloquium “Religions on the Move”. Three days later, on January 29, the travelling exhibition “**Holocaust in Comics**”<sup>296</sup> opened its doors in the Anne Frank educational centre in Frankfurt/M., making quite an impression with an extensive supporting programme of readings, talks and training courses for teachers. From February 7 to 9, the University of Bremen hosted the conference “**The Empirical Study of Comics**”,<sup>297</sup> bringing together international experts such as Pascal Lefèvre (Leuven), Gert Meesters (Brussels/Lille), John Bateman (Bremen), Neil Cohn (Tilburg) and Bart Beaty (Calgary), to name just a few.

As for upcoming events, we’ve already mentioned the third workshop of the AG Comicforschung (Comic Studies Board) on “**Formen der Selbstreflexivität im Medium Comic**”<sup>298</sup> [Forms of Self-Reflexivity in the Comics Medium] at the University of Cologne (March 2 to 3). The full programme has now been published (see the link above), promising most exciting approaches from a variety of perspectives.

The “**ComiXconnection**” events in Freiburg,<sup>299</sup> spanning from January 19 to March 19, live up to their name and connect our topics of conferences

294 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2017/01/19/vortrag-newsflash-aus-der-amerikanischen-comic-szene-in-tuebingen/>.

295 <http://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2017/01/23/vortrag-zum-transfer-von-religion-im-medium-comic-in-hamburg-2/>.

296 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2017/01/26/holocaust-im-comic-rahmenprogramm-zur-ausstellung-in-frankfurt/>.

297 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2016/10/27/programm-der-konferenz-the-empirical-study-of-comics-in-bremen/>.

298 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2017/01/30/workshop-programm-formen-der-selbstreflexivitaet-im-medium-comic/>.

299 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2017/01/12/comixconnection-freiburg/>.

and lectures to those of festivals and fairs: on February 21/22, the festival presents an international symposium on “Comics Connected. Transnational Comics Art and Comics Scenes”, with talks on transculturalism and related topics by many ComFor members and international guests. The surrounding ComiXconnection exhibition on independent comics from Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as from Hungary and Romania, can be found at the university library and the gallery of Kommunales Kino. Already before that, on February 10/11, the city of Cologne celebrated its second “**Comic Festival Köln**”<sup>300</sup> at the Literaturhaus [House of Literature]. Then, on February 24, Frankfurt/M. will resume its regular “**Stories+Strips**” event series<sup>301</sup> with nonfiction-cartoonist Sarah Glidden and on March 3 the city of Hamburg is going to celebrate its **Comic- und Manga-Convention**.<sup>302</sup> The upcoming events afterwards will be Austria’s **NEXTCOMIC-Festival Linz & Steyr**<sup>303</sup> (March 16 to 24), the **Buchmesse Leipzig**<sup>304</sup> with its adjoining **Manga-Comic-Con**<sup>305</sup> and the small but prestigious graphic novel festival **Millionaires Club**<sup>306</sup> (all March 23 to 26 in Leipzig), followed by the outstanding **Fumetto Festival**<sup>307</sup> in Switzerland’s Lucerne (April 1 to 9).

Finally, we would like to mention that our newest staff member, Alexandra Hentschel from the Erika Fuchs Museum, is doing an outstanding job in keeping track of comic exhibitions across Germany, Austria and Switzerland. There have been and will be, indeed, too many to be mentioned here individually, but if you visit the **Exhibition section**<sup>308</sup> of our website you can stay updated on an almost daily basis.

300 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2017/02/02/comicfestival-koeln-2/>.

301 <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100068438168954>.

302 <https://www.comiconvention-hamburg.de/>.

303 <https://www.nextcomic.org/> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

304 <https://www.leipziger-buchmesse.de/>.

305 <https://www.manga-comic-con.de/>.

306 <https://themillionairesclub.tumblr.com/>.

307 <https://www.fumetto.ch/> (link updated on June 7, 2024).

308 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/category/magazin/ausstellungen/>.



Julia Ingold:

## May 2017

Just recently, Germany's Gesellschaft für Comicforschung (Society for Comic Studies, short: ComFor) **published the date and a call for papers for its 12th annual conference.**<sup>309</sup> Scholars from home and abroad are invited to come together, present, and discuss their latest research under the topic "Comics and their Popularity" from December 1 to 3, 2017. The conference will take place at Bonn University, hosted by Joachim Trinkwitz and his team, who might be well known for their astonishing work on **the Bonner Online-Bibliographie zur Comicforschung**<sup>310</sup> (Bonn Online Bibliography for Comics Research).

From March 2 to 3, this year's second major meeting for German comic scholars took already place in Cologne, as Lukas announced in the last ComFor Update. Experienced scholars and junior researchers discussed "Forms of Self-Reflexivity in the Comics Medium" within a two-day workshop organized by Véronique Sina and Nina Heindl on behalf of the AG Comicforschung (Comic Studies Board) of the German Society of Media Studies (GfM). One international conference report by Laura Schlichting and Markus Streb was **published in English on comicsforum.org**,<sup>311</sup> while I had the pleasure to write another myself **in German for ComFor's website.**<sup>312</sup>

Nina Heindl and Véronique Sina also arranged for a lecture series at Bochum University on "**Holocaust in Kunst, Kultur und Medien**"<sup>313</sup> ('Holocaust in Art, Culture, and Media') where two presentations by Jörn Wendland and Véronique Sina will focus on specific aspects related to comics. Christian A. Bachmann will give a talk on "Jenseits der Schriftlichkeit:

309 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/en/2017/04/06/call-for-paper-zur-comfor-jahrestagung-2017-der-comic-und-das-populaere/>.

310 <https://www.bobc.uni-bonn.de/> (link updated on June 7, 2024).

311 <https://comicsforum.org/2017/04/14/workshop-report-formen-der-selbstreflexivitat-im-medium-comic/>.

312 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2017/04/03/tagungsbericht-zum-3-workshop-der-ag-comicforschung/> (link corrected on June 7, 2024).

313 <http://blue-square.rub.de/veranstaltungen/reihen/holocaust-kunst-kultur-und-medien> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

Zur Materialität von Comics" ('Beyond the Written: On the Materiality of Comics') in the Staatsbibliothek Berlin on June 13.

Furthermore, the PathoGraphics research team at the Freie Universität Berlin announced **its call for papers**<sup>314</sup> on "Stories of Illness / Disability in Literature and Comics: Intersections of the Medical, the Personal, and the Cultural" for an upcoming conference from October 27 to 28. Paper proposals can still be submitted until May 31.

As Laura had already mentioned in the Update in December 2016, a symposium on the topic "Zur Ästhetik des Gemachten in Animation und Comic" ('On the Aesthetics of the Made in Animation and Comics') took place in Hannover in November 2016. **An English conference report**<sup>315</sup> by Sebastian Bartosch was published in *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal* (12.1)<sup>316</sup> as well as a German one by Vanessa Ossa in *ZfM – Zeitschrift für Medienwissenschaft online*.<sup>317</sup> Additionally, the proceedings of the 2015 Berlin-symposium "Science Meets Comics: The Anthropocene Kitchen: Designing the Future of Food" are now **available in book form**<sup>318</sup> published by the Christian A. Bachmann publishing house, as well as in open-access-format on **zenodo.org**.<sup>319</sup> It comprises both the contributors of ComFor members, such as Stephan Packard or Jaqueline Berndt, and also international experts, such as Nick Sousanis.

As Spring is finally granting more friendly weather to Germany, this year's festival season opened with numerous smaller conventions that will gradually lead up to the Frankfurter Buchmesse (Book Fair) in October. One of the biggest intermediary events will be the biennial **Comic Festival Munich**<sup>320</sup> from May 25 to 28, accompanied by countless ex-

314 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/en/2017/03/25/cfp-stories-of-illness-disability-in-literature-and-comics/>.

315 <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1746847717696460>.

316 <https://journals.sagepub.com/home/anm>.

317 <https://zfmedienwissenschaft.de/online/zur-aesthetik-des-gemachten-animation-und-comic> (link updated on June 7, 2024).

318 [http://www.christian-bachmann.de/b\\_sciencemeets.html](http://www.christian-bachmann.de/b_sciencemeets.html).

319 <https://zenodo.org/records/556383#.WRHJXsmkIy7>.

320 <http://2017.comicfestival-muenchen.de/> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).



hibitions all over the city. Those include “Portraits of our Friends” by the Japanese artist-duo YUKI, “50 Jahre Deutsches MAD” (‘50 Years of MAD in Germany’), as well as “Der Mythos Eternauta” (‘The Myth of Eternauta’) about the Argentine comic artist Héctor Germán Oesterheld, who disappeared under the military dictatorship in 1977. Moreover, many additional comic exhibitions can be visited all over Germany at the moment. Our newest editorial staff member, Alexandra Hentschel keeps track of these: you can find a constantly updated list on **our website’s exhibition section**.<sup>321</sup> I will only mention a few in more detail:

Between May 13 and October 22, you can admire “Die Besten Deutschen Comics – Max-und-Moritz-Preis 2016” (‘The Best German Comics – the Max and Moritz Award 2016’). There, the Erika-Fuchs-Haus in Schwarzenbach an der Saale presents last year’s winners of Germany’s most renowned comic award, granted at the Biannual International Comic-Salon in Erlangen. The Bundekunsthalle in Bonn exhibits “Comics! Mangas! Graphic Novels!” from May 7 to September 10. The organizers collected over 250 exhibits from USA, Japan, and Europe which thus make up the most extensive display of comics in Germany (with a focus on the post-World War II-era in Japan and Germany). In contrast, the Staatliche Bücher- und Kupferstichsammlung Greiz presents new acquisitions of their collection SATIRICUM, dedicated to german caricature in the first half of the 20th century: “Vom Simplicissimus zum Eulenspiegel” welcomes visitors from April 1 to June 25 in Greiz. The Caricatura Museum Frankfurt continues to exhibit a wide range of graphic artworks from its own collection. It changes the items regularly and will show a new arrangement from May 18 onwards. As May the 4th has been an important date for popular culture aficionados/as around the world for a while now, German comic readers are excited about another significant event on the 13th of this month: they will get free sample copies at local comic book stores in the course of the “Gratis Comic Tag” (Free Comic Book Day).

321 <https://www.comicesellschaft.de/category/magazin/ausstellungen/>.

Lukas R.A. Wilde:

## July 2017

We are back with some more accounts of what was going on in German comic studies recently... After the following update, the ComFor editorial team will take some time off for a short holiday break. The weeks and months since Julia’s last update in May, however, have been nothing short of a rollercoaster. In some of our columns it has been challenging to not just recount the ‘German corner’ of the **News Reviews**<sup>322</sup> (Martin de la Iglesia deserves all our credit for his excellent coverage of German events); this time, on the contrary, I have to remind myself not to let this get out of hand.

### Conferences

I would like to start, then, with a short survey of all the conferences related to comic studies that took place since May. On the first weekend of the month (May 2-7), the city of Stuttgart celebrated its annual International Festival of Animated Film for the 24th time. Among the many spectacular public screenings, award ceremonies and workshops across the city, an academic symposium focusing on **Sound in Animation, Comics and Illustration**<sup>323</sup> was held. It was co-organized by the Society of Animation Studies, the School of Art, Design and Media at Nanyang Technological University Singapore, the Institute of Media Studies at Eberhard Karls University Tübingen, the Arbeitsgruppe Animation (Animation Studies Board of the German Society for Media Studies) and the Literaturhaus Stuttgart and more than half of the presentations focused mainly on comics: Uwe Zimmermann (Flensburg) talked about possibilities and challenges of comic production and reception on digital platforms (his presentation was titled “Responsive Comics”); ComFor member Thomas Raich (München) investigated sound expanding in space in his paper on sound word experiments in Frank Miller’s *The Dark Knight Returns*; and Raphael Zähringer (Tübingen) gave a presentation titled “Beyond Onomatopoeia: Sounds, Words, and Metafiction in Hunt Emerson’s *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*”. The

322 <https://comicsforum.org/2017/07/04/news-review-june-2017/>.

323 <https://www.itfs.de/en/news/sas-symposium/>.



latter work is a comic adaptation of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem also titled *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1797/1834).

Only a few weeks later (May 25-27), the University of Graz (Austria) held a specialized symposium titled "**Comic/verfilmung und Religion**"<sup>324</sup> [Comic/Screen Adaptations and Religion], organized by the international research group Film and Theology. For three days, scholars from different academic fields (including ComFor members Barbara Eder (Wien) and Martin Frenzel (Darmstadt)) reflected on the functions of mythology and spirituality in works as varied as *Persepolis*, *Preacher*, *MAUS* or *Batman vs Superman*.

Comic studies are also becoming increasingly visible through specialized panels at conferences that do not specifically focus on comics. On June 6-9, The Ruhr University of Bochum hosted the annual conference of the DGAVL (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Allgemeine und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft), the German Society for Comparative Literature. This year's topic, "**Schrift und Graphisches im Vergleich**"<sup>325</sup> [A Comparative View on the Written and the Graphic], was certainly an invitation to shed comparative views on 'graphic literature' as well. I participated in one such panel myself, with a manga-oriented presentation titled "Das Basismedium der Line: Natsume Fusanosuke's Faszinationen der Manga-Linie" [The Line as a Base-Medium: Natsume Fusanosuke's Many Fascinations with the Lines of Manga]. Maria Weilandt's (Potsdam) and Mara Stuhlfauth-Trabert's (Düsseldorf) contributions engaged in a highly interesting dialogue on Craig Thompson's *Habibi* (2011). Weilandt's presentation was titled "... filling the emptiness ... with writing: Unterschiedliche Ebenen von Schreiben und Schrift(lichkeit) in Craig Thompsons *Habibi*" [Different levels of Writing and the Written in Craig Thompson's *Habibi*] while Stuhlfauth-Trabert's paper was titled "Das Reich der Schriftlichkeit – Überlegungen zu Shaun Tans *The Arrival* und Craig Thompsons *Habibi*" [The Realm of the Written – Reflections on Shaun Tan's *The Arrival* and Craig Thompson's *Habibi*]. It should be noted that,

324 <https://comics-religion-2017.uni-graz.at/de/> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

325 <https://www.komparatistik.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/tagungen/schriftundgraphisches/schriftundgraphisches.html.de>.

at the same time in another panel, Julia Abel (Wuppertal) gave a presentation titled "Sprechblasen, Soundwords und Lettering" [Speech Bubbles, Sound Words and Lettering].

I had then the pleasure to participate in yet another comic-oriented panel smuggled into a different event: the **NECS (Network of European Cinema Studies)**<sup>326</sup> conference held at the Université Sorbonne Nouvelle in Paris (June 28-July 1). This year's overall topic was "Sensibility and the Senses: Media, Bodies, Practices". Our panel, organized on behalf of the Comic Studies Board of the German Society of Media Studies (AG Comicforschung der Gfm), combined three approaches to re-examine the idiosyncratic graphic sensuality of comics under the panel title "**Cartoon Bodies and Graphic Sensuality**".<sup>327</sup> The contributions ranged from the genre-defining art of underground comix and the political implications of their naturalization and denaturalization in mainstream comics to the yet innovative redistribution of depicted and elicited agency in digital comics. Our individual presentations were thus labelled "Interfacing (Digital) Comics: The Distribution and Negotiation of Agency and Control" (Lukas R.A. Wilde, Tübingen), "Seeing Fragmented Bodies – Towards an Inherent Political Quality of Comic Books" (Markus Engelns, Duisburg-Essen) and "If only I'd had a nose job" – Representations of the Gendered Jewish Body in the Works of Aline Kominsky Crumb" (Véronique Sina, Tübingen). Abstracts can be found on the **AG website**.<sup>328</sup>

While we are all eagerly awaiting the program lineup of **ComFor's own fall/winter-conference**<sup>329</sup> whose theme is "Comics and their Popularity" and which will be held at the University of Bonn (December 1-3), the next big event will certainly be **the annual conference of the German Society of Media Studies (GfM)**<sup>330</sup> at the University of Erlangen on October 4-7. The overall focus will be on

326 <https://necs.org/>.

327 <https://agcomic.net> (link updated on June 7, 2024).

328 <https://agcomic.net/2017/05/02/cartoon-bodies-and-graphic-sensuality-necs-2017/> (link updated on June 7, 2024).

329 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/en/2017/04/06/call-for-paper-zur-comfor-jahrestagung-2017-der-comic-und-das-populaere/>.

330 <https://www.theater-medien.phil.fau.de/forschung/veranstaltungen/gfm2017/>.



media studies approaches to the concept of ‘access’ and **the finalized program**<sup>331</sup> has just been released. The Comic Studies Board will again be very active. Véronique Sina is organizing (and chairing) a panel titled “Zu- und Übergänge des Comics” [Accesses and Thresholds of Comics], with contributions by Maxim Nopper (Freiburg) (“*Persepolis* – Eine Geschichte von Übergängen: Transversalität und Liminalität” [Persepolis – A Story of Transitions: Transversality and Liminality]), Stephan Packard (Freiburg) (“Das Panel war nicht für mich bestimmt.’ Mehrfachadressierungen im populären Comic” [That Panel was not intended for Me: Multiple Addressings in Popular Comics]), and Peter Vignold (Bochum) (“Aufbruch ins Silver Age – Das Marvel Cinematic Universe als Zugang zum Wandel in der Produktionspraxis zeitgenössischer Comicfilme” [Departure into the Silver Age: The Marvel Cinematic Universe as an Access into Changing Production Practices of Contemporary Comic Book Films]). Additionally, the Comic Studies Board will co-host a workshop together with the Animation Studies Board, addressing “Interdisziplinäre Zugänge der Animations- und Comicforschung” [Interdisciplinary Approaches/Accesses to Comics and Animation]. I’ll have the pleasure to be the chair; the contributors/speakers will be comprised of Oliver Moisich (Paderborn), Jörn Ahrens (Gießen), Véronique Sina (Tübingen), Franziska Bork Petersen (Kopenhagen), Anja Ellenberger (Hamburg) and Daniele Martella (Tübingen). In other panels, Andreas Veits (Hamburg) will present a paper titled “Zur Repräsentation von Subjektivität im Comic: Konventionen, Innovationen, Irritationen” [On the Representation of Subjectivity in Comics: Conventions, Innovations, Irritations] while Miriam Piegsa (Passau) will deliver a talk titled “Selbstbilder nach MAUS: Comics kultursemiotisch betrachtet” [Self-Perception/Self-Images after MAUS: Looking at Comics with Cultural Semiotics].

## Lectures and Speeches

Aside from these larger events in our academic calendars there were a number of smaller lectures and speeches that I can just mention in passing. But first, I would like to mention that we conducted a survey amongst ComFor’s members and friends again, in order to find out about all the **comic-related semi-**

331 <https://www.conftool.net/gfm2017/sessions.php> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

**nars and lectures that were taking place at German, Austrian and Swiss universities**<sup>332</sup> (and a bit beyond that) this spring. If we did not miss too many, there were about 12 places this semester where undergraduate students could approach comics from a variety of different academic perspectives. In terms of public lectures, ComFor’s former president, Dietrich Grünewald, gave a presentation at the Museum of Starnberg (June 29) that promised a survey on comical characters in picture stories throughout history: “**Kaleidoskopischer Seelenspiegel: Hanswurst, Kasper, Donald Duck & Co, Ein Reigen komischer Figuren**”<sup>333</sup> [Kaleidoscopic Mirrors of the Soul: A Parade of Comical Characters]. On July 10, José Alaniz (University of Washington, Seattle) gave a paper titled “Elephants and DJs: Disability in Post-Soviet Russian Comics” at the Free University of Berlin. His public lecture was organized by the PathoGraphics research group (which will also host an entire conference titled “**Stories of Illness / Disability in Literature and Comics**”<sup>334</sup> on October 27-28 in Berlin). The scholar and publisher Christian Bachmann has again been very busy as well. On June 13 he held a public lecture titled “**Jenseits der Schriftlichkeit: Zur Materialität von Comics**”<sup>335</sup> [Beyond the Written: About the Materiality of Comics] in Berlin and on July 6 he engaged in a public conversation titled “**Comics und Museum**”<sup>336</sup> [Comics and the Museum] with the ComFor editorial board member Alexandra Hentschel, who is also the director of Germany’s first comic museum in Schwarzenbach. The talk will take place within Frankfurt/M’s Museum für Angewandte Kunst as part of the supporting program to their spectacular **exhibition on Marc-Antoine Mathieu**<sup>337</sup> (togeth-

332 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2017/05/22/comic-lehrveranstaltungen-im-sommersemester-2017/> (link corrected on June 7, 2024).

333 <https://www.museum-starnberger-see.de/museum-starnberger-see/> (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

334 [https://www.geisteswissenschaften.fu-berlin.de/friedrichschlegel/assozierte\\_projekte/Pathographics/Exhibition-\\_-Conference/index.html](https://www.geisteswissenschaften.fu-berlin.de/friedrichschlegel/assozierte_projekte/Pathographics/Exhibition-_-Conference/index.html) (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

335 [https://staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/service/schulungen/wissenswerkstatt/materialitaet/#jfmulticontent\\_c100123-1](https://staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/service/schulungen/wissenswerkstatt/materialitaet/#jfmulticontent_c100123-1) (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

336 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2017/07/06/vortrag-frankfurt-m-comic-und-museum/>.

337 <https://www.museumangewandtekunst.de/de/>.



er with an additional opening lecture by Andreas Platthaus titled “Zur Bedeutung des Traums im Comic” [The Significance of Dreams in Comics] on June 22 and a presentation by Rolf Lohse on “Wirbel – Endlosschleifen – Verschiebungen” [Vortices – Loops – Shifts] on July 20).

## Publications

It has literally become impossible to keep track of all the exhibitions on comics that are taking place all over Germany – for anyone except Alexandra Hentschel, who is doing exactly that for our website’s **exhibition section**<sup>338</sup> week by week. I mentioned the Mathieu exhibition in more detail, however, not only because of its accompanying lectures, but also because its organizers released a significant publication on the artist. Edited by David Beikirch and Matthias Wagner K. and published by Christian A. Bachmann in June, *Kartografie der Träume. Die Kunst des Marc-Antoine Mathieu*<sup>339</sup> [The Cartography of Dreams. The Art of Marc-Antoine Mathieu] features 10 scholarly articles on this fascinating contemporary artist.

Some more recent publications deserve mention. You may not have heard about ICOM (Interessenverband Comic e.V.), a Stuttgart-based advocacy group for comic book interests founded in 1981. When comic studies were still in their infancy in Germany, ICOM was already building bridges between professionals, fans and teachers of the medium. Today, ICOM is still very active, publishing the annual *Comic Jahrbuch*<sup>340</sup> [Comic Yearbook] every autumn, which has proven indispensable for the German scene. This June, ICOM’s Burkhard Ihme edited a free publication titled *Manga- und Comiczeichner im Dialog*<sup>341</sup> [Manga and Comic Artists in Dialogue]. Since the ‘tensions’ between manga and other comic scenes are somewhat notorious, the more than 30 contributions included are remarkable: a mixture of

reflective writing and artistic reflections. The whole booklet can be **downloaded as a pdf for free**.<sup>342</sup> It features contributions from ComFor members (such as Ihme himself or Björn Hammel), as well as from renowned German artists (like Martina Peters or Johanna Baumann, who publishes under the penname “Schlogger”).

Some more mentions (yes, May to July 2017 were busy months around here!): Gerhard Mauch and André Märten edited (and self-published) a book titled *Krieg im Comic? Grafisches Erzählen zu Militarismus und Gewalt*<sup>343</sup> [War in Comic? Graphic Narration about Militarism and Violence] (which was highly recommended by ComFor’s former president Grünewald). Peter Vingold finished a monograph titled *Das Marvel Cinematic Universe: Anatomie einer Hyperserie*<sup>344</sup> [The Marvel Cinematic Universe: Anatomy of a Hyper-Series] that was released by the publishing house Schüren. And ComFor members Nina Heindl and Véronique Sina published an edited volume titled *Notwendige Unzulänglichkeit: Künstlerische und mediale Repräsentationen des Holocaust*<sup>345</sup> [Necessary Shortcomings: Artistic and Medial Representations of the Holocaust] which also includes a chapter on Art Spiegelman’s *MAUS* by Daniela Kaufmann.

Finally, I’d like to draw your attention to an exciting upcoming publication that relies a little bit on advance orders: *Adventures of a New Telemachus: A Picture Story from 1786*.<sup>346</sup> Friedrich Schiller, the scandalous author of *The Robbers*, actually created a hand-drawn picture-story in 1786. Initially intended as a private jest among close friends and later presumed lost, it has since been recovered and will finally be presented in print. The historical context and aesthetics of Schiller’s picture story are explained by Dietrich Grünewald in an extensive introductory essay which will be fully translated to English by Stephan Packard. The advance order price will be 15€ only until October 31 (**available at**

museum/ausstellungen/kartografie-der-traeume-die-kunst-des-marc-antoine-mathieu/ (original link, no longer valid on June 7, 2024).

338 <https://www.comicesellschaft.de/category/magazin/ausstellungen/>.

339 [http://christian-bachmann.de/b\\_beikirch.html](http://christian-bachmann.de/b_beikirch.html).

340 [http://www.comic-i.com/aaa-icom/docs/icom\\_pub-jahrbuch.html](http://www.comic-i.com/aaa-icom/docs/icom_pub-jahrbuch.html).

341 <http://www.icom-blog.de/showthread.php?229-Das-Heft-ist-fertig&s=a56ee6f4e9baaa12c1578d6af6b55b8d>.

342 [http://www.comic-i.com/Dialog/Dialog\\_Endfassung.pdf](http://www.comic-i.com/Dialog/Dialog_Endfassung.pdf).

343 <https://buch-findr.de/buecher/krieg-im-comic/>.

344 <https://www.schueren-verlag.de/programm/titel/539-das-marvel-cinematic-universe-anatomie-einer-hyperserie.html>.

345 <https://lit-verlag.de/isbn/978-3-643-13539-1/> (link updated on June 12, 2024).

346 [http://www.comicesellschaft.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/2017\\_schiller\\_en.pdf](http://www.comicesellschaft.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/2017_schiller_en.pdf).



Bachmann).<sup>347</sup>

Before we take some time off now, let me just mention that the summer will not be idle for everyone around here. In the first week of August, ComFor members Daniel Stein and Lukas Etter will be organizing a summer school at Siegen University. Titled “**Transnational Graphic Narratives**”,<sup>348</sup> the summer school is intended for doctoral and post-doctoral researchers from all over the world (July 31 to August 5). Only shortly after, from August 30 to September 8, the Summer Institute Cologne 2017 will host a specialized seminar titled “**Visual Narration: Seeing Is believing: Evidentiality in Visual Narration**”,<sup>349</sup> jointly hosted and arranged by Patrick Noonan (Northwestern University) and Stephan Packard (University of Freiburg/University of Cologne).

And with that, we will be back with our next update in October.

Laura Oehme:

## October 2017

After a short holiday break, the ComFor editorial team is back on track and it is my pleasure to fill you in on what happened since Lukas’ last update in July. Although, three months have passed, this update is rather brief as comics studies events were expectedly scarce over the summer. The new semester, however, promises to be packed with stimulating conferences, exhibitions, publications and festivals. As ComFor editorial team, we decided to kick off the season with **a post that compiles all university classes in Germany**<sup>350</sup> that relate to comics in the upcoming winter semester 2017/18.

### Conferences

During the summer, we were able to share two reports of past conferences. Among them is the conference report for **last year’s annual ComFor conference on comics in school**<sup>351</sup> (“Comics in der Schule – Schule im Comic”) in Duisburg. The extensive report was written by Jan-Niklas Meier and is available in German. The second conference report is from **the summer school “Transnational Graphic Narratives”**<sup>352</sup> that Lukas announced in his last update. It took place in Siegen from July 31 to August 5, 2017 and, in accordance with the conference language, the report is in English.

At the end of October, this fall’s comics conference season will have started off with an international conference titled “**Stories of Illness / Disability in Literature and Comics: Intersections of the Medical, the Personal, and the Cultural**”<sup>353</sup> that will take place in Hamburg from October 27 to 29. Our next update in December will then also cover this year’s annual ComFor conference, which ad-

347 [http://christian-bachmann.de/b\\_e\\_schiller.html](http://christian-bachmann.de/b_e_schiller.html).

348 <https://www.uni-siegen.de/phil/transnationalgraphicnarratives/>.

349 <https://sic.phil-fak.uni-koeln.de/index.php?id=15231> (original link, no longer valid on June 12, 2024).

350 <http://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2017/09/25/comic-lehrveranstaltungen-im-wintersemester-201718/>.

351 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2017/10/02/tagungsbericht-comfor-jahrestagung-2016-comics-in-der-schule/>.

352 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2017/09/28/tagungsbericht-summer-school-transnational-graphic-narratives/>.

353 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2017/10/09/konferenzprogramm-stories-of-illness-disability-in-literature-and-comics/>.



dresses “Comics and the Popular” (“Der Comic und das Populäre”) on December 1–3 in Bonn. As usual, we cordially invite all comics studies scholars and comic lovers, as well as those who strive to become (either) one!

### Exhibitions

While academia might have been on (somewhat of a) summer break, there are numerous exhibitions that opened their doors, are still under way, or will start soon. Let me just mention one that features talks by ComFor members: the exhibition “The Nazi Era in Comics” (“Die NS-Zeit im Comic”) opened on September 6 and still runs until December 10, 2017. After two opening talks by Ralf Palandt in September, Martin Frenzel will speak about the genre of holocaust comics in general and the multiple fictional and autobiographical holocaust memories that exist beyond Spiegelman’s classic in particular. **Frenzel’s talk “Beyond Maus?”**<sup>354</sup> (“Über *Maus* hinaus?”) takes place on October 24 at the concentration camp memorial site in Osthofen. Thanks to my colleague Alexandra Hentschel, you may always find past, current, and future comics exhibitions in Germany on the **ComFor exhibitions website**.<sup>355</sup>

### Call for Papers

Finally, I would like to draw your attention to a still ongoing **Call for Papers for the English language winter school titled “Re/Decontextualizing Characters”**<sup>356</sup> in Tübingen, which will take place in February/March 2018. The deadline for abstracts, however, is November 30 and the organizer—none other than our very own Lukas Wilde, ComFor online editor-in-chief—is welcoming international contributions. So feel free to become part of a season full of stimulating comics studies events in Germany!

354 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2017/10/05/veranstaltungsreihe-die-ns-zeit-im-comic/>.

355 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/category/magazin/ausstellungen/>.

356 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2017/10/09/cfp-winter-school-derecontextualizing-characters/>.

Stephan Packard:

## December 2017

For comics studies in the German speaking parts of the world, the last two months of this year were dominated by two major conferences.

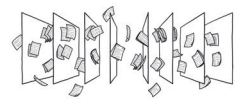
On the one hand, the annual ComFor conference took place in early December. Hosted for the first time at Bonn University, the conference focused on **Comics and their Popularity**.<sup>357</sup> With this topic, organisers Joachim Trinkwitz and Rolf Lohse brought the continuously expanding discussion in the German Society for Comics Studies back to some aspects that had almost been neglected in several years of research, as the discipline had moved towards perspectives on advanced, avant-garde and aesthetically unique comics. This year returned our attention to the art form as a decisively popular genre and thus revisited questions of seriality, popularity, ideology and culture industry. Beginning with the by now traditional open workshop for planned and ongoing research, the conference then moved on to discussing practices of identity, political and ideological aspects, discourses of cultural legitimacy, facets of authorship and finally the concept of the popular itself. In their keynote lectures, Julia Round (Bournemouth) and Martin Lund (Växjö/New York) discussed canonicity and aestheticism in Neil Gaiman’s *Sandman* and the popular propaganda of Jack T. Chick’s ‘chick tracts’ respectively.

Next year’s annual conference will see ComFor returning to Cologne for the first time since 2010, when organisers Véronique Sina, Nina Heindl and Christine Gundermann invite us to discuss *Gender, Identity, and Diversity in the In-between of Comics*. Watch this space as well as the ComFor website for the forthcoming international call for papers.

On the other hand, the research carried out over the last several years by the **PathoGraphics**<sup>358</sup> group at Berlin culminated in an international conference on *Stories of Illness / Disability in Literature and Comics*. Researchers discussed transformative relations between both art forms and medical science; the representation of inner landscapes—autobiographical and otherwise—in illness narratives; and the artistic and

357 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2017/10/26/programm-der-12-comfor-jahrestagung-in-bonn/>.

358 [https://www.geisteswissenschaften.fu-berlin.de/friedrichschlegel/assozierte\\_projekte/Pathographics](https://www.geisteswissenschaften.fu-berlin.de/friedrichschlegel/assozierte_projekte/Pathographics).



narrative treatments of various temporalities of pathology, from acute pain through chronic conditions to terminal illness. Further panels focused on more specific topics such as ‘present absences’ dealing with various parts of illness experiences, confessionals and normalizing discourses, as well as the politics of storying illnesses. The keynote from Leigh Gilmore was dedicated to the issue of the *Tainted Witness*, while a set of poster presentations expanded the field even beyond the more than 30 individual talks. The conference is connected to the exhibition **Sick!**<sup>359</sup> on *Reclaiming Illness through Comics*, which can be seen at the Berlin Charité through March 4th next year.

Aside from these two major conferences, the field has been busy with many other events as well. At Hamburg, the symposium on **Framing Comics 1900/2000**<sup>360</sup> brought together researchers in a joint effort of two currently active research groups: on media transformations; and on German and American periodicals circa 1900. With a keynote from Roger Sabin and a reading from German comics artist Simon Schwartz, the meeting took a multi-faceted approach to the concept of frames, ranging from the immediate shape on the comic page to its broader hermeneutical and sociological analogies. Meanwhile, as I am writing this on December 15th, Tuebingen has just closed a day-long symposium on **Orders and Framings of Visual Satire**,<sup>361</sup> which coincided with invited speaker and ComFor founder Dietrich Grünewald’s 70th birthday (best wishes and many happy returns!).

Still ongoing is the weekly Comic Colloquium at Berlin with a multi-faceted and international **program**<sup>362</sup> of speakers from all parts of comics research that lasts into early February next year; as well as the lecture series on **Migration and War in Graphical Narrative**<sup>363</sup> at Düsseldorf, which continues into

359 <https://www.einsteinfoundation.de/en/information/sick-kranksein-im-comic/> (original link, no longer valid on June 12, 2024).

360 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2017/10/23/workshop-programm-framing-comics-comics-rahmen-19002000/>.

361 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2017/11/20/workshop-tuebingen-ordnungen-und-rahmungen-in-visueller-satire/>.

362 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2017/10/30/berliner-comic-kolloquium-im-ws-201718/>.

363 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2017/11/02/ringvorlesung-migration-und-krieg-in-duesseldorf/>.

January.

Among innumerable noteworthy exhibitions and popular presentations of research and comics, let me just point out three: at the Concentration Camp Memorial Osthofen, a **lecture series**<sup>364</sup> discussed depictions of the national socialist regime in comics. Lorenzo Mattotti’s work is on show at an exhibition at the **Cartoon Museum at Basel**<sup>365</sup> through March next year. And the exhibition *Das Parlament* at the Deutsche Bundestag showcased 20 comic biographies of German parliamentarians by Simon Schwartz.

Recent publications include Ute Ostkamp’s monograph on biblio-therapeutic work with comics (*Bibliotherapeutische Arbeit mit Comics*, LIT Verlag); Angela Weber’s and Katharina Moritzen’s extremely rich and voluminous collection on comics as an aesthetic practice of the post-migrant society (*Tausend Bilder und eins: Comics als ästhetische Praxis in der postmigrantischen Gesellschaft*, transcript); and the new editions of the two German yearbooks on comics and comic studies, the **COMIC!-Jahrbuch**<sup>366</sup> published by ICOM, edited not least by ComFor member Burkhard Ihme; and the **Jahrbuch Deutsche Comicforschung**<sup>367</sup>, as ever edited by Eckart Sackmann. The online journal *Closure*, which is rapidly becoming the central periodical format for German comics studies, published its **fourth issue**,<sup>368</sup> focusing on the broad topic of old and new beginnings. The next call for papers just closed and promises a fifth issue devoted to forms of failure and failure narratives.

In recent comic art, the publication of Ari Folman’s and David Polonsky’s new comic book version of *The Diary of Anne Frank* attracted considerable attention. Véronique Sina and Ole Frahm drew a crowd at Frankfurt City Library for a public discussion that framed the new work in the context of the 50-odd existing adaptations and versions from all over the world. Meanwhile, Ralf König, one of the best-known German comics artists, won the

364 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2017/10/05/veranstaltungsreihe-die-ns-zeit-im-comic/>.

365 <https://cartoonmuseum.ch/ausstellungen/lorenzo-mattotti>.

366 [http://www.comic-i.com/aaa-icom/docs/ipj\\_2018/ipj\\_2018\\_01.html](http://www.comic-i.com/aaa-icom/docs/ipj_2018/ipj_2018_01.html).

367 <https://www.comicforschung.de/index.html>.

368 <https://www.closure.uni-kiel.de/closure4/start> (link updated on June 12, 2024).



Wilhelm Busch Prize for his life work, which was honoured and explored in an exhibition that is still ongoing—until April 2018—at **Wiedensahl**.<sup>369</sup>

Looking ahead, Lukas Wilde's graduate and post-graduate **Winter School**<sup>370</sup> at Tuebingen in late February 2018 will discuss the de- and re-contextualization of characters, focusing, for instance, on Western-style cartoons and Japanese-style *kyaras*. Two more events will focus on factual discourse in comics: the German Society for Media Studies' committee on comics research joins organizers Laura Schlichting and Johannes Schmid in inviting an international array of colleagues to discuss **Graphic Realities: Comics as Documentary, History, and Journalism**<sup>371</sup> at Gießen in February; and *Diegesis*, the online journal on narratology, is preparing an issue on narrating reality in comics edited by Christian Klein, Matías Martínez and Lynn L. Wolff.

Thus closes an immensely rich, exciting and sometimes exhausting year. And yet the conversation constantly may be, and needs to be, expanded further. Do consider joining us at one of the conferences or symposia in 2018—and in any case, have a great new year.

Lukas R.A. Wilde:

## February 2018

It might be a little late to open the 2018 installments of our column with a “happy new year”... but nevertheless: happy new year! As usual, ComFor's 2018 started off with our edited lists of international **comic book reading recommendations**<sup>372</sup> from some of our members. This time around, the participation was exceptionally high, with more than a dozen seasoned scholars, junior researchers and prolific journalists involved.

Since Stephan Packard mentioned Dietrich Grünewald's 70th birthday in our last post, I would first like to add a quick follow-up: the **Comicoskop-journal**<sup>373</sup> put together an impressive **online portfolio on Grünewald and his work**,<sup>374</sup> celebrating his life's achievements for the academic research of comics and pictorial narratives in Germany and abroad. Only a few weeks later, another one of ComFor's founding fathers and pioneers had reasons for a toast: at the end of the semester, Bernd Dolle-Weinkauff will be going into retirement, which many of his friends and colleagues took as an occasion for a celebratory colloquium on January 27. Dolle-Weinkauff is the author of many standard works on comics in Europe and has been the director of Frankfurt/M's Department for Children's and Young Adult Literature Research (Institut für Kinder- und Jugendbuchforschung) since 1989. His tireless commitment to broadening our knowledge about the prevalence of manga in Germany deserves a special mention. The one-day-event **“Comics. Eine Bestandsaufnahme: Archive – Sammlungen – Institutionen”**<sup>375</sup> [Comics. An Inventory: Archives – Collections – Institutions] was not just idle celebration. Renowned researchers such as Jaqueline Berndt, Daniel Stein or Felix Giesa attracted about 80 guests and visitors to discuss the state of comics scholarship in Germany and Europe.

Just one week earlier, Dolle-Weinkauff demon-

369 [https://www.wilhelm-busch-land.de/1353\\_Ralf\\_Koenig\\_-\\_Wilhelm-Busch-Preistraeger\\_2017.html](https://www.wilhelm-busch-land.de/1353_Ralf_Koenig_-_Wilhelm-Busch-Preistraeger_2017.html) (original link, no longer valid on June 12, 2024).

370 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2017/10/09/cfp-winter-school-derecontextualizing-characters/>.

371 <https://agcomic.net/2017/12/12/graphic-realities-comics-as-documentary-history-and-journalism/>.

372 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2018/01/08/comfor-leseempfehlungen-2017/>.

373 <https://www.comicoskop.com/>.

374 <https://www.comicoskop.com/comicforscher-dietrich-gr%C3%BCnewald-zum-70/>.

375 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2018/02/15/tagungsbericht-symposium-zur-verabschiedung-von-bernd-dolle-weinkauff/>.



strated the breadth of his knowledge at a public colloquium in Cologne on manga cultures in Germany. Organized by the Japan Foundation on January 19, “**Japan Pop goes global? – Japanische Populärkultur und ihre vielschichtige Rezeption in Deutschland**”<sup>376</sup> [Japanese Popular Culture and its Multi-Layered Reception in Germany] invited Dolle-Weinkauff, Jaqueline Berndt, Martin Roth, Kristin Eckstein and representatives of Animexx’ (a German volunteer association for the promotion of Japanese popular culture) to discuss the influence of manga, anime, cosplay and Japanese videogames on German contemporary culture. Then, around the time when this column is being published, I should be heading to Gießen where the **Comic Studies Board (AG Comicforschung)**<sup>377</sup> of the German Society of Media Studies (GfM) is going to host a colloquium on non-fictional and journalism comics (February 22-23). Laura Schlichting and Johannes Schmid invited many colleagues to discuss “**Graphic Realities: Comics as Documentary, History, and Journalism**”.<sup>378</sup> While I can’t speak about the event yet, given the spectacular line-up of international presenters, it looks like it is not to be missed.

Aside from all the fascinating colloquiums, the first major academic event on my mental radar – I am certainly biased – is going to be my own graduate and post-graduate Winter School from February 27 to March 2. Eleven international keynote speakers and ten junior researchers will be travelling to Tuebingen to discuss “**De/Recontextualizing Characters: Media Convergence and Pre-/Meta-Narrative Character Circulation**”.<sup>379</sup> Topics concerning comics and manga are especially prominent within the program, focusing on the recontextualization of fictional protagonists across media and participatory cultures. ComFor participants include Jaqueline Berndt (Stockholm), Christina Meyer (Os-

narbrueck), Stephan Packard (Cologne), Jan-Noël Thon (Nottingham) and Jeff Thoss (Berlin). Only a few weeks later (March 23 to 25), the Protestant Academy Baden in Karlsruhe is going to host a specialized 3-day symposium titled “**Mangas, Graphic Novels und Comics in der Gegenwartskultur**”<sup>380</sup> [Mangas, Graphic Novels and Comics in Contemporary Culture]. Once again, Dolle-Weinkauff will be honoring the event with an introductory presentation accompanied by other ComFor members such as Véronique Sina (talking about the representation of the Holocaust in sequential art) and Marie Schröer (focusing on autobiographical comics).

Otherwise, the spring season is (as usual) relatively quiet in terms of conferences and workshops but preparations for a spectacular fall started early this year. As Stephan announced last time, ComFor’s 13th **annual conference**<sup>381</sup> is going to take place in Cologne once more, from September 17 to 19. Organizers Véronique Sina, Nina Heindl and Christine Gunderman have now published an international Call for Participation on the topic of “**Spaces Between – Gender, Diversity and Identity in Comics**”.<sup>382</sup> Focusing on questions how gender, identity and diversity are represented and negotiated in sequential art, the CfP asks to uncover and analyze different kinds of ‘in-betweenness’ not only within the formal expressions of comics themselves, but also within their cultures of production and reception. Participation is open to English-language speakers and to non-members as well, so why not consider joining our discussion with a proposal until April 1st (no April fool there)...?

Another CfP deadline of potential interest for comics scholars was published during the same time: The research group Journalliteratur (journal literature, founded by the German Research Foundation) is inviting researchers to the University of Bochum – unfortunately on the very same dates as the ComFor conference (September 17 to 19). The Bochum event is titled “**Interrupted Reading – Follow-on**

376 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2018/01/15/symposium-japan-pop-goes-global-in-koeln/>.

377 <https://agcomic.net/>.

378 <https://agcomic.net/2017/12/12/graphic-realities-comics-as-documentary-history-and-journalism/>.

379 <https://uni-tuebingen.de/fakultaeten/philosophische-fakultaet/fachbereiche/philosophie-rhetorik-medien/institut-fuer-medienwissenschaft/forschung/zentrum-fuer-interdisziplinaere-medienforschung/veranstaltungen/winter-school-derecontextualizing-characters-media-convergence-and-pre-meta-narrative-character-circulation/> (link updated on June 12, 2024).

380 <http://www.ev-akademie-baden.de/html/veranst/detail.html?&m=7041&tid=183987> (original link, no longer valid on June 12, 2024).

381 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/en/category/comicgesellschaft/jahrestagungen/>.

382 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/en/2018/02/01/cfp-comfor-tagung-2018-zwischenraeume-geschlecht-diversitaet-und-identitaet-im-comic/>.



**Readings: Reading Journals**,<sup>383</sup> focusing on materially offered reading paths and directions of reading, forms of reflection on journal mediality and journal-specific logics of format and practices of reception. Presentations about (early) comic strips are especially welcome, as are contributions in English (or in French).

For the many, many exhibitions on comic art within German-speaking countries, I can again only direct your attention to our respective **homepage section**<sup>384</sup> where Alexandra Hentschel is continuously cataloguing larger and smaller events alike. In the past, our editorial board has also regularly pointed out comic festivals, fairs and conventions all over Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Since their number has been growing exponentially, this has become more and more impractical. **Comic Solidarity**,<sup>385</sup> a German webcomic and independent artist initiative, has been trying to fill that gap since 2017 (full disclosure: I am one of the coordinators). Visiting <http://www.comicsolidarity.de> and following the “Kalender” link in the upper bar, you will find a calendar tool in which (almost) all public comic and manga fairs and conventions of 2018 are listed.

We will be back with our next update in two months!

*Julia Ingold:*

**April 2018**

Finally, spring has arrived in most parts of Germany, and with it some exciting events. The summer term has just started and on our website we have again put together a list of most **classes related to comics studies**<sup>386</sup> taught at German-speaking universities in various fields like history, literature or didactics. ComFor’s President Stephan Packard and the Comic Studies Working Group’s speaker Véronique Sina, for instance, are organizing a series of lectures at Cologne University under the title “Aktuelle Perspektiven der Comicforschung” (“Recent Perspectives in Comics Studies”). They compiled a broad program to shed some more light on the ever-expanding diversity of the field as an interdisciplinary practice. The speakers are from all different realms of the humanities (and even beyond), such as semiotics, media studies, linguistics, childhood studies, digital humanities, fan studies, sociology, narratology, political science, intersectionality studies, postcolonial studies and Japanese studies. The program intends to give students insights into the flourishing domain of comics studies and to teach them about methodology in media studies in general. For more information on this promising project **visit our website**.<sup>387</sup>

Everyone in the world of German-language comics – ranging from fans and cosplayers over amateurs/amatrices, to artists and, finally, scholars – is eagerly awaiting the opening of the 18th biannual **Erlangen Comic Salon**,<sup>388</sup> certainly one of the most intriguing comics events in Germany and beyond! This time around, it is going to spread all over the picturesque city center of Erlangen from May 31st to June 3rd. There will be big public tents, filled to the brim with representatives of publishing houses showcasing new releases, and many international artists will be there for autographs and sketches. **Comic Solidarity**,<sup>389</sup> the German webcomic artist initiative my colleague Lukas told you about in his last post,

383 <https://journalliteratur.blogs.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/call-for-papers-lektuereabbruch-anschlusslektueren-interrupted-reading-follow-on-readings/>.

384 <http://www.comicgesellschaft.de/category/magazin/ausstellungen/>.

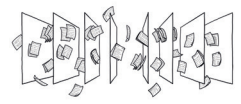
385 <http://www.comicsolidarity.de/>.

386 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2018/04/12/comic-lehrveranstaltungen-im-sommersemester-2018/> (link corrected on June 12, 2024).

387 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2018/04/02/koelner-ringvorlesung-aktuelle-perspektiven-der-comicforschung/>.

388 <https://www.comic-salon.de/en>.

389 <http://www.comicsolidarity.de/>.



is going to host a new artist-run space for comics featuring non-stop readings, discussion groups and workshops. Museums, shops, cafés, bars and newly constructed tents will host a variety of exhibitions of contemporary and classical comic art; ‘second hand comic bookshops’ will pop up all over the place; comic artists are invited for talks and interviews; universities will display and sell little DIY-publications of their fine arts students specializing in illustration or comics. This is the very vanguard where you can discover the future Max and Moritz award winners. This award is certainly the most prestigious one for German-speaking comics artists. By the way, the last winners—Barbara Yelin, Birgit Weyhe, Patrick Wirbeleit and Uwe Heidschötter, Katharina Greve, Mikiko Ponczek, Wunderfitz and Avant-Verlag—presented their original work in a traveling exhibition during the last two years. Their last host will be **the public library of Bremen until April 21.**<sup>390</sup>

Various institutions will give lectures or short presentations, their topics ranging from comics’ history to comics theory, with a special focus on this year’s main topic: “Comics Journalism”. Of course, ComFor will be represented as well—this year with an exceptionally rich program with eleven scholars. They will talk about such different subjects as “Zu den Eigenschaften des Zeichenblocks als journalistisches Mittel” (“The Sketch Book as a Journalistic Instrument”) (Augusto Paim), “*Das Komplott—Will Eisners Comic-Reportage gegen Antisemitismus*” (*The Plot – Will Eisner’s Comic Report against Anti-Semitism*) (Jennifer Willms), “Von Clark Kent / Lois Lane über Brenda Starr bis Tim und Struppi: Der Topos des Journalisten und rasenden Reporters im Comic. Ein internationaler Vergleich.” (“From Clark Kent / Lois Lane and Brenda Starr to Tintin: The Topos of the Journalist and the Roving Reporter in Comics. An International Comparison” (Martin Frenzel), to name only a few. You will find more about it online once the event draws closer.

In the meantime, there are two remarkable calls for participation for academic comic conventions in Germany at the moment. Both events will be held in English. From September 13 to 15, Free University of Berlin’s **PathoGraphics research team**<sup>391</sup> is

390 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2018/03/01/ausstellung-die-besten-deutschen-comics-2/>.

391 [https://www.geisteswissenschaften.fu-berlin.de/friedrichschlegel/assozierte\\_projekte/Pathographics/sl\\_2\\_](https://www.geisteswissenschaften.fu-berlin.de/friedrichschlegel/assozierte_projekte/Pathographics/sl_2_)

going to host a workshop about “**Dementia, Violence, and the Politics of Memory in Contemporary Literature, Film, and Comics**”.<sup>392</sup> The papers will be collected into an edited volume or a peer-reviewed special journal issue later. The deadline to submit an abstract is May 13. ComFor members Daniel Stein and Jan-Noël Thon, together with Andreas Rauscher, then invite scholars to discuss “**Comics | Games. Aesthetic, Ludic, and Narrative Strategies**”<sup>393</sup> from November 5 to 7. The latter symposium is co-organized by the **Comics Studies Working Group (AG Comicforschung)**<sup>394</sup> and the **Game Studies Working Group (AG Games)**<sup>395</sup> of the **German Society for Media Studies (GfM)**<sup>396</sup> (Gesellschaft für Medienwissenschaft). It will be held in Hanover’s Herrenhausen Palace, that became an advanced congress center after its re-opening in 2013. The location looks like you should definitely submit an abstract! (but no later than April 30)

Finally as we are already talking about the very active Comics Studies Working Group of the GfM, I want to mention this year’s European Network for Cinema and Media Studies conference—even though it will not take place in Germany but rather in the Netherlands’ beautiful capital Amsterdam. Véronique Sina will chair the session with the theme “**Addressing and Engaging Audiences through Transmedia Comics Culture**”.<sup>397</sup> Three of the four panelists are ComFor members. As you see, there is a lot going on and we would be delighted to welcome you at one or the other event!

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ABOUT/index.html.

392 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/en/2018/04/10/dementia-violence-and-the-politics-of-memory-in-contemporary-literature-film-and-comics/>.

393 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/en/2018/03/02/cfp-symposium-comics-games-aesthetic-ludic-and-narrative-strategies/>

394 <https://agcomic.net/>.

395 <http://www.ag-games.de/>.

396 <https://gfmedienwissenschaft.de/>.

397 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2018/03/22/transmedia-comics-culture-panel-der-ag-comicforschung-auf-der-necs-tagung-2018/> (link corrected on June 12, 2024).



Laura Oehme:

## June 2018

The summer term has started and the past two months since Julia's update were rich in comics-related events in academia (and beyond) all over Germany. With regard to the ComFor itself, the biggest news is the new board of the society that was elected at the end of April. As part of the ComFor's current online editorial team, I am particularly happy to see that Lukas R.A. Wilde – the longest-serving member and absolutely vital coordinator of the editorial team – has been chosen for the position of treasurer, but I am equally ecstatic about the reelection of Stephan Packard as president and the election of Véronique Sina as vice president of the society. For more information on all three board members, please see our introduction of the **“ComFor's New Managing Committee”**.<sup>398</sup>

### Comics Studies Events

The semester started off with two talks, both given by ComFor members. The first was about the construction of gender stereotypes in comics and film (**“La Femme Piège – Zur Inszenierung einer Comicheldin in Enki Bilals ‘La Triologie Nikopol’ und ‘Immortel (ad vitam)’”**)<sup>399</sup> by Véronique Sina on May 7, that was held in the context of the opening of an exhibition about hero(ine)s at the Institut Français in Mainz. About a week later, on May 15, Tilmann Courth gave a presentation on bodies in U.S. superhero comics (**“GAMMA STRAHLEN: Körper im U.S. Superhelden Comic”**)<sup>400</sup> in the Cöln Comic Haus, Cologne. Also, only recently, the latter interviewed the former about gender roles in comics narratives and comics production; the **interview**<sup>401</sup> was published in a special issue of the journal *Comixene* dedicated to the theme “Women in

398 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/en/2018/05/10/vorstellung-des-neuen-comfor-vorstands/>.

399 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2018/05/07/vortrag-zur-vernissage-der-ausstellung-heroines-heldinnen-in-mainz/>.

400 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2018/04/16/bebilderter-vortrag-szenische-lesung-koeln-koerper-im-u-s-superhelden-comic/>.

401 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2018/06/04/comixene-interview-zu-gender-im-comic/>.

Comics.”

This summer, the **Berlin Comic Colloquium**<sup>402</sup> has again put together a series of talks dealing with diverse topics within the realm of comics studies. While some of the presentations (by Jeff Thoss, Matthias Harbeck, Florian Hadler and Maria Weilandt) have already been given in April and May, Anna Beckmann's and Thomas Greven's contributions will soon conclude the colloquium, at least for the current semester.

In addition, on June 18, a **poster session titled “Comics & Disability Studies”**,<sup>403</sup> organized by Véronique Sina, presented student projects from a seminar at the University of Cologne. Also, from June 18 to 19, the research group “Hybrid Narrativity” hosted an English-language **“Workshop on Comics Annotation: Designing Common Frameworks for Empirical Research”**<sup>404</sup> with, among others, John Bateman and Neil Cohn as their guests.

### 18th Erlangen International Comic Salon

As already announced in the previous update, Erlangen hosted the International Comic Salon again, from May 31 to June 3. A **program of academic talks**<sup>405</sup> on “Comics and Journalism” was organized by ComFor's Clemens Heydenreich and some of them are now **available on YouTube**.<sup>406</sup> The rich program of the Salon also comprised two ceremonies for the **“Max und Moritz” Award and the ICOM Independent Comic Award**,<sup>407</sup> which bestowed prizes upon, for instance, Reinhard Kleist (“Max und Moritz” Award as Best German-language Comic Artist), Ulli Lust's *Wie ich versuchte, ein guter Mensch zu sein* [*How I Tried To Be A Good Person*]

402 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2018/04/23/berliner-comic-kolloquium-im-sommersemester-2018/>.

403 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2018/06/14/poster-ausstellung-comics-disability-studies-in-koeln/>.

404 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/en/2018/05/21/workshop-comics-annotation-in-potsdam/>.

405 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2018/05/03/die-comfor-auf-dem-18-internationalen-comic-salon-in-erlangen/>.

406 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2018/06/11/comfor-beiraege-auf-dem-comic-salon-2018-als-videos/>.

407 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2018/06/07/max-und-moritz-preis-und-icom-independent-comic-preis-2018-die-preistraeger/>.



(“Max und Moritz” Award as Best German-language Comic”), and volume 12 of the *Jazam!* anthology (ICOM Award as Best Independent Comic).

## Publications

This May saw the publication of a special issue of the German-language online journal *Closure* (#4.5)<sup>408</sup> about “Formen der Selbstreflexivität im Medium Comic” [“Forms of Self-reflexivity in the Comics Medium”], guest-edited by ComFor members Nina Heindl and Véronique Sina. The issue collects selected contributions to the third workshop of the AG Comicforschung [Comics Studies Working Group], which took place in March 2017. Also, an issue on “German Comics”<sup>409</sup> appeared in the German Studies journal *Colloquia Germanica*. Edited by Lynn Kutch and ComFor member Brett Sterling, the issue is based on a number of panels from the 2015 annual conference of the German Studies Association (GSA) and features articles on comics adaptations as well as the history of comics by U.S. American as well as European comics scholars.

Regarding monographs, I am particularly happy to announce that our very own chief editor, Lukas Wilde, just published his dissertation with the Herbert von Halem publishing house. Under the title “*Im Reich der Figuren: Meta-narrative Kommunikationsfiguren und die >Mangaisierung< des japanischen Alltags*”<sup>410</sup> [“Empire of Characters: Meta-narrative Communicational Characters and the ‘Mangaization’ of Everyday Japan”], Wilde investigates the functions of iconic ‘characters’ without stories (kyara) within everyday communication of contemporary Japanese society, for whose understanding comic book and manga theory plays a particularly salient role.

Finally, I would like to point out that the Roland Faelske foundation and the University of Hamburg have again tendered the biannual **Roland Faelske Award**<sup>411</sup> for outstanding bachelor or master theses and doctoral theses dealing with comics and/or an-

408 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2018/05/14/closure-4-5-erschienen/>.

409 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2018/04/26/colloquia-germanica-themenheft-german-comics/>.

410 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2018/05/17/publikationshinweis-im-reich-der-figuren/>.

411 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2018/05/28/auslobung-des-roland-faelske-preises-2018/>.

imated film. The deadline for submissions is July 1, 2018.

## Exhibitions

Since Alexandra Hentschel, museum director of the Erika-Fuchs-Haus, has joined our online editorial team to document exhibitions in Germany that are comics-related, our website provides quite a comprehensive list that I will only hint at with a few of the currently running exhibitions: “**GLÜCK AUF! Comics und Cartoons von Kumpel Anton über Jamiri bis Walter Moers**”<sup>412</sup> in Oberhausen (May 2–September 9, 2018); “**Avengers Assemble!**”<sup>413</sup> in Cologne (May 5–October 28, 2018); “**Simon Schwartz: Geschichtsbilder – Comics & Graphic Novels**”<sup>414</sup> in Erfurt (May 18–September 9, 2018); and “**FIX & FOXI – Rolf Kauka, der deutsche Walt Disney, und seine Kultfüchse**”<sup>415</sup> also in Oberhausen (June 10–September 9, 2018). As usual, the **Erlangen International Comic Salon** also featured numerous exhibitions<sup>416</sup> – some of them were only open during the Salon, but some are still running.

## Outlook

Last but not least, we are looking forward to this year’s annual ComFor conference, which will be held on September 17–19 in Cologne. Go ahead and check out the recently released **flyer**<sup>417</sup> and **conference schedule**<sup>418</sup> that revolves around the general

412 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2018/05/03/ausstellung-glueck-auf-comics-und-cartoons-von-kumpel-anton-ueber-jamiri-bis-walter-moers/>.

413 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2018/05/04/ausstellung-avengers-assemble/>.

414 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2018/05/26/ausstellung-simon-schwartz-geschichtsbilder-comics-graphic-novels/>.

415 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2018/05/27/ausstellung-fix-foxi-rolf-kauka-der-deutsche-walt-disney-und-seine-kultfuechse/>.

416 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2018/05/23/ausstellungen-zum-internationalen-comicsalon-erlangen/>.

417 [https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/comfor\\_zwischenraeume\\_programm\\_engl\\_FINAL\\_kl.pdf](https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/comfor_zwischenraeume_programm_engl_FINAL_kl.pdf).

418 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/en/2018/04/30/programm-der-comfor-jahrestagung-2018-zwischenraeume/>.



topic “Spaces Between – Gender, Diversity and Identity in Comics” and feel free to join us there in the fall!

*Stephan Packard:*

## November 2018

After the traditional summer break, the winter semester has begun at German, Swiss and Austrian universities. A few weeks in, at least 15 courses and lecture series in those regions have begun work related to comics studies: the ComFor website’s staff has edited a **useful and fascinating list**.<sup>419</sup> In addition to all of these courses, the Comic-Kolloquium in Berlin has started up again as well, boasting no less than **ten announced talks**<sup>420</sup> from guests and regulars throughout the season. Topics range from Art Spiegelman to *Preacher*, from Eastern German history to 19th century sequential art, and from literary criticism to quantitative and network analysis. Back in June, the Comic-Kolloquium had contributed a dense series of talks packed with presentations that opened up comics studies for a popular audience at the *Comic Invasion Berlin*. The Kolloquium is organized by Matthias Harbeck, Linda-Rabea Heyden and Marie Schröer.

If summer had slowed down comics studies at the universities, this was not true for the annual conference of ComFor, the German Society for Comics Studies. ***Spaces Between – Gender, Diversity and Identity in Comics***,<sup>421</sup> organized at Cologne by Véronique Sina and Nina Heindl, and conceived in conjunction with Christine Gundermann, set new standards as the first fully international conference from ComFor, by boasting by far the most extensive and varied program – and, far too late but all the more important, by being the first ComFor conference organized by a team of female colleagues, mirroring the topic’s departure in the best possible way. With an artistic lecture from Philip Crawford and keynotes from Tahneer Oksman and Caroyln Cocca (as well as a surprise visit from German TV star and comic reader Hella von Sinnen), and more than 30 speakers, the symposium discussed identity representations, production conditions and reading perspectives regarding comics as a medium with “spaces between”, which the call for papers had interpreted as leverages

419 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2018/10/01/comic-lehrveranstaltungen-im-wintersemester-2018-19/>.

420 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2018/10/22/berliner-comic-kolloquium-im-ws-2018-19/>.

421 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/en/2018/04/30/programm-der-comfor-jahrestagung-2018-zwischenraeume/>.



that “might be used or construed as a reference to a realm of the ‘unshown’, wherein notions of a final, self-contained truth are renounced and alternative worldviews that challenge the social status quo are enhanced.” The conference was accompanied by three exhibitions: a selection of Philip Crawford’s artwork under the title *My Noose Around that Pretty’s Neck*; a reshewing of the Berlin Schwulen Museum’s *SuperQueeroes – Our LGBTF\* Comic Heroes* adapted by Cologne students; and a poster exhibition from students titled *Comics & Disability Studies* and focusing on individual comic book interpretations. To precede the conference, the Cologne Comic Haus in conjunction with the self-publishing initiative *Comic Solidarity* and the Institute for Media Culture and Theatre at the University of Cologne organized a reading and discussion with comic artists Katja Klengel (*Girlsplaining*) and Lara Keilbart (*Troll Control* and *Bodies*), chaired by Marie Schröer. A full report on the conference in English **has since been published on the ComFor website.**<sup>422</sup>

The Annual Conference was also an opportunity to unveil the newly established *Martin Schüwer Publikationspreis für herausragende Comicforschung*, the Martin Schüwer Prize for Excellence in Comics Studies. A joint venture of ComFor and the Committee for Comics Studies at the German Society for Media Studies, the prize will be awarded for one essay or chapter from young scholars in the field, recognizing their contributions and hopefully advancing the establishment of the growing discipline and its standards. The prize’s namesake, Martin Schüwer, passed away at much too young an age in 2013. It is not only his highly regarded monograph on comics narratology, *Wie Comics erzählen*, but also and even more so the example that he set for interdisciplinary, sincere collaboration and public accessibility for scholarship in the humanities that the spirit of the prize sets out to emulate.

A few weeks prior, ComFor had finally been able to present its collection of essays on comics and cartoons in French satirical weekly *Charlie Hebdo*. Edited by Lukas Wilde and myself, the (much delayed) volume is intended to make a point out of not merely discussing the terrorist attacks on the magazine in January 2015 or the few cartoons that are usually discussed in its context, but to do justice to the

422 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2018/10/29/tagungsbericht-comfor-jahrestagung-2018/>.

breadth and variation of artistic formats and political topics since the magazine’s inception. The title (*Charlie Hebdo: Nicht nur am 7. Januar 2015! / Charlie Hebdo: Not only on January 7, 2015!*) summarizes this approach. The **open access publication**<sup>423</sup> with chapters by Barbara Eder, Elisabeth Klar, Marie Schröer and Catherine Michel is joined by a separate publication on *Charlie Hebdo*’s depictions of God by **Martin Wambsganß.**<sup>424</sup>

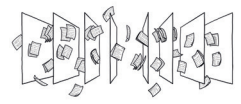
Also this summer, Thomas Nehrlich, Joanna Nowotny and Lukas Etter published their long-awaited *Reader Superhelden* at Transcript, a tour de force on super heroes that begins with readings from Homer and Apollodorus, moving through the Edda and the Nibelungenlied, and finally joining modernity with Nietzsche, to then launch into a series of analytical as well as historical accounts on old and new definitions, historiographies, mythologies, and self-reflections, as well as considerations of racial and gender stereotypes and the mediality of the genre.

While the ComFor updates for the *Comics Forum* usually focus on comics studies in German language, I do want to draw attention to three international co-operations: firstly, the hugely impressive collection of perspectives on *Empirical Comics Research* assembled by Janina Wildfeuer, Alexander Dunst, and Jochen Laubrock and **published by Routledge this summer,**<sup>425</sup> which promises to “bring together work in the field of empirical comics research. Drawing on computer and cognitive science, psychology and art history, linguistics and literary studies, each chapter presents innovative methods and establishes the practical and theoretical motivations for the quantitative study of comics, manga, and graphic novels,” as the announcement reads. Secondly, from August 9th through to August 11th, the first annual conference of the Comics Studies Society in Illinois included a ComFor panel organized by Björn Hochschild, which dealt with *Disregarded Gaps, Blanks, and*

423 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2018/07/30/comfor-publikation-charlie-hebdo-erschienen/> (link corrected on June 12, 2024).

424 [https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Martin\\_Wambsganß\\_2018\\_-\\_Gott\\_christlich\\_und\\_Charlie\\_Hebdo.pdf](https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Martin_Wambsganß_2018_-_Gott_christlich_und_Charlie_Hebdo.pdf).

425 <https://www.routledge.com/Empirical-Comics-Research-Digital-Multimodal-and-Cognitive-Methods/Dunst-Laubrock-Wildfeuer/p/book/9781138737440>.



*Discontinuities in the Comics Reading Experience* from perspectives of phenomenological comics studies, paratextual examinations of adverts and marketing surrounding comics, and blanks as materializations in comics art. And thirdly, on November 1st and 2nd, the Chicago Conference on *Comic Art and/As Remembrance in German Culture and Beyond* closed. It was organized by Susanne Rott and opened with a keynote from Wuppertal scholar and Max Kade Visiting Professor Christian Klein.

The topic of history and comics was also central to ComFor honorary member Bernd Dolle-Weinkauff's talk at Hannover on 'protest culture, politpop and satire: on comics from 1968s'; and to a workshop on the holocaust in comics organized by Jörn Wendland, Ole Frahm, and Markus Streb on October 25th in Berlin. And on July 2nd, ComFor member Ole Frahm and comics artist Sascha Hommer joined the second workshop of the project *Rerrawing Stories from the Past* at the Goethe Institute in Leipzig. As the organizers put it: "In the second part of the project, 'Escape and Migration in Europe', we wanted to explore the history of flight and migration as a consequence of National Socialism. The scope of the project, however, goes beyond the historical events of this period as participants also examine the medium- and long-term impact of escape and migration. These consequences are passed down from generation to generation and are still discernible in today's societies. This approach will allow us to draw parallels between historic and current events (e.g. refugee and migration flows to Europe) with the aim of fostering a better understanding of history among the participating artists and youth, as well as the general public."

As I am finishing this update, I am about to leave for Hannover, where the German Society for Media Studies' (GfM) Committees for Comics Studies and for Games Studies are organizing an event on *Comics/Games: Aesthetic, Ludic, and Narrative Strategies*, hosted by the VW Foundation. The three-day international **program**,<sup>426</sup> put together by Andreas Rauscher, Daniel Stein and Jan-Noël Thon, is fascinating to the point of being on the verge of pure intimidation; I am greatly looking forward to the event. It comes on the heels of the publication of the substantial volume from the previous VW symposium on comics and

426 [https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/comicgames\\_program\\_final.pdf](https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/comicgames_program_final.pdf)

animation in 2016. Within the space of 350 pages, all available in **de Gruyter's open access format**,<sup>427</sup> editors Hans-Joachim Backe, Julia Eckel, Erwin Feyersinger, Véronique Sina and Jan-Noël Thon have assembled expanded chapters developed from the talks on the artificiality of aesthetics in both art forms: *Die Ästhetik des Gemachten*. An auspicious and timely challenge to this year's symposium, no doubt. In further co-operations, the Committee for Comics Studies will join the Committee for Fan Studies for a workshop on *Comics/Fandom* at the University of Cologne on March 28th and 29th 2019; the international **Call for Papers**<sup>428</sup> is still open. The workshop will deal with a seemingly obvious intersection that somewhat surprisingly has hitherto been somewhat neglected by fan studies as well as comics, as Vanessa Ossa and Sofie Einwächter have argued before. For the workshop, they are working with Véronique Sina and Sven Stollfuß to change that. As always, do consider submitting a paper! It would be great to meet you there.

427 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2018/10/11/publikationshinweis-aesthetik-des-gemachten/>.

428 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2018/10/06/cfp-comics-fandom/>.



Julia Ingold:

## January 2019

The first month of the new year always starts smoothly with a prolonged holiday period. German universities resume their daily activities only in the second week of January and so does ComFor's editorial staff—as usual with **our established retrospect about several ComFor members' favorite comics of 2018.**<sup>429</sup> Shortly after Stephan Packard's substantial bi-monthly update two months ago, ComFor's editorial team posted a retrospect on **the panel "Comics 4.0"**<sup>430</sup> that the Committee for Comics Studies contributed to the German Society for Media Studies' (GfM) annual conference that took place in Siegen under the headline "Industry" in September 2018. ComFor Member Lukas R. A. Wilde gave a talk on "Von Remediation zum Intermedium: Formen, Formate und mediale Rahmungen digitaler Comics" (From Remediation to Indermedia: Forms, Formats and Medial Framings of Digital Comics). Tim Glaser shared his views on "Comics, Communities & Crowdfunding: Plattformen und deren Einfluss auf die Rezeption und Distribution von Webcomics" (Comics, Communities, and Crowdfunding: Platforms and their Influence on Reception and Distribution of Webcomics). Peter Vignold, for his part, presented on "From A(yn) to Z(ack): Objektivismus im zeitgenössischen Comicfilm" (From A(yn) to Z(ack): Objectivism in the Contemporary Film Adaptation of Comics). The first two presentations both took their cues from the concept of the infinite canvas that Scott McCloud introduced in his 2000 book *Reinventing Comics*. The panel expounded the question to what extent webcomics' many new possibilities might collide with the fact that they still only receive widespread attention once they are transferred into traditional print media and thus lose aspects of their inherent mediality.

How the medium of comics can generally contribute to the depiction of history was the crucial question of the workshop "Hamburgs Geschichte im Comic?" (Hamburg's History in Comic Books?) at Hamburg University in December 2018. Organiz-

429 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2019/01/07/comfor-leseempfehlungen-2018/>.

430 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2018/11/05/rueckblick-ag-comicforschung-auf-der-gfm-jahrestagung-siegen/>.

ers and ComFor members Sylvia Kesper-Biermann, Thorsten Logge and Sabine Bamberger-Stemmann brought together historians, comic scholars, comic artists, university teachers and students to explore the possibilities of rendering Hamburg's historical facts and events in comics form. They plan to continue the project with a workshop on comics and history in spring 2019.

Hamburg University was also host to another important event recently. On January 18, the bi-annual Roland Faelske-Preis was once again awarded by Hamburg University's Arbeitsstelle für Graphische Literatur (ArGL) (Research Institute for Graphic Literature) to honour outstanding bachelor or master theses and doctoral theses dealing with comics and/or animated film. Alexandra Novacov from Freiburg was given the award for her master's thesis "The Ugly in Animated Series", while ComFor member Lukas R. A. Wilde from Tübingen received the award for his doctoral thesis "Im Reich der Figuren: Meta-narrative Kommunikationsfiguren und die ‚Mangaisierung‘ des japanischen Alltags" (Empire of Characters: Meta-narrative Communicational Characters and the "Mangaization" of Everyday Japan). Markus Kuhn, professor for media studies at Kiel University, will give an accompanying guest lecture on "Ein bewegtes Leben in (un)bewegten Bildern: Werk und Alltag des Comicauteurs Harvey Pekar in der filmischen Comicaaption 'American Splendor'" (A Moved Life in (Im)Movable Pictures: Comic Author Harvey Pekar's Work and Life in the Cinematic Adaptation of the Comic 'American Splendor').

On January 24 Véronique Sina and Esra Canpalat hosted the interdisciplinary workshop "**Gendered Cultural Identities in Comics and Literature**"<sup>431</sup> at Bochum University. Béatrice Hendrich, junior professor at Cologne University's Department of Middle Eastern and South East Asian Studies and comic artist Sarah Lightman examined, as the organizers had announced, "(auto-)biographical comics and Turkish literature and culture. Bringing together the drawn line and the written word, an emphasis will be placed on the question how gendered cultural identities are being constructed, documented and negotiated within different media constellations. By

431 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2018/12/13/workshop-self-documentation-self-performance-and-self-constitution-of-gendered-cultural-identities-in-comics-and-literature/>.



doing so, the workshop will examine various conceptions of identity and their (de-)construction in comics and literary texts, paying specific attention to mechanisms of hegemonic exclusion(s) as well as manifestations of heteronormative structures and allocations in both media.”

The Berlin Comic Colloquium, organizing regular meetings to discuss comics and comics scholarship for many years at the Humboldt University, then invites scholars to a one-day symposium to discuss “Motive von Angst und Wut – Emotionen im und um den Comic” (Motives of Fear and Anger – Emotions in and Around Comics) on February 9. ComFor members Angela Guttner, Matthias Harbeck, Linda Heyden, Marie Schröer and Jeff Thoss compiled a promising program around the subject. In times of rampant hate speeches, as well as of many forms of self-centered mindfulness, it might indeed be time to explore in more detail how fear and anger are depicted and narrated in comics. ComFor member Tillmann Courth’s opening lecture carries the provocative title “Hatte Wertham recht? – Wie Comics Angst erzeugen” (Was Wertham Right? – How Comics Generate Fear). Next will be ComFor member Antje Knopf with a talk on “Anthropomorphisierungen der Angst im zeitgenössischen Comic” (Anthropomorphizations of Fear in Contemporary Comics). Subsequently, scholars from Berlin and from all over Germany will focus on specific case studies, for example on the Netflix series *Marvel’s Jessica Jones*. A group visit to Syrian comic artist Tarek Nijmeh’s exhibition “Sensing Bureaucrac(it)y – Erfahrungen von Wut und Angst in Berlin” (Sensing Bureaucrac(it)y – Experiences of Anger and Fear in Berlin) will conclude the day and the event.

The last months of 2018 brought some new important publications to the German-speaking world of comic scholarship. The 15th issue of editor Eckart Sackmann’s *Deutsche Comicforschung* (German comic research) appeared at the end of November with articles focusing exclusively on the investigation of German comic history. In this year’s issue you will find, amongst others, investigations of Wilhelm Busch’s *Max und Moritz*, Rudolph Dirk’s *Katzenjammer Kids* and comics during Germany’s Third Reich.

Around the same time, *CLOSURE – Kieler e-Journal für Comicforschung*<sup>432</sup> (*CLOSURE – The Kiel University e-Journal for Comics Studies*) published **Issue**

432 <http://www.closure.uni-kiel.de/>.

#5.<sup>433</sup> The e-journal initially started in 2014 as a project to support and encourage comics scholarship written in German. The online periodical continues to provide a unique platform for contemporary research in German but it has become increasingly open to articles written in English as well. Since issue #2, each installment of *Closure* focuses on one special topic or headline while articles on any other subject are still welcome. In Issue #5, the editorial team (amongst them many ComFor-members, as well as the writer of these very lines here) compiled many insightful investigations focused on the topic of “Failure”. **Comic artists Anne Elizabeth Moore’s and Katharina Brandl’s article “Bound to fail. Living and working conditions in the comics industry”**<sup>434</sup> has already received some notable attention on the international comic scholars scene. It also contains unpublished artworks by the authors. Aside from many additional case studies from all kinds of disciplinary backgrounds you will find journalist and translator Marc-Oliver Frisch’s fine essay “**Kapow! Boom! Comics: They’re Not Just for Kids Anymore! On the failure of comics criticism**”<sup>435</sup> provoking further discussions. The subsequent call for papers for the next issue invites articles for the special section “A.I.”, as well as (again) on any other topic in the open section. Since I cannot inspire you to hand in an abstract for an upcoming conference in Germany this time around to close off this bi-monthly update, I can at least invite you to consider submitting an abstract for *CLOSURE* #6. We would be happy to read your thoughts there and present them to a German audience!

Last but not least, I am honoured to announce that ComFor’s editorial staff has gained new members whom we cordially welcome to our team. Düsseldorf University’s Robin M. Aust, Dresden Academy of Fine Arts’ Katharina Serles and Frankfurt University’s Nathalie Veith have, in fact, already joined the team since October last year. They have been constantly working on our weekly posts on ComFor’s website ever since to inform interested readers about relevant events and publications in comics scholarship. At the same time, I am sad to say goodbye to Lukas R. A. Wilde and Laura Oehme whom

433 <https://www.closure.uni-kiel.de/closure5/start>.

434 [https://www.closure.uni-kiel.de/closure5/brandl\\_moore](https://www.closure.uni-kiel.de/closure5/brandl_moore).

435 <http://www.closure.uni-kiel.de/closure5/frisch>.



you know well as regular authors of “The Bi-Monthly ComFor Update” on the Comics Forum. They will thus conclude their regular work within ComFor website’s editorial team to move on to new ‘missions’ for ComFor and comics studies. I cannot thank both of them enough for their great and inspiring commitment to ComFor and their ‘contagious’ passion for comics (studies).

*Natalie Veith:*

## March 2019

In March, German universities are on term break, but it is rapidly coming to a close, so we are all busy getting ready for the summer semester that starts in April, preparing for our research and teaching duties, compiling reading lists and shuffling around seminar schedules. But that is not the only thing keeping us busy these days. In the field of comics studies as well as in the general German-language comics scene, this month in particular has been eventful.

First, from 11 to 14 March, the **8th Hamburg Graphic Novel Days**<sup>436</sup> were held at the Literaturhaus Hamburg. Hosted by journalist and comic expert Andreas Platthaus, the Graphic Novel Days consisted of a series of dialogues between German and foreign comics creators on new impulses and developments, this year with Jochen Gerner, Henning Wagenbreth, Nora Krug, Hamed Eshrat, Catherine Meurisse, Mikael Ross, Jason Lutes, Arne Jysch and Volker Kutscher.

The Austrian **Next Comic Festival**<sup>437</sup> took place from 14 to 23 March, mostly in Linz, but with further associated events in other locations across Upper Austria (Traun, Steyr and Steyermühl). The Next Comic Festival is the only one of its kind in Austria. The programme included a wide range of book signings and workshops, exhibitions and presentations by more than forty comic artists, creative groups and artist collectives as well as a panel with academic presentations, such as one by ComFor member Bettina Egger on travel narratives in francophone comics.

21 to 24 March were the dates of the **Leipzig Book Fair**,<sup>438</sup> which is one of the largest German book fairs (second only to the Frankfurt Book Fair, which takes place in October) and hence a crucial event for the publishing industry. Comics play an increasing role there and, since 2014, the Leipzig Book Fair also includes the Manga-Comic-Con, which has become a central event in the manga fan community. Many of the fair’s visitors with an interest in

436 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2019/02/25/sprechende-bilder-8-hamburger-graphic-novel-tage/>.

437 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2019/02/28/nextcomic-festival-2019-in-oesterreich/>.

438 <https://www.leipziger-buchmesse.com/>.



comics have also stopped by at **The Millionaire's Club**,<sup>439</sup> Leipzig's annual Comics and Graphics Festival taking place at the same time as the book fair. This year's Millionaire's Club featured a diverse, international programme, including a talk by Georgy Elaev on Russian comics; readings by comic artists Aisha Franz, James Turek, Daria Bogdanska, War and Peas, Elisabeth Pich, Max Baitinger and Anna Haifisch; and a talk by illustrator Lisa Frühbeis on sexism in comics, followed by an open discussion with the **Feminist Comic Network**.<sup>440</sup>

Regarding this last topic, it is noticeable that sexism and other forms of discrimination and exclusion in the field of comics are still a bustling topic here. This resonates, of course, with the topic of our last annual conference, "**Spaces Between – Gender, Diversity and Identity in Comics**",<sup>441</sup> that took place at the University of Cologne last September and that you may have read about in Stephan Packard's ComFor Update for November 2018. I am happy to say that the enthusiasm for these topics has not ebbed away and we are still seeing many lively discussions on the critical engagement with hegemonic constructions relating to categories of sex, gender, ethnicity or dis-/ability: on 5 February, Prof. Elizabeth Wheeler gave a guest lecture on superheroes with disabilities at the German-American Institute Tübingen, in which she addressed the strengths and weaknesses of American culture and how those are condensed in images of superheroes with disabilities, who have become a sign of inclusion in the 21st century. Also the topic of the **Berlin Comic Colloquium**<sup>442</sup> on 9 February, "Motive von Angst und Wut – Emotionen im und um den Comic" ("Motives of Fear and Anger – Emotions In and Around Comics"), announced in Julia Ingold's previous ComFor Update, bore witness to how the field of German comics studies increasingly takes up impulses from recent socio-cultural and political debates. The mobilisation of emotions such as anger and fear as well as general insecurities and anxieties have lately become determining factors

in broader social and political developments. The aim of the colloquium, which ComFor members Tillmann Courth, Antje Knopf, Anke Marie Bock, Juliane Blank and Matthias Harbeck contributed to, was to discuss not only how these intense negative emotions are depicted in comics, but also how comics can fuel them. On 7 March, ComFor co-president Véronique Sina held a lecture on comics and intersectionality at the Free University of Berlin as part of the lecture programme of the Pathographics research project. Sina explored which possibilities and potentials could be opened up within the field of comics studies by introducing the concept of intersectionality as an analytical tool.

This also leads me to another exciting recent announcement, namely the establishing of the **GINCO award**,<sup>443</sup> the German Inclusive Comic Award of the Independent Scene, which is currently accepting submissions until 31 March. This award, that is supposed to be an addition and counterbalance to the comics awards we already have in Germany, is specifically aimed at supporting and acknowledging the contributions of artists belonging to marginalised groups who, as the organisers point out, frequently find themselves excluded from established structures and systems. The GINCO award seeks to help these artists to increase their visibility and also honour the work of small independent publishers who often provide them with a first chance to reach public recognition. The award is funded by donations and organised entirely by volunteers, among them ComFor treasurer Lukas R. A. Wilde as well as Eve Jay, a former member of the jury of the ICOM award (another German award for independent comics).

Also in the academic field, we are approaching the submission deadline of a comic-related award (also on 31 March), namely the **Martin Schüwer Publikationspreis für herausragende Comicforschung**<sup>444</sup> (the Martin Schüwer Prize for Excellence in Comics Studies), that will be awarded for the first time this year. It is named in memoriam of ComFor member Martin Schüwer, whose publication *Wie Comics erzählen* (2008) has become a basic reference work in German-language comics studies. The prize is a joint venture of the ComFor and the German Society for Media Studies and was announced at our

439 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2019/03/04/the-millionaires-club-in-leipzig-2/>.

440 <https://feministische-comics.net/>.

441 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/en/2018/04/30/programm-der-comfor-jahrestagung-2018-zwischenraeume/> (link corrected on June 12, 2024).

442 <http://www.comic-kolloquium.de/symposium-am-9-2-2019/>.

443 <https://www.ginco-award.de/en/>.

444 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/en/schuewer-preis/>.



last general meeting in September. It is specifically aimed at young comics scholars, to support those who are still at an early stage of their academic career, but who are making significant contributions to the field.

This sums up most events of February and March, with just one missing that is approaching rapidly as I write this: the **workshop “Comics/Fandom”**,<sup>445</sup> that will be held on 28 and 29 March at the University of Cologne. Among the organisers are ComFor members Vanessa Ossa and Véronique Sina. It is a collaboration of the German Society for Media Studies’ Committee for Comics Studies and the Committee for the Studies of Fandom and Participatory Culture. Since many ComFor members are also on the Committee for Comics Studies, the workshop is a good opportunity for some of us to get together once more before the lecture period starts again. The interdisciplinary workshop will address the possibilities and limitations of interferences between the fields of comics studies and fandom studies, something that has as of yet been insufficiently explored, so we are looking forward to two productive days.

Lukas R.A. Wilde:

## May 2019

It is my pleasure to fill you in on what happened since Natalie’s last update in March on comics scholarship in the German-speaking corners of the world. The summer term started around the middle of April in German universities and, as usual, ComFor’s editorial staff compiled a list of **comics related classes and lectures**<sup>446</sup> from disciplines as varied as Literature (English, German and French), Media Studies, History, Art Teaching and even Geography. Spring break or not, our motivated team (that Laura Oehme and I have had the honor to hand over some months back) has in general been very busy, as you can see from our new website section dedicated to **international comic scholarship journals**.<sup>447</sup> Take a look at their **second installment**<sup>448</sup> introducing new issues and articles of the *International Journal of Comic Art*, *Studies in Comics*, the *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*, *ImageText* and *The Comics Grid* in a clear arrangement. As usual, you can also find short introductions of new monographs and edited collections on comics within the regular **Monitor**<sup>449</sup> section. Most of these books are released by international publishing houses and in English, so send a short note to [redaktion@comicgesellschaft.de](mailto:redaktion@comicgesellschaft.de) if you know of a publication that should be included in future installments. One notable German-language publication has been released during the last months: **Überzeichnete Spektakel: Inszenierungen von Gewalt im Comic**<sup>450</sup> [*Exaggerated Spectacle: The Staging of Violence in Comics*] by ComFor member Jörn Ahrens. The author investigates the many forms, strategies and functions of ‘graphic violence’ from a formal, media-specific perspective, with case studies ranging from classics as *Sin City* or the works of Joe Sacco, to more contemporary series such as *100 Bullets* or

445 <https://agcomic.net/2019/01/14/work-schedule-comics-fandom/>.

446 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2019/04/15/comic-lehrveranstaltungen-im-sommersemester-2019/> (link corrected on June 12, 2024).

447 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2019/02/18/zeitschriftenmonitor-01-neue-ausgaben/>.

448 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2019/04/11/zeitschriftenmonitor-02-neue-ausgaben/>.

449 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/tag/monitor/>.

450 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2019/05/02/publikationshinsweis-ueberzeichnete-spektakel-round-table-comics-aesthetik-und-gewalt-in-giessen/>.



DMZ. The monograph's release was accompanied by a roundtable discussion event on May 14 at the University of Gießen (with Frank Thomas Brinkmann, Ole Frahm and Kirsten von Hagen) on the relationship between comic aesthetics and violence.

This brings us right to the topic of conferences, workshops and public lectures – and it is safe to say that the last months have been surprisingly busy for this time of the year. On April 4 the Museum of Vienna hosted the second edition of **Graphic Vienna**,<sup>451</sup> an evening during which many local artists (this time Leopold Maurer and Regina Hofer; Jasmin Rehrmbacher; and Andreas Martens) present and discuss their recent graphic novels and answer questions concerning their works. The next day, Akiiko Yamada, Melanie Unseld and Markus Oppolzer from the University of Music and Performing Arts (also based in Vienna) invited a more specialized audience of comic scholars to a one-day workshop on **“Manga, Comic und visuelle Kultur: Auto|Biographische Narrative”**<sup>452</sup> [Manga, Comic and Visual Culture: Auto|biographical Narratives]. In our previous column we already announced that the Erika-Fuchs-Haus in Schwarzenbach an der Saale, a museum dedicated to comics translations (and especially to the regionalization of Carl Barks' work in Germany) is going to host ComFor's upcoming annual conference from November 8 to 10. The museum's director Alexandra Hentschel (also part of our editorial staff) organizes many smaller events at the same venue, too. On April 9 she invited comics expert Wolfgang J. Fuchs to give a talk on **“Die drei Leben des Donald Duck”**<sup>453</sup> [The Three Lives of Donald Duck] to complement the museum's special exhibition on Disney artist Al Taliaferro. On the museum's website, you can find information about many additional events all year round. The month of April was then concluded by a two-day workshop (April 26/27) at Tuebingen University on **“Comics des Mittelalters – Mittelaltercomics”**<sup>454</sup> [Medieval Comics and Comics about Medieval Times].

I've had the honor and pleasure to present alongside ComFor's former president Dietrich Grünewald, as well as many other friends and colleagues (mainly from medieval studies). The organizers Marion Darilek (Tuebingen) and Matthias Däumer (Vienna) first asked for presentations on medieval artifacts featuring sequential images that could be read *just like* a (proto-) comic; they then contrasted these studies with discussions about the representation of those times in contemporary comic books. As a media studies scholar, I initially felt a little like an outsider, but I can honestly report that the stimulating discussions have been among my intellectual highlights of 2019 so far.

Unfortunately, I was not able to attend the **SAS (Society of Animation Studies) Symposium**<sup>455</sup> at Stuttgart's Festival of Animated Film on May 1, even though it was very close to Tuebingen University, where I am based. Most of the symposium's presentations seemed to investigate animated films, animation and animation theory itself from interdisciplinary perspectives. The next specialized event on comics (as such) took place only days later: ComFor members Véronique Sina and Kalina Kupczynska invited specialized comic scholars to the University of Cologne on May 3 for a workshop on **“The Crumbs. Obszönität und Tabubruch”**<sup>456</sup> [Obscenity and the Breach of Taboos]. The dual focus on both Aline Kominsky-Crumb and Robert Crumb within the context of underground culture inspired the participation of many ComFor members to discuss and compare the aesthetics of one of the most controversial couples in comic book history. Finally, the Center for Jewish Studies at Austria's University of Graz organized an outstanding international conference titled **“Beyond MAUS: The Legacy of Holocaust Comics”**<sup>457</sup> from May 26 to 29. Hans-Joachim Hahn and ComFor members Markus Streb and Ole Frahm managed to put together no fewer than 9 panels of 20 presentations. A freely available **PDF pro-**

451 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2019/04/01/vortrag-und-diskussion-graphic-vienna/>.

452 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2019/03/11/workshop-manga-comic-visuelle-kultur-autobiographische-narrative/>.

453 <https://www.erika-fuchs.de/veranstaltungen/> (original link, no longer valid on June 12, 2024).

454 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2019/04/18/workshop-vom-spruchband-zur-sprechblase-in-tuebingen/>.

455 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2019/04/29/sas-symposium-auf-dem-internationalen-trickfilm-festival-stuttgart/>.

456 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2019/04/08/workshop-the-crumbs-obszoenitaet-und-tabubruch/>.

457 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2019/05/20/tagung-beyond-maus-the-legacy-of-holocaust-comics-in-graz/>.



**gram book with the detailed abstracts of all the contributions**<sup>458</sup> documents the fact that the participants did, indeed, go beyond the usual suspects such as *MAUS* to examine the many contact points of the comics form with our image-based memory of the Holocaust.

While such a range of lectures, workshops and conferences – in just the two months of April/May – is bordering on intimidating for a scholar who tries to follow current discussions, there was an equally impressive number of comic festivals, fairs and events for a non-specialized audience. I can do no more than mention them briefly here: from April 6 to 14, comic book artists, journalists and fans met up at the **Fumetto Festival**<sup>459</sup> in Switzerland's Luzern; on May 5, the city of Cologne expanded its traditional 'Night of Literature' for the first time with an additional comic book event with a spectacular program ("**Für die Comics bitte ganz nach hinten durchgehen!**"<sup>460</sup> [For Comics, All the Way to the Back, Please!]); Munich's municipal library likewise created a new format called "**ComicBar**"<sup>461</sup> a few months back, in which world-renowned artist Barbara Yelin invites emerging stars to the stage. The third installment took place on May 10 with Jan Bachmann's work *Mühsam, Anarchist in Anführungsstrichen* [Mühsam, Anarchist in Single Quotation Marks] in the spotlight. Then, in the second part of May (16–26), Berlin hosted the international **Anime Festival**.<sup>462</sup> Not only did the Babylon Cinema, the organizer of the event, screen more than 30 new films and classics, but it also put together a wonderful side program with concerts, exhibitions and lectures. For the local scene, however, the highlight of these last two months has certainly been the **Comic Invasion**<sup>463</sup> festival (May 11/12) that, for the ninth time, turned

458 [https://static.uni-graz.at/fileadmin/juedischestudien/tagungsprogramme/Program\\_HOLOCAUST\\_COMIC\\_final.pdf](https://static.uni-graz.at/fileadmin/juedischestudien/tagungsprogramme/Program_HOLOCAUST_COMIC_final.pdf).

459 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2019/04/04/fumetto-comic-festival-luzern-2019/>.

460 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2019/04/25/animate-europe-preisverleihung-in-bruessel-comic-lesungen-in-koeln/>.

461 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2019/05/09/comicbar-anarchist-in-anfuehrungsstrichen-in-muenchen/>.

462 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2019/05/13/festival-anime-berlin/>.

463 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2019/05/06/festival-comic-invasion-in-berlin/>.

our capital into the center of the German language comic book world as well. The festival was of additional interest to scholars, as the side program with lectures and round tables (with the participation of many ComFor members) seems to expand every year.

Coming to a close, I'd like to draw your attention to a Call for Papers for an upcoming journal issue on "**Comics/Fandom: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Intersection of Fan Studies and Comics Studies**",<sup>464</sup> a collaboration between the German Society for Media Studies' Committee for Comics Studies and the Committee for the Studies of Fandom and Participatory Culture that emerged from the workshop "**Comics/Fandom**"<sup>465</sup> held at the University of Cologne in March. The upcoming comics-focused special issue of *Participations: Journal of Audience & Reception Studies*<sup>466</sup> will be in English and the deadline to submit contributions is October 31. With our column's focus on comics scholarship in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, I should also mention an international Call for Papers on "**German Comics and Graphic Literature**",<sup>467</sup> planned as a special issue of *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies*.<sup>468</sup> The deadline for this CFP is June 15.

464 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2019/05/05/cfp-comics-fandom-interdisciplinary-perspectives-on-the-intersection-of-fan-studies-and-comics-studies/>.

465 <https://agcomic.net/2019/01/14/work-schedule-comics-fandom/>.

466 <http://www.participations.org/>.

467 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2019/04/21/cfp-german-comics-and-graphic-literature/>.

468 <https://www.utpjournals.press/loi/seminar>.



Robin-M. Aust:

## January 2020

There is an old, often used Lovecraftian saying: “That is not dead which can eternal lie, and with strange aeons even death may die”. Well, the ComFor Update is certainly neither dead nor has the ComFor been caught up in eternal slumber. Instead, the past few months have been busy and eventful, both for the Gesellschaft für Comicforschung as well as for German comics scholarship in general: the fall semester has started at German universities and the summer break has been filled to the brim with conferences and workshops, proceedings are to be written and read, research groups have been founded, announcements are to be made. That’s why a little bit more time than usual has passed since Lukas’s last update and why we decided to switch things up a bit: instead of a bi-monthly rhythm, we will adopt a tri-monthly schedule from now on—which also gives us the opportunity to present you with an even more information-packed column.

Speaking of the beginning semester: as is tradition by now, we compiled a **list of comics-related lectures and seminars**<sup>469</sup> held at German universities on our website. As you can see, the ongoing semester once again offers a wide range of different courses dedicated to comics studies in different academic fields.

Even if they do not teach comics and their academic utilisation, it has been a busy time for ComFor’s members. We are proud to announce a new publication series initiated by two of ComFor’s chairpersons: *Comicforschung transdisziplinär*<sup>470</sup> [Transdisciplinary Comic Studies], edited by Stephan Packard and Véronique Sina and soon to be published by de Gruyter, is bound to include both German and English contributions on the study of comics as a medium, as an art form and as a cultural phenomenon. The new series is going to contain monographs as well as anthologies by both established and young scholars working in various disciplines, such as media, literature and art studies or philosophy, cultural studies and visual culture studies.

469 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2019/10/14/comic-lehrveranstaltungen-im-wintersemester-2019/>.

470 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2019/10/10/neue-publikationsreihe-comicforschung-transdisziplinaer/>.

Similar to the ever-expanding number of classes and publications on comics, the number of conferences and workshops dedicated specifically to “everything comics” keeps on growing. Thus, it is nearly impossible to give you a full rundown of all the national or international events and meetings that took place during the last few months. We’ll thus limit ourselves to events involving one of the two comic studies institutions: ComFor and the AG Comicforschung [Committee for Comics Studies] of the German society for media studies (GfM).

Not only are German comic studies very active on the local scene, but they are branching out on the international scene as well. Thus, it is of no surprise to see the names of quite a few German comic scholars on the schedules of international conferences: the Annual Conference of the **International Society for the Study of Narrative (ISSN)**<sup>471</sup> took place in Pamplona in June—and a whole 5 of its 14 panels were dedicated to comics and graphics novels, **one organized by Vanessa Ossa**,<sup>472</sup> also a ComFor member, and the Committee for Comics Studies. Noteworthy, but also surely known to the Anglophone comics research scene, was the 10th annual **International Graphic Novel and Comic Conference (IGNCC)**<sup>473</sup> that took place from 24th to 28th June in Manchester. This year’s topic, “Storyworlds and Transmedia Universes” amassed around 40 presentations, once again with contributions from ComFor members (Lukas R. A. Wilde and Vanessa Ossa). Just one short month later, but on the other side of the globe, Ryerson University in Toronto hosted the **2nd annual conference of Comics Studies Society (CSS)**.<sup>474</sup> The topic was “Comics/Politics”. Around the same time, ComFor member Jörn Ahrens of Justus-Liebig-Universität Giessen (Germany) organized a **one-day conference titled “Der Comic als Form”**<sup>475</sup> [Comics as Form]—the programmes of both conferences featured speakers from the ComFor and the AG Comicforschung, of

471 <https://www.thenarrativesociety.org/>.

472 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2019/05/27/jahrestagung-der-issn-2019-in-navarra/>.

473 <https://internationalgraphicnovelandcomicsconference.com/>.

474 <http://comicssociety.org/conference/program> (original link, no longer valid on June 12, 2024).

475 [https://www.uni-giessen.de/de/fbz/zmi/aktuelles/comic\\_als\\_form\\_programm](https://www.uni-giessen.de/de/fbz/zmi/aktuelles/comic_als_form_programm).



course.

While we are on the topic of comic research societies and their annual conferences: September brought **the conference “Medien-Materialitäten”**<sup>476</sup> [Media Materialities] of the Gesellschaft für Medienwissenschaft [GfM, German Society for Media Studies] in Cologne that also included comics in its programme (The Committee for Comics Studies organized both a panel on comics and the materialities of media borders and an artists’ round table on digital drawings). Comics were also amongst the many topics at **the conference “Die internationale und intermediale Thomas Bernhard-Rezeption”**<sup>477</sup> (The international and intermedial reception of Thomas Bernhard), organised by Florian Trabert (a fellow ComFor member) and myself. 30 Years after the death of this controversial Austrian playwright and writer, the conference aimed to give an overview of his reception not only in literature itself, but also in music and comics. These two conferences among others once again proved the integration of Comics studies in the wider German academia. In addition, while not (yet) hosting their society’s annual conference, ComFor members Marina Rauchenbacher and Katharina Serles founded the **Österreichische Gesellschaft für Comic-Forschung und -Vermittlung**<sup>478</sup> [OeGeC, Austrian Association for the Research and Promotion of Comics].

Departing from the strictly *scholarly* conferences and societies, a variety of events and fairs bringing together fans and artists took place as well: in September, there was the **Comiciade Eupen**.<sup>479</sup> The fourth edition of this “Comic family fair” brought artists and fans together for workshops, talks as well as a Cosplay contest. In June, the fourth **Comiccon Germany**<sup>480</sup> took place and with it the first award ceremony of the new GINCO award—but more on that later.

Last but not least, our very own **annual ComFor**

476 <https://gfm2019.de/> (original link, no longer valid on June 12, 2024).

477 <https://www.bernhard-rezeption.de> (original link, no longer valid on June 12, 2024).

478 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2019/10/03/gruendung-der-oesterreichischen-gesellschaft-fuer-comic-forschung-und-vermittlung/>.

479 <https://www.alter-schlachthof.be/veranstaltung/comiciade-eupen-2019/>.

480 <https://www.comiccon.de/de/>.

**conference**<sup>481</sup> took place in November, kindly hosted by the museum Erika Fuchs Haus in Schwarzenbach an der Saale. Organised by Christian Bachmann, Juliane Blank, Alexandra Hentschel and Stephan Packard, the conference included 17 international talks and three keynote speeches by David Zane Mairowitz, Federico Zanettin and Nathalie Mälzer, who have done outstanding work in the field of adaptation and translation. This year, the conference was dedicated to the topic of comparative comics studies and dealt with relations and transformations within the art form that cross and bridge cultural, linguistic, economic, juridical, political and media fields. Sadly, due to the aforementioned busy times, the author of this column was not able to attend the conference. Still, the tightly-packed schedule of the conference included an open forum on current research projects; presentations of comics museums and galleries such as the one in Schwarzenbach and the **comic+cartoon showroom in Dortmund**;<sup>482</sup> as well as lectures on topics such as Finnish Marvel cutting and pasting strategies; political Taiwanese Popeye translations; scanlations; adaptations of classics such as Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Faust* or Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*; and comics studies’ historiography. The discussions were rich and productive, ranging from questions of queer modes of cultural production/adaptation to the political impacts of references/referentiality. Even after the ‘official’ part of the conference was completed, contributors and guests delved deep into the matter by touring the museum, swimming in Uncle Scrooge’s money bin and eating Donald Duck cookies. Last but not least, this year’s conference also included the first formal meeting of the AG Diversity [Working Group for Diversity], calling for an inclusive, respectful, supportive and empowering comics studies scene—but, once again: more on that later. In conclusion, this year’s conference was a success and those who sadly had to stay at home are looking forward to reading its proceedings.

While one ComFor annual conference is on its way, another one has come to its natural conclusion:

481 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2019/10/24/comfor-jahrestagung-in-schwarzenbach-a-d-saale/>.

482 [https://www.dortmund.de/de/freizeit\\_und\\_kultur/museen/schauraum\\_comic\\_cartoon/startseite\\_schauraum/index.html](https://www.dortmund.de/de/freizeit_und_kultur/museen/schauraum_comic_cartoon/startseite_schauraum/index.html) (original link, no longer valid on June 12, 2024).



the proceedings of the 2013 ComFor conference “Comics und Naturwissenschaften”<sup>483</sup> [Comics and the Natural Sciences] have finally been released by the Berlin publishing house Christian A. Bachmann, edited by Clemens Heydenreich. It offers a great variety of articles on the interplay of natural sciences and comics. And while we are on topic—you can read the full report on the 2018 ComFor conference “Zwischräume – Geschlecht, Diversität und Identität im Comic” [Intermediate Spaces – Gender, Diversity and Identity in Comics] [here](#).<sup>484</sup>

Other colleagues did not lazily put up their feet either. September saw the release of the open access issue “Graphic Realities: Comics as Documentary, History, and Journalism”<sup>485</sup> of the journal *ImageText – Interdisciplinary Comics Studies*, edited by ComFor members Laura Schlichting and Johannes C. P. Schmid. ComFor founding member and former chairman Dietrich Grünewald released a monograph about one of the most prolific German humourists: *Loriot und die Zeichenkunst der Ironie*<sup>486</sup> [Loriot and the Art of Drawing Irony] takes a look at Victor von Bülow’s humoristic and ironic drawings. The volume *Geschichte und Mythos in Comics und Graphic Novels*<sup>487</sup> [History and Mythology in Comics and Graphic Novels] has also been released again, with a long list of ComFor contributors. For all the other big or small publications on comics and comics scholarship, we refer you to our [publication overview section](#).<sup>488</sup>

Where there is hard work, there ought to be appreciation as well. Thus, with such a number of different contributions in the field of comics studies, there is also a necessity for awards. 2019 brought two new awards to the table (both with the participation of ComFor members), one for comic artists and one for comic scholars. First, we are proud to announce the establishment of a new award for inclusive and independent comic artists: the **GINCO award (German Independent/Inclusive Com-**

**ic and Manga Award)**.<sup>489</sup> The award, set up by, amongst others, ComFor’s Lukas R. A. Wilde, serves to recognise self-publishing creators working with small, independent publishers, all by themselves, or on platforms for creator-owned content. July 2019 brought us the first ever GINCO winners, selected by a jury of five members (one of them ComFor’s Marie Schröer): *Maertens* by Maximilian Hillerzeder, *Wilhelm will ans Meer* by Matthias Lehmann, *Grün & Gold* by Lisa Brenner and *Koukla* by Alexandra Rügler. We are no less proud to announce the second award, this time for academic achievements: the **Martin Schüwer-Publikationspreis für herausragende Comicforschung**<sup>490</sup> [Martin Schüwer Award for Excellent Comic Studies] is now annually awarded by a cooperation between ComFor and the Committee for Comics Studies. It is meant to motivate young scholars not yet holding a permanent academic position. By honouring outstanding publications in the field of interdisciplinary comic research, the award aims to contribute to the promotion and communication of comic-related research work. In September 2019, Dorothee Schneider (now Marx) was awarded the **first ever Martin Schüwer-Publikationspreis**<sup>491</sup> for her article “The ‘Affected Scholar’. Reading Raina Telgemeier’s *Ghosts* as a Disability Scholar and Cystic Fibrosis-Patient”,<sup>492</sup> available freely (and in English) in Kiel University’s journal on comics research, *Closure*.

Speaking of awards, German comic artist **Isabel Kreitz was recently awarded the Wilhelm-Busch-Preis 2019**<sup>493</sup> für satirische und humoristische Zeichenkunst und Verdichtung [Award for Satirical and Humorous Drawn Arts and Reduction]. Of course, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all winners in the name of all ComFor members!

Finally, we are proud to announce another important initiative: founded by ComFor chairwoman

483 [http://www.christian-bachmann.de/b\\_comfor5.html](http://www.christian-bachmann.de/b_comfor5.html).

484 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2019/06/27/nachbericht-zur-comfor-tagung-2018/>.

485 <https://imagetextjournal.com/category/volume-11-issue-1/> (link updated on June 12, 2024).

486 [http://www.christian-bachmann.de/b\\_loriot.html](http://www.christian-bachmann.de/b_loriot.html).

487 [http://www.christian-bachmann.de/b\\_bn6.html](http://www.christian-bachmann.de/b_bn6.html).

488 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/?tag=monitor>.

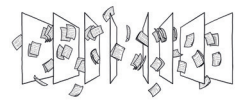
489 <https://www.ginco-award.de/>.

490 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/schuewer-preis/>.

491 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2019/09/26/verkuendung-der-preistraegerin-des-ersten-martin-schuewer-publikationspreises-2019/>.

492 <https://www.closure.uni-kiel.de/closure5/schneider>.

493 [https://www.wilhelm-busch.de/nachrichten\\_ueber\\_wilhelm\\_busch/preistraegerin-des-wilhelm-busch-preises-2019-wird-isabel-kreitz/](https://www.wilhelm-busch.de/nachrichten_ueber_wilhelm_busch/preistraegerin-des-wilhelm-busch-preises-2019-wird-isabel-kreitz/).



Véronique Sina, **AG Diversity**<sup>494</sup> aims to contribute to the visibility, promotion and networking of non-hegemonic, queer-feminist comic research both within and beyond ComFor. Thus, AG diversity is a response to a lack of diversity in comic research that is reflected both in research approaches and text canon as well as in the group of researchers and their public representation and networking. AG Diversity seeks to establish a more inclusive research and discussion culture and to anchor new impulses in research to counteract these exclusionary representational relationships. With the founding of AG Diversity, ComFor is taking an important step towards closing this gap and sending a clear signal against all forms of discrimination and exclusion.

That's it for now. While the days are getting shorter and Christmas, New Years eve (and related dreadful parties) are over once again, a lot of ongoing projects are coming to an end and new ones are getting started—so I guess there is no shortage of talking points for the next ComFor update. Currently, we are concluding our winter break. Our editorial team is collecting our readers' annual primary literature (i.e. comics) recommendations from our members, which constitutes the first post in the new year. For those interested and in dire need of some additional new reading material, we refer you to **the last few years' recommendations**<sup>495</sup> for the time being.

Stephan Packard:

## July 2020

This update was originally planned for May. It would have chronicled a number of spring-time conferences and publications in the German-speaking worlds of comics studies; outlined further plans for this year's annual ComFor conference; pointed out various courses and lectures on comics in university curricula throughout Germany, Austria and Switzerland; and announced a newly elected Executive Board for the German Society for Comics Studies.

And then, of course, a pandemic happened. The ComFor website turned into a chronicle of cancellations and deferments, listing these casualties on a new landing page (but accompanying this with a laconically titled but encouraging international list of comic projects that respond to the pandemic: **Comics und Corona**).<sup>496</sup> Compromises abound. Leipzig's Manga Comic Con and the Comiciade at Aachen were both cancelled altogether, as were too many conferences. The joint Bremen and Bydgoszcz conference on empirical studies into language and images in public communication, once planned for May, has been postponed for the fall; organized by Anna Kapuścińska and John Bateman, it is set to continue the first *Sprache und Bild in der öffentlichen Kommunikation* conference from April 2019. The NEXTCOMIC Festival in Austria originally had to close down most of its events, moving on to planning for 2021; but it did uphold the basic elements of its exhibition – and by now, several new and deferred events have begun to populate its **2020 programme**.<sup>497</sup> Stuttgart's International Trick Film Festival on animation went virtual, as did the **Erlangen Comic Salon**,<sup>498</sup> Germany's largest comic convention and conference. It has moved completely online and has now begun a virtual salon on July 10th. Other special events have gone the same route; perhaps most notably, comic artist Ulli Lust presents a **'coronavirus-safe' version of her seminar on drawing comics on YouTube**.<sup>499</sup>

494 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2019/08/15/sommerpause-und-initiative-fuer-mehr-diversitaet-in-der-comicforschung/>.

495 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/category/comicgesellschaft/leseempfehlungen/>.

496 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2020/03/12/comics-und-corona/>.

497 <https://www.nextcomic.org/> (original link, no longer valid on June 12, 2024).

498 <https://www.comic-salon.de/>.

499 <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLgu08I->



The Erlangen Salon is also accompanied by the recently founded **GINCO Award**<sup>500</sup> in its second year. The German Inclusive Comic Award of the Independent Scene celebrates independent comics creators and emphasizes a new direction of inclusiveness, thus complementing – in their own words – “existing awards and structures in the comic scene by creating a common ground, or rather a stage. One where there is no difference made between, for example, digital and analogue, or comics and manga. The objective is amplifying visibility for newcomers, and to create a symbol to invite new readers to discover and support diverse styles and content.”

One of the first academic events to realize the potential of the online format has been the workshop *CorpoRealities: Perceptions of ‘Extraordinary’ Time in Literature and Comics*, a joint project of the German Society for Media Studies’ Committee for Comics Studies and the long-running graphic medicine project at Berlin, *PathoGraphics*. The varied **programme**<sup>501</sup> quickly spilled online, setting a trend for scholarly discussions surrounding so many virtual conferences in the following weeks. At that point, the eleventh International Graphic Novel and Comics Conference, not-at-London, was still to follow; it has now set standards for digital academic conferences with its very nearly seamless combination of recorded open access lectures, lively synchronous online Q & A sessions and extended debate in social media.

A model, then, for ComFor’s annual conference this fall: dedicated to the topic of *Comics and Agency*, the conference will look at the actors, public spheres and formats of participation involved in various comics and comics scenes. The organisers – Vanessa Ossa, Jan-Noël Thon and Lukas R. A. Wilde – have moved the organisation from the planned venue at Tübingen online as well, taking full advantage of the reduced costs of travel to present one of the most international programmes ComFor has yet seen. Expect more information on this on the **ComFor website**<sup>502</sup> as the October 2020 date approaches and do

please join us. A large part of the discussions will be in English and visiting with German comics scholarship has never been easier than now, when you can do it through your browser!

Meanwhile, the German Society for Media Studies has also moved its annual conference online and that includes two panels organised by the Committee for Comics Studies: a discussion panel on experimental performances of disease, trauma and corporealities in comics, and a workshop on media experiments and transversals in comics. October should also see the forty-fourth Annual Conference of the North American German Studies Association, though it is not yet clear what shape it will take. It too will include several panels on German comics; calls for papers have promised events discussing transnational perspectives on comics as well as German-language comics journalism.

Publications have continued, albeit often delayed, through the COVID-19 crisis. The 2018 ComFor conference *Spaces Between: Gender, Diversity and Identity in Comics* will be published in two volumes: Véronique Sina’s and Nina Heindl’s collection of the same name at **Springer**,<sup>503</sup> scheduled for August, promises “interdisciplinary perspectives on and theoretical approaches to the notion of ‘spaces between’”, drawing “our attention to the nexus between the medium of comics and the categories of difference as well as identity such as gender, dis/ability, age, and ethnicity, in order to open and intensify an interdisciplinary conversation between comics studies and intersectional identity studies.” Christine Gundermann’s edited volume with publishing house Bachmann is set to follow shortly thereafter – watch this space.

Meanwhile, Jan-Noël Thon’s and Lukas R. A. Wilde’s special issue of *Frontiers of Narrative Studies* on **Characters Across Media**<sup>504</sup> discusses “characters in popular culture that are used, re-used, and related to each other for a much longer period of time”. It argues that although “the semiotics, aesthetics, and economics of serial and transmedial narratives have generally been the focus of many studies in recent years, [...] less attention has been paid to the crucial role comprised by characters as ‘nodal points’ or ‘currencies’ between converging and diverging

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500 <https://www.ginco-award.de/en/>.

501 [https://www.geisteswissenschaften.fu-berlin.de/friedrichschlegel/assozierte\\_projekte/Pathographics/sl\\_3\\_EVENTS/2020\\_0625-27\\_KoerperzeitenWorkshop.html](https://www.geisteswissenschaften.fu-berlin.de/friedrichschlegel/assozierte_projekte/Pathographics/sl_3_EVENTS/2020_0625-27_KoerperzeitenWorkshop.html).

502 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/category/comicgesellschaft/jahrestagungen/>.

503 <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-658-30116-3>.

504 <https://www.degruyter.com/journal/key/fns/5/2/html> (link updated on June 12, 2024).



storyworlds.” The issue is one of two publications following a winter school on narratively isolated or de-contextualized character depictions, prominently cartoons and similar images, at Tübingen in early 2019, following 2019’s special issue of *IMAGE*, *Re-contextualizing Characters*.<sup>505</sup>

The upcoming special issue of the Kiel journal on comics studies *CLOSURE*, *The Crumbs: Obszönität und Tabubruch* [Obscenities and Broken Taboos], edited by Kalina Kupczynska and Véronique Sina, chronicles a workshop at Cologne from the previous summer. The also upcoming special issue of online journal *Participations* follows the Cologne workshop, *Comics/Fandom: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Intersection of Fan Studies and Comics Studies*, held earlier the same year, and is edited by Sophie Einwächter, Vanessa Ossa, Véronique Sina and Sven Stollfuß. All of these are collaborations with the Committee on Comics Studies, as is the upcoming volume on *Comics/Games: From Hybrid Medialities to Transmedia Expansions*, edited for Routledge by Andreas Rauscher, Daniel Stein and Jan-Noël Thon, which follows the 2018 conference of the same name at Hannover.

The marginally delayed collection of new comics-related seminars and lectures has now **materialised**,<sup>506</sup> as well. With 12 entries, the COVID-19 edition turned out quite a bit shorter than in previous semesters, but it is clear that comics studies in university teaching continue with several fascinating and often innovative formats. It is also worth noting that comics’ pervasion through German popular culture still continues, one recent symptom of note being the 13th ‘Goldener Blogger’ [Golden Blogger] Award, which went to Nadja Hermann’s uniquely inspiring and acerbic webcomic *Erzählmirnix*.<sup>507</sup>

Since its inception, this ComFor Update has served in part as a personal reflexion for each contributor and in part as a summary of the plethora of materials collected and published through **our German website**.<sup>508</sup> A shout-out is in order to the newly assembled team now editing that resource, which pub-

lishes a lot of its information in English: Robin-M. Aust, Alexandra Hentschel, Vanessa Ossa, Katharina Serles and Natalie Veith. For me, this will be the last entry in this series, as I am stepping down as ComFor President after eight years. The new Executive Board is set to be elected for the postponed ComFor assembly that will now finally, albeit virtually, take place at the end of the month. Thank you so much for reading my often delayed ramblings; and do come and meet me and all of us at our conferences, events or through our publications, in the real world, or online as needed.

505 [http://www.gib.uni-tuebingen.de/own/journal/pdf/IMAGE%2029\\_Themenheft.pdf](http://www.gib.uni-tuebingen.de/own/journal/pdf/IMAGE%2029_Themenheft.pdf).

506 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2020/05/05/lehrveranstaltungen-comic-lehrveranstaltungen-im-sommersemester-2020/>.

507 <https://x.com/erzaehlmirnix> (link updated on June 12, 2024).

508 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/>.



Natalie Veith:

## October 2020

Generally speaking, not too much has changed since Stephan's update in July. Obviously. Most of us are still working from home and we feel the walls slowly closing in on us. Many comic-related events that had been planned for the summer were cancelled or rescheduled. Under different circumstances, the teaching period of the winter semester would start right about now, but most German universities have postponed it for another few weeks to accommodate for the delayed beginning of classes during the summer semester and the difficulties related to scheduling exams. During countless hours on Zoom and other video conference tools over the past months, we have all had ample opportunity to satisfy our voyeuristic drives and take a peek at the interior of our colleagues' and students' homes; say hello to various pets, parents and friends interrupting the calls; and realise that there are some students whose name we only know but whose face we have never seen because they do not own a webcam (as opposed to remembering their faces, but not having a clue what their names are, as is usually the case). Maybe it is the knowledge that we are all in this together – though spatially apart – or it is because, given enough time, people get used to anything, but in one way or another, we are all settling into this crazy situation and accepting it as the new normal.

In the middle of all of this, in late July, the general assembly of the ComFor took place via Zoom and we elected a **new managing committee**:<sup>509</sup> our new president is Christina Meyer, whom many of you are probably familiar with because of her monograph *Producing Mass Entertainment: The Serial Life of the Yellow Kid*,<sup>510</sup> which was nominated for the 2020 Eisner Award in the category "Best Academic/Scholarly Work"; Lukas R. A. Wilde, who used to be our treasurer, has now assumed the post of vice president; and Vanessa Ossa, who is also my new colleague on the website editorial team, has become the new treasurer. I am very much looking forward to the developments this new committee will bring

509 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/en/2020/08/06/vorstellung-des-neuen-comfor-vorstands-2/>.

510 <https://ohiostatepress.org/books/titles/9780814214169.html>.

to the ComFor, however not without being a little bit sad as well to say goodbye to Stephan Packard, who had been our president since 2013, and Véronique Sina, our vice president since 2018, who both have also done an excellent job over all these years, turning the ComFor into the brisk research society it is today.

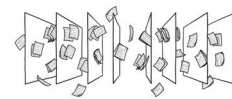
Another central topic during our assembly and the weeks preceding it was the work of the **ComFor diversity initiative**.<sup>511</sup> We started this initiative to contribute to a more inclusive and diverse research environment in German comics studies and to support and increase the visibility of otherwise marginalised researchers as well as objects of study and analytic approaches. The initiative issued a statement of solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement and also drafted a set of guidelines to ensure more equal gender ratios among contributors of ComFor events and publications that our members pledged to commit to during the assembly. I think we are all very happy that we finally managed to take this important step!

Speaking of diversity: the first volume of the conference proceedings of our thirteenth annual conference that Stephan already announced in the previous update are now finally available. They have been published by Springer under the title *Spaces Between: Gender, Diversity, and Identity in Comics*<sup>512</sup> (eds. Nina Eckhoff-Heindl and Véronique Sina). The volume contains a total of thirteen articles on topics such as gender and superheroism, disability, non-binary identities and the representations of bodies in comics.

Another notable publication that I would like to mention is the special issue 6.5 of the open access journal *Closure*, "Obszönität und Tabubruch in den Comics der Familie Crumb" [Obscenity and Breaking Taboos in the Comics of the Crumbs], edited by Kalina Kupczynska and Véronique Sina. Several ComFor members have contributed articles (mostly, but not exclusively, in German) in which they critically engage with the comics of Aline Kominsky-Crumb and Robert Crumb and the issue also contains a transcript of Kominsky-Crumb in conversation with Sarah Lightman (original in English).

511 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/en/diversitaet-in-der-comfor/>.

512 <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-658-30116-3>.



An event that recently provided a welcome diversion from home-office-as-usual was the **annual conference of the German Society for Media Studies**<sup>513</sup> that took place from 29 September until 2 October 2020. This year's topic, "Experimentieren" [Experimenting], could not have been more fitting, considering the fact that the conference took place in the form of several parallel live streams, with the participants jumping back and forth between them, depending on which of the numerous discussions and workshops they wanted to attend. I had the pleasure of attending the workshop "REMEDIATE! Mediale Experimente und Grenzüberschreitungen im Comic" [Media Experiments and Crossing Borders in Comics] during which we had a lively and very interesting discussion on comics by Liv Strömquist, Julie Doucet, members of the OuBaPo, Marc-Antoine Mathieu and Chris Ware. A meeting of the society's Committee for Comics Studies also took place. Many ComFor members participate in this committee as well and we frequently collaborate with each other.

And, last but not least, there is of course ComFor's own annual conference, which is – at the time I am writing this – only a few days away (8-10 October, 2020). This year's topic is "Comics & Agency". I have heard that registrations have been coming in by the bulk these past few days and it seems that streaming the conference via Zoom has turned it into a much more international event than our previous conferences have been. So even though I regret not having the opportunity to see all those colleagues and friends in person (after all, our annual conferences are usually a nice get-together of people working at different ends of the country or even abroad), I am very excited about this and curious to see the impact this will have on the discussions!

The conference programme is very promising this year: the keynote speakers are Henry Jenkins (University of Southern California), who will talk about "Comics and Stuff", and Mel Gibson (Northumbria University), whose topic is "Librarians, Agency, Young People, and Comics: Graphic Account and the Development of Graphic Novel Collections in Public Libraries in Britain in the 1990s". The panels address the agency of comic authors, editors, distributors and fans as well as digital and intermedial agency.

513 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2020/09/21/gfm-jahrestagung-2020/> (link corrected on June 12, 2024).

A highlight of the conference will probably also be the digital award ceremony of the Martin Schüwer Prize, that the ComFor awards annually since 2019 in collaboration with the German Society for Media Studies' Committee for Comics Studies for the publication of an outstanding article in the field of comics studies. This year's laureate is Gesine Wegner (University of Leipzig) with her article "Reflections on the Boom of Graphic Pathography: The Effects and Affects of Narrating Disability and Illness in Comics". An honourable mention also went to Joanna Nowotny (ETH Zürich) for her article "Repetition oder Revolution? Posthumane Identitätsentwürfe im Superheldencomic der Gegenwart" [Repetition or Revolution? Posthuman Conceptions of Identity in Contemporary Superhero Comics]. My congratulations go to both of them for their remarkable contributions that are a great reminder of the momentum that comics studies have gained in Germany over recent years.

I will close this update with a brief outlook on yet another award ceremony: the GINCO award, the German Inclusive Comic Award of the Independent Scene, which will also be awarded for the second time. The **shortlist of nominees**<sup>514</sup> has just been released and includes many amazing creators and their works. The award ceremony will take place in late November. My colleagues and I will keep you posted!

514 <https://www.ginco-award.de/en/archive/ginco-award-2020/shortlist.html>.



Lukas R.A. Wilde:

## January 2021

Whereas Natalie Veith remarked that nothing much had happened or changed during the months before her last ComFor update in early October, unfortunately that statement does certainly no longer hold. The German COVID-19 stats were still exceptionally good around that time, but it has become painfully clear now that we have squandered the relative advantage we had. An early “light lockdown” turned into a stricter one in December and the infection numbers were rising dramatically around New Year’s; they are now only gradually falling after all public life has been shut down. A general (legal) work-from-home order remains a mere recommendation from all our discordant state governments, however. Universities, of course, have long settled for online activities entirely, just like in most other countries around the world. The screens and interfaces of our online platforms and tools feel all too familiar by now, for better or worse. As one of the organizers of October’s (8th–10th) **annual Comfor Conference on “Comics & Agency”**<sup>515</sup> (together with Vanessa Ossa and Jan-Noël Thon), conducted entirely via Zoom with around 140 registered participants and 45 presenters, I was certainly not only excited about the high quality of papers and discussions despite all circumstances, but also surprised by the lack of technical problems, even in comparison with earlier live events where there’s always a missing Mac adapter, an unreadable USB device, or a PowerPoint presentation that just won’t open right. The same is probably true for classes, at least it has been for mine. There’s again a great amount of teaching on comic books going on in German Universities (as well as in Austria and Switzerland). As usual, ComFor has published a **list of comic-related classes**<sup>516</sup> on offer during our winter term on its website.

One good thing that has come out of all these Zoom meetings is that workshops have become more inclusive and easier to attend, especially for younger scholars and PhD students without a budget for

travel and accommodation. The German Society for Media Studies’ Committee for Comics Studies (**AG Comicforschung**),<sup>517</sup> especially, has done some wonderful experiments with online roundtables and workshops these last months. On October 23 a first “Comics Exchange” virtual roundtable was organized in collaboration with the Austrian Society for Comic Studies (**OeGeC**)<sup>518</sup> and the **Comic Colloquium Berlin**<sup>519</sup> (organized by Marina Rauchenbacher and Véronique Sina) under the title “**Diversity in and with Comics**”,<sup>520</sup> with a total of 6 presenters. **A second installment**<sup>521</sup> with the same number of speakers soon followed, no later than on December 4. While I am writing this I am preparing for a short presentation about Nadja Hermann’s fascinating Twitter/Facebook/Instagram strip *Erzählmirnix*<sup>522</sup> (occasionally translated into English as *Emoticomix*) for another follow-up on January 22, focused on the exciting topic of “**Small Formats**”,<sup>523</sup> again with five other participants (organized by Björn Hochschild and Katharina Serles). During the same months a second cooperative online format on comic scholarship was the **Comic Colloquium North**,<sup>524</sup> set up by the University of Hamburg, the Christian-Albrechts-University Kiel, and the Europa-University Flensburg. Its first online workshop took place on November 19 when Leonhard Flemisch discussed his research on “**Drawing Testimony – Strategies of Documentary Representation in Joe Sacco’s *Paying the Land***”,<sup>525</sup> with a second installment on January 14 where Dorothee Marx presented “**Drawing Mis/Information. Disabled Futures in Lauren Weinstein’s Webcomic, *Carriers***”.<sup>526</sup> A third one is

517 <https://agcomic.net/>.

518 <https://www.oegec.com/>.

519 <http://www.comic-kolloquium.de/>.

520 <https://agcomic.net/2020/10/10/online-diskussionsforum-comics%e2%80%90exchange-diversitaet-in-und-mit-comics/>.

521 <https://agcomic.net/2020/11/03/online-diskussionsforum-comics-exchange-diversitaet-in-und-mit-comics/>.

522 <https://twitter.com/erzaehlmirnix>.

523 <https://agcomic.net/2020/12/16/call-for-participants-comics-exchange/>.

524 <https://comickolloquium.wordpress.com/>.

525 <https://comickolloquium.wordpress.com/19-november-2020/>.

526 <https://comickolloquium.wordpress.com/14->

515 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/en/2020/08/03/programm-der-comfor-jahrestagung-2020-comics-agency-actors-publics-participation/> (link corrected on June 12, 2024).

516 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2020/11/15/comic-lehrveranstaltungen-im-wintersemester-2020-21/>.



soon to follow on February 2, when artist Jens Natter will talk about his own graphic novel *Hamburg*.<sup>527</sup> I'd also like to mention a lecture series of FU Berlin and the **PathoGraphics Research Group**<sup>528</sup> featuring 14 extensive lectures by well-known and emerging voices of German-speaking comics scholarship on ideals, stereotypes, and caricatures of body representations ("**Comic – Kunst – Körper | Konstruktion und Subversion von Körperbildern im Comic**"<sup>529</sup> [Comic – Art – Bodies | Construction and Subversion of Body Images in Comics]), organized by Irmela Marei Krüger-Fürhoff and Nina Schmidt.

While all of these events had to accommodate the new, and virtual, conditions we are now all working under, publications were relatively unaffected by the new COVID-19 world. In early December the new issue of *Closure*<sup>530</sup> (issue 7), Germany's celebrated open access e-journal on comics scholarship, was released. Aside from reviews of current secondary and primary sources, as well as open-themed articles, the issue also featured a **themed section on what the editors coined "Eco-Comics,"**<sup>531</sup> a possible variant of comics concerned with the relationship between nature and culture. The four contributions (most of them in English, by the way) investigated works as varied as DC's *Animal Man*; Luke Pearson's *Hilda*; Frauke Berger's *Grün*; and Grant Morrison's and Frank Quitely's *WE3*. Roughly around the same time, the renowned *Participations: Journal of Audience & Reception Studies*<sup>532</sup> also published a special themed section in issue 17.2 on the notoriously under-researched relationship between comic studies and fan studies (concisely titled "**Fandom and Comics**").<sup>533</sup> It is based on a joint workshop set up

by the Committee for Comics Studies (AG Comicforschung) and the Committee for Participation and Fan Studies that **was held on March 28-29, 2019, at the University of Cologne.**<sup>534</sup> The eight contributions on transmedia fandom, transcultural manga reception, and platform capitalism are also all in English and open access, so make sure to head over there and have a look at truly amazing research perspectives. One more publication, this one also in print, emerged from another conference co-organised by the Committee for Comics Studies and the Committee of Game Studies, held on November 2018 in Hanover on "**Comics|Games: Aesthetic, Ludic, and Narrative Strategies**".<sup>535</sup> The resulting book-length study, titled *Comics and Video Games: From Hybrid Medialities to Transmedia Expansions*,<sup>536</sup> was edited by Andreas Rauscher, Daniel Stein, and Jan-Noël Thon and published by De Gruyter. Again, all of the contributions are open access and in English, tracing the many, often surprising aesthetic, historical, and social connections between comic books and video games under the two conceptual lenses of media hybridity and transmediality. Finally, I'd like to draw your attention to Lukas Etter's recently published research monograph *Distinctive Styles and Authorship in Alternative Comics*,<sup>537</sup> released as volume 70 of De Gruyter's esteemed Anglia Book Series. ComFor member Etter traces the highly contradictory discourses surrounding authorship in North American Comics, especially with regard to alternative comics published between 1980 and 2018 (Spiegelman, Bechdel, Lutes). This book, too, was released in English, exemplifying once again a growing internationalization of German comic book research.

In other pleasant news, autumn is always award season, both for comic book scholarship and actual artists working in the medium. The most presti-

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527 <https://www.ellert-richter.de/detail.php/?ISBN=978-3-8319-0781-6> (original link, no longer valid on June 12, 2024).

528 [https://www.geisteswissenschaften.fu-berlin.de/friedrichschlegel/assozierte\\_projekte/Pathographics/index.html](https://www.geisteswissenschaften.fu-berlin.de/friedrichschlegel/assozierte_projekte/Pathographics/index.html).

529 [https://www.geisteswissenschaften.fu-berlin.de/friedrichschlegel/assozierte\\_projekte/Pathographics/sl\\_3\\_EVENTS/2020\\_1112\\_RV\\_\\_wholeEvent.html](https://www.geisteswissenschaften.fu-berlin.de/friedrichschlegel/assozierte_projekte/Pathographics/sl_3_EVENTS/2020_1112_RV__wholeEvent.html).

530 <http://www.closure.uni-kiel.de/>.

531 <https://www.closure.uni-kiel.de/closure7/about>.

532 <https://www.participations.org/>.

533 <https://www.participations.org/volume-17-issue-2/>

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(link updated on June 12, 2024).

534 <https://www.comicesellschaft.de/2019/01/28/workshop-comics-fandom/>.

535 <https://www.comicesellschaft.de/2018/03/02/cfp-symposium-comics-games-aesthetic-ludic-and-narrative-strategies/>.

536 <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/oa-edit/10.4324/9781003035466/comics-videogames-andreas-rauscher-daniel-stein-jan-no%C3%ABl-thon>.

537 <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9783110693683/html>.



gious award for scholars in the field continues to be the **Roland Faelske Award**,<sup>538</sup> issued biannually to the most inspiring undergraduate and graduate theses concerned with comic books and/or animation. This year I had the great honor to be part of the selection committee, put together by Hamburg University's **Arbeitsstelle für Graphische Literatur (ArGL)**<sup>539</sup> [Graphic Literature Research Center]. The ceremony was held online on November 6, which was when I first had the great pleasure to give a laudatio for Helene Bongers's ambitious MA thesis on visual narrative strategies in *Batman: The Killing Joke* (1988). The award for the most striking dissertation was split for the first time between two equally astonishing works: Johannes C. P. Schmid's *Frames and Framing in Documentary Comics*<sup>540</sup> (to be published this February by Palgrave Macmillan) and Bettina Julia Egger's *Comic und Erinnerung: Oral History im Werk von Emmanuel Guibert*<sup>541</sup> ([*Comics and Memory: Oral History in Emmanuel Guibert's Works*], published by Bachmann). While the former develops a large-scale theoretical outline of the documentary comic form that offers an impressive overview of corresponding works of the past decades while simultaneously elaborating their social relevance in relation to "faster" media, the latter reflects on Guibert's working methods at the intersection of literary studies, production studies, and aesthetic practice: Egger's impressive achievement includes an artistic section of 89 pages in which her own interviews with Guibert are reflected in comic form itself. Around the same time we also held the ceremony for our own **Martin Schüwer Publication Prize for Excellence in Comics Studies**,<sup>542</sup> awarded for the second time in cooperation between ComFor and the Committee for Comics Studies (AG Comicforschung). The award promotes articles or book chapters of "emerging scholars," i.e. researchers who, regardless of their actual age, do not yet hold a permanent academic position as tenured faculty. This

538 <https://www.slm.uni-hamburg.de/imk/forschung/arbeitsstellen-zentren/argl/roland-faelske-preis.html>.

539 <https://www.slm.uni-hamburg.de/imk/forschung/arbeitsstellen-zentren/argl.html>.

540 <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-030-63303-5>.

541 [http://www.christian-bachmann.de/b\\_bn7.html](http://www.christian-bachmann.de/b_bn7.html).

542 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/en/schuewer-preis/>.

year at ComFor's annual conference it was given to Gesine Wegner for her groundbreaking article "Reflections on the Boom of Graphic Pathography: The Effects and Affects of Narrating Disability and Illness in Comics", published in issue 14:1 of the *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* <sup>543</sup>(2020) (and available online).<sup>544</sup>

I'd also like to draw your attention to some awards and distinctions for comic book artists, always an indicator of the esteem and cultural prestige of comics in Germany in general. In mid-December, the Berlin Senate announced the winners of the next comic scholarships offered by the state. The 12-month working scholarship endowed with €24,000 went to Berlin-based artist Mikkel Sommer. The Danish-born illustrator published the biography *Stran-nik*<sup>545</sup> last year with Rotopol Press, based on his own research, together with his Russian-born partner Anna Rakhmanko. The award ceremony of the Berthold Leibinger Stiftung Comic Book Prize (which was actually planned for March 2020), also took place on November 8, 2020, at the Hospitalhof in Stuttgart. The award (endowed with €20,000) was given to Max Baitinger for his developing comic strip *Sibylla*<sup>546</sup> that recounts the story of the 17th-century Greifswald poet Sibylla Schwarz and is to be published by Reprodukt later this year. Other German awards of the fall season include the **Rudolph Dirks Award**<sup>547</sup> from the German Comic-Con Dortmund, presented to many popular German and international works on December 4, the **ICOM (independent comic) Award 2020**<sup>548</sup> celebrated around the same time online, as well as the **second GINCO (German Independent/Inclusive Comic and Manga) Award**<sup>549</sup> presented during the virtual **CIB20**<sup>550</sup> (Comicinvasion Berlin, November 28-29).

543 <https://muse.jhu.edu/journal/456>.

544 <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/748214/pdf>.

545 <https://www.leibinger-stiftung.de/en/comicbuchpreis-/> (original link, no longer valid on June 12, 2024).

546 [https://reprodukt.com/products/sibylla?\\_pos=1&\\_sid=4e35dffa&\\_ss=r](https://reprodukt.com/products/sibylla?_pos=1&_sid=4e35dffa&_ss=r) (link updated on June 12, 2024).

547 <http://rudolphdirksaward.de/en/2544-2/>.

548 [http://www.comic-i.com/aaa-icom/docs/icp2020/icp\\_2020\\_home.html](http://www.comic-i.com/aaa-icom/docs/icp2020/icp_2020_home.html).

549 <https://www.ginco-award.de/en/archive/ginco-award-2020.html> (link updated on June 12, 2024).

550 <https://comicinvasion.de/>.



As I am one of the organizers of the latter, which focuses especially on artists from marginalized groups, smaller publishers, and self-publishing artists, I am particularly excited about **the astonishing picks**<sup>551</sup> of our wonderful independent selection committee who went through 140 contributions – webcomics alongside self-published and professional ones. Not all news from the German-speaking regions of world was bad then. I sincerely hope that, with our next update in a few months, everything will look brighter. If you are in need of some distraction – or/and research material – here’s the traditional New Year’s list of comic book recommendations from our members (**part 1**,<sup>552</sup> **part 2**,<sup>553</sup> **part 3**<sup>554</sup>) to help you get to the other side of this long winter. Stay safe, stay at home whenever possible, all the best to you out there!

*Michaela Schober:*

## August 2021

This is the first time that I have the honour of penning the Intermittent ComFor Update for the Comics Forum, having only joined the website editorial team last autumn. Stephan wrote a year ago, “[a]nd then, of course, a pandemic happened”: it is still ongoing and I would not presume to offer any projections as to the developments of the near or even intermediate future, given the world at large. Overall, as Natalie said last October, not too much has changed. However, as the vaccination efforts are progressing, the hope for at least a respite over the summer and, dare I say it, perchance even in-person conferences or courses in autumn, is alive. Personally, I must confess that while I do miss seeing colleagues in person, I have come to appreciate the ease, speed and spontaneity with which it is possible to attend talks and conferences halfway across the world. Admittedly, the sight-seeing is limited to various virtual backgrounds and the availability of ‘local’ culinary delights is dependent on one’s own culinary skills (or availability of restaurants offering delivery or click and collect services), but optimism is allegedly all about considering the (cocktail) glass (at the virtual social event with a virtual bar in the virtual background) half-full.

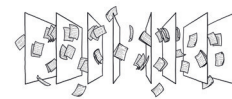
As I was reading through previous updates, Lukas’ from January this year, Natalie’s from October last year, and then, even further back in the year that was and, somehow, wasn’t, Stephan’s from last July and Robin’s from January 2020, I was struck again, possibly even more so in hindsight, by how drastic many of the changes over the last 18 months really have been. At the time they happened, it often felt as if there was too much going on to actually fully process what was going on, in all its implications and ramifications. The lockdowns between countries differed in timing and intensity, something that hasn’t changed, but I still remember the chaos of switching from working completely in situ to completely online in a matter of days, when there was barely any actual infrastructure, neither in terms of suitable software and technology nor in terms of teaching plans and course materials, to do so in the first place. I am honestly amazed by how much things have improved, and both amazed and disturbed by how quickly these things have become normal. I wonder how we will

551 <https://www.ginco-award.de/en/archive/ginco-award-2020/winner-comics.html>.

552 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2021/01/11/comfor-leseempfehlungen-2020-teil-1-3/> (link corrected on June 12, 2024).

553 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2021/01/14/comfor-leseempfehlungen-2020-teil-2-3/>.

554 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2021/01/21/comfor-leseempfehlungen-2020-teil-3-3/>.



fare going back to the ‘new old normal’—personally, I feel as if FFP2 masks on cramped public transport will stay with me for a long time—and if we will manage to hold on to the good things that have come out of this, including but not limited to streamed and hybrid conferences. In any case, it was heartening to see how many activities and events carried on, and how the pace picked up again as we all grew used to—or at least, as much as it is possible to grow used to—the current status quo.

The last summer term happened online again at most universities. Still, there was a considerable number of events, lectures and conferences, all being hosted on various online platforms, and many being organised or contributed to by ComFor members. Most of these online events were free to attend for everybody interested in comics. In February the **International Semiotics Week**<sup>555</sup> was hosted by the University of Potsdam, during which one day was dedicated to comic studies. Titled “Kritisch, komisch, kommunikativ – Zum politischen Potential des Comics” [Critical, Comical, Communicative – The Political Potential of Comics], the event sought to provide a platform where participants could explore how comics engage with serious, volatile topics, despite the still widely spread association of comics with the comical due to the term’s etymological origins. The conference boasted a wide array of different formats, ranging from keynotes, through readings and discussions, to online workshops. Speaking of difficult topics and comics, in early March, the managing committee invited all ComFor members to an online workshop as well, namely the first one of the ComFor’s Diversity Initiative. The workshop aimed to approach the complex topic of critiquing caricatures and issues connected to this. It was a great success and sparked so many lively and varied discussions that a second workshop will be planned for later this year.

Later in March, Dr Torsten Caeners, Nicolas Gaspers and Dr Matthias Keidel hosted the colloquium “**Moral, Glaube und Religion im Superhelden-Narrativ**”<sup>556</sup> [Morals, Faith and Religion in the Superhero Discourse]. The presentations investigat-

555 <https://www.uni-potsdam.de/de/kultursemiotik/semiotikwoche/2021/programm>.

556 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2021/02/25/kolloquium-moral-glaube-und-religion-im-superhelden-narrativ/>.

ed the role these key topics play in the narratives, how they are realised in the comic and the importance ascribed to them. The symposium “**Learning by Comics: ein Symposium rund um das Webcomic ‘Pragmatism Reloaded’**”<sup>557</sup> [Learning by Comics: a Symposium centred on the Webcomic ‘Pragmatism Reloaded’] presented the results of a graduate course at the Institut für Erziehungswissenschaften at the University of Tübingen, during which a webcomic on empirical social research had been developed and subsequently published. The **Comic Kolloquium Nord**,<sup>558</sup> organised by ComFor members Sylvia Kesper-Biermann, Johannes C. P. Schmid and Astrid Böger, offered a range of lectures by many distinguished speakers. In April, Johannes C. P. Schmid gave a talk titled “Comics as (Post-) Documentary: Framing Strategies in Graphic Nonfiction” and in June ComFor member Christine Gundermann spoke about Anne Frank as a global phenomenon of the culture of remembrance. In May the conference “**Seitenarchitekturen. Architektur und Raum im Comic**”<sup>559</sup> [Page Architectures. Architecture and Space in Comics] was held online; it was organised jointly by icon Düsseldorf and the AG Comicforschung. Towards the end of the term, in early June, the Online Discussion Forum Comics Exchange celebrated their fifth anniversary. The topic for the fifth meeting of the Comics Exchange was “Colour”. Also in June, the conference “**Crisis Lines – Coloniality, Modernity, Comics**”,<sup>560</sup> organised by Dominic Davies (City University of London) and Haya Alfarhan (King’s College London), analysed the connections between coloniality and cartography. The Joint Conference of The International Graphic Novels and Comics and The International Bande Dessinée Societies in (virtual) Cambridge examined the connections and interrelations between “Comics and Their Audiences/Audiences and Their Comics” in almost 100 keynotes and presentations.

Another event in June was a talk with the comic artist Sarah Burrini, part of a lecture series “**Pippi**

557 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2021/03/08/online-symposium-learning-by-comics-ein-symposium-rund-um-das-webcomic-pragmatism-reloaded-am-26-03/>.

558 <https://comickolloquium.wordpress.com/>.

559 <https://www.icon.hhu.de/call-for-papers>.

560 <https://call-for-papers.sas.upenn.edu/cfp/2021/03/11/crisis-lines-coloniality-modernity-comics>.



**Langstrumpf und ihre Töchter**<sup>561</sup> [Pippi Longstocking and her Daughters] organised by the Karl Rahner Akademie Köln. The announcement of this course included the phrase ‘takes place online or in situ depending on the rules and regulations in place at the time’—I haven’t been able to verify where the course finally took place, but it was exciting to see that the overall situation allowed for ‘in real life’ to be considered a possible option at the point of the announcement. The Comics Festival Munich also entertained the idea of facilitating at least a hybrid version of this year’s festival, which they managed to make a reality by getting creative: the Comics Festival became the Comics Museum, but the programme stayed just as diverse and extensive as in the previous years.

Spring has also seen the publication of a number of new books; provided that travelling will be possible again this summer, there will be plenty to read on the beach. Markus Engels, Ulrike Preußner and Felix Giesa are the editors of the 11th ComFor Conference Proceedings *Comics in der Schule – Theorie und Unterrichtspraxis* [Comics at School – Theory and Teaching Practice], published by C. A. Bachmann. Over the course of a sizeable 390 pages, the contributors explore the role of comics in secondary and tertiary education and suggest that comics enable an expansion of known discourses on teaching literature and media worlds, while at the same time providing its own approaches to teaching knowledge and other competences. Also published by C. A. Bachmann, but edited by Christian A. Bachmann and Johannes C. P. Schmid, *Framing [in] Comics and Cartoons* is the ninth volume in the series “Bildnarrative” [Image Narratives] and features a delightful number of articles written by ComFor members. Focussing on the function of frames in the comic, *Framing [in] Comics and Cartoons* suggests that frames constitute a basic grammar of comics in addition to its communicative aspects. With more than 600 pages, a true behemoth of a book, the *Handbook of Comics and Graphics Narratives*, edited by Sebastian Domsch, Dan Hassler-Forest and ComFor member Dirk Vanderbeke and published by De Gruyter, might very well become one of the standard works of comics research. The work combines a plethora of different approaches, historical contexts and close readings, covering

a truly impressive amount of ground. Many of the contributions have been written by ComFor members as well, including but not limited to chapters on adaptations by Juliane Blank, on life writing by Astrid Böger, on comics focussing on science by Heike Elisabeth Jüngst and a close reading of Richard F. Outcault’s *The Yellow Kid* by Christina Meyer. The new publication series titled *SieGN* (Siegen Research in Graphic Narrative) by ComFor member Daniel Stein has had its inaugural publication this April. The first publication in the series was Lia Roxana Donadon’s monograph *Mafalda: Quinos Comicstrips als Gesellschaftskritik im Argentinien der 1960er und 70er Jahre* [Mafalda: Quino’s Comic Strips as a Critique of Argentinian Society in the 1960s and 70s], which is incidentally the first full-length monograph on Mafalda in German. Another new publication by C. A. Bachmann is the anthology *Anne Frank im Comic*, edited by ComFor member Ralf Palandt and featuring contributions from ComFor members Ole Frahm, Christine Gundermann and Markus Streb. Anne Frank’s diary has been included in the UNESCO’s *Memory of the World* Programme and is the subject of many works of theatre, literature, film and music; however, this is the first time that a full anthology is dedicated to the numerous comics from all over the world centred on Anne Frank’s life and her diary.

The submission deadline for proposals for this year’s ComFor conference was at the end of June and some more information on our very own symposium seems like a fitting way to conclude this intermittent update. The conference is scheduled to take place online on 14-16 October. While I’m sure that we would all be excited to see each other again in person, the organisers Elisabeth Krieber, Markus Oppolzer and Hartmut Stöckl have sensibly decided to stay in the virtual space this year as well, as the COVID situation, while at the moment much improved, remains difficult to predict. They also note that an online event will be more inclusive as it will make participation easier for independent scholars as well as for colleagues with family obligations or reduced mobility. This consideration is one of the aspects that I hope will stay with us even once the pandemic has become—knock on wood—a thing of the past. The topic this year will be coherence in comics and all the different ways in which it is achieved and how things are connected. For the moment we re-

561 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2021/06/07/gespraech-mit-comiczeichnerin-sarah-burrini/>.



main connected by the video conference provider of one's choice as well as our intermittent updates.

*Lukas R.A. Wilde*

## April 2023

[This final column had not been published on comicsforum.org]

It's been quite a while since the last ComFor update has been published here in August 2021 – almost two years ago. The reasons for this hiatus are many-fold but certainly lie primarily in limited personal and professional resources for researchers in German academia. In the last couple of weeks especially, the pushbacks against and necessary outrages about the German government's attempt to worsen **the precarious conditions in German academia**<sup>562</sup> even more – the percentage of full-time positions under limited contracts is **one of the most humiliating ones in the world**,<sup>563</sup> affordable **only to the privileged**<sup>564</sup> – have made these shortcomings visible **even on an international stage**.<sup>565</sup> I personally was incredibly lucky to attain a permanent position in academia where I can and will continue to invest time, experience, and last but not least enthusiasm into German and international comic scholarship; but I had to move to Norway for that, with all the challenges a change of institutional system, language, and social environment entails. While I could certainly not be happier at the moment, the transition was not without challenges, so it took me a while to find time for this newest ComFor update. The ComFor editorial staff meanwhile, working under the same precarious German university conditions, continuously published weekly updates about comic-related Call for Papers, publications, conferences, and workshops on our website (mostly in English, too), in their spare time. I will try to outline a little bit of what ComFor, as well as related institutions and actors within the German-speaking parts of the world, have been doing in all this time. Hopefully, we can then return to a regular update perhaps once at the end or the beginning of each new academic

562 <https://ichbinhanna.wordpress.com/english-version/>.

563 <https://twitter.com/DieVilla4/status/1643658597379735558?s=20>.

564 <https://twitter.com/gkalinkat/status/1643573929200451587?s=20>.

565 <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-00913-5>.



semester.

First of all, ComFor has continued to publish numerous volumes based on past annual conferences. Some of these events date far back, but the publications are all the more welcome. These include the now second proceedings of the 13th ComFor Annual Conference at the University of Cologne (September 17–19, 2018). Edited by Christine Gundermann and published by Christian Bachmann Verlag in February 2022, *Zwischenräume: Geschlecht und Diversität in Comics*<sup>566</sup> (*Spaces Between: Gender and Diversity in Comics*), brings together relevant articles by numerous ComFor members and other contributors. In 2020, *Spaces Between: Gender, Diversity, and Identity in Comics*,<sup>567</sup> edited by Nina Eckhoff-Heindl and Véronique Sina, was already released with a focus on the English-language contributions of the same conference. Also worth mentioning is the second volume of the 10th ComFor conference, which took place all the way back in September 2015 at the Goethe University Frankfurt. *Studien zur Geschichte des Comic*<sup>568</sup> (*Studies in the History of Comics*) was edited by Bernd Dolle-Weinkauff and Dietrich Grünewald, also published by Bachmann in May 2022. The first conference proceedings on the same event, *Geschichte im Comic: Befunde – Theorien – Erzählweisen*<sup>569</sup> (*History in Comics: Observations – Theories – Narration*, edited also by Dolle-Weinkauff), has already been published by Bachmann in August 2017. More recently, both in terms of event as well as publication, is the publication of *Comics & Agency*<sup>570</sup> edited by myself, Vanessa Ossa, and Jan-Noël Thon that came out just last fall as an open access publication<sup>571</sup> with De Gruyter. It is based on 2020's 15th ComFor Annual Conference which took place at Tübingen Universi-

ty and online, and I can say that am incredibly proud of it. The 350-page volume aims to intensify the interdisciplinary dialogue on comics by focusing on the concept of medial, mediated, and mediating agency and the interrelations between individual, collective, and institutional actors within comic cultures. The volume also kicks off De Gruyter's new "**Comics Studies: Aesthetics, Histories, Practices**"<sup>572</sup> series, edited by Jaqueline Berndt, Patrick Noonan, Karin Kukkonen, and Stephan Packard. Perhaps not immediately ComFor-related, I also had the great pleasure to edit, together with Stephan Packard, a special issue of *PUNCTUM: International Journal for Semiotics* (7:2) on *The Social, Political, and Ideological Semiotics of Comics and Cartoons*<sup>573</sup> which also appeared in open access<sup>574</sup> last year. It contains a range of English articles on the question of *what more can semiotics do for comics* (and comic studies) that I am particularly proud of. In addition to these collaborative projects I would like to draw attention once again to ComFor's "**Monitor of Publications**",<sup>575</sup> which is a truly unique resource for international comics scholarship. The ComFor editorial staff continuously references new monographs, essay collections, and journal issues published around the globe in German or English. This has also become a truly indispensable source for my own work.

During all this time, ComFor has also continued to host new exciting annual conferences. From October 14 to 16, 2021, its 16th annual conference, titled "**Coherence in Comics: An Interdisciplinary Approach**",<sup>576</sup> was held online via Zoom and entirely in English. It was organized by Elisabeth Krieger, Markus Oppolzer, and Hartmut Stöckl from the University of Salzburg. Keynote speakers were Janina Wildfeuer, Charles Forceville, and Barbara Postema. A publication – for which I was also allowed to

566 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2022/02/10/publikation-zur-13-comfor-jahrestagung-zwischenraeume-geschlecht-und-diversitaet-in-comics/>.

567 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/en/2020/07/23/publikationshinweis-comfor-tagungsband-spaces-between/>.

568 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/en/category/comicgesellschaft/neues-aus-der-comfor/publications/>.

569 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2017/08/26/comfor-tagungsband-geschichte-im-comic/>.

570 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/en/2022/11/17/comfor-tagungsband-comics-and-agency/>.

571 [https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9783110754483/html?fbclid=IwAR3Jc0e4LV-L6\\_El4mP8yRjw2MH-K1jRzLqGXn8xRlsJl4-yreKH\\_OkWL80](https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9783110754483/html?fbclid=IwAR3Jc0e4LV-L6_El4mP8yRjw2MH-K1jRzLqGXn8xRlsJl4-yreKH_OkWL80).

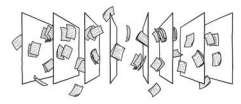
572 <https://blog.degruyter.com/call-for-manuscripts-comics-studies-aesthetics-histories-and-practices/>.

573 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2022/12/08/publikation-the-social-political-and-ideological-semiotics-of-comics-and-cartoons/>.

574 <https://punctum.gr/volume-07-issue-02-2021-the-social-political-and-ideological-semiotics-of-comics-and-cartoons/>.

575 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/en/category/magazin/publikationen-ressourcen/>.

576 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2021/09/27/comfor-jahrestagung-2021-coherence-in-comics>.



participate as an author – should appear shortly as open access in *Closure: Kieler e-Journal für Comicforschung*<sup>577</sup> (Since 2021, *Closure* has of course also published regular online issues, which, in addition to reviews of primary and secondary literature, also included immensely fascinating focuses on “Being Old – or: Doing Age? Conceptions of Age in Comics” and on “Non-narrative Comics”). Meanwhile, the just held 17th annual conference of ComFor (November 2022) was organized (online) by Iuditha Balint (Fritz-Hüser-Institut) and Markus Engels (University of Duisburg-Essen) on the tremendously important topic of “**Labor and class conditions in comics**”.<sup>578</sup> ComFor is currently planning its next annual conference for 2023, which I have once again the privilege of co-hosting together with ComFor board members Christina Meyer and Vanessa Ossa. As ComFor will turn 10 years of age as a registered institution in April 2024, we would like to put this phase of comics research in German-speaking countries under a critical reflection. We are interested in how comics research has developed, differentiated, and changed over the last ten years. Which recurring, but also new questions and research perspectives have we been dealing with since 2014? Which disciplinary desiderata will we have to address more closely in the future? We are very excited to see what perspectives our members will contribute and, of course, we are also planning an open-access publication soon thereafter. Speaking of recurring events, mention must surely be made once again of the tireless work of the **Committee for Comics Studies (AG Comicforschung)**<sup>579</sup> of the German Society of Media Studies (GfM), which certainly produces the most continuous opportunities for academic dialogue. In a series of smaller online events (called “**Comics Exchanges**”)<sup>580</sup> organized together with the Berlin Comic Colloquium and the Austrian Society for Comic Studies and Education (OeGeC), the Committee invited to discuss a range of highly varied topics such as “Anti-Fascism in Comics” (December 3 2021 & January 14, 2022), “Filmic Comics – Comic-esque Films” (May 20, 2022), “Psychic/Psycholog-

577 [https://www.closure.uni-kiel.de/start\\_en](https://www.closure.uni-kiel.de/start_en).

578 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/2022/10/13/programm-der-comfor-jahrestagung-2022-arbeits-und-klassenverhaeltnisse-im-comic>.

579 <https://agcomic.net/>.

580 <https://agcomic.net/comics-exchange/>.

ical States in Comics” (May 14, 2022), “Writing and Lettering” (January 7, 2023), or “Fashion Victims: Fashion and Comics” (March 11, 2023). During the same time, the Committee also organized a second form of online discussion forums called “Comic-Analytical Labs” in which scholars came together online to discuss selected primary texts in detail – first Hannah Brinkmann’s *Gegen mein Gewissen* (on July 8, 2022), then Tillie Walden’s *On a Sunbeam* (on December 5, 2022), and soon Birgid Weyhe’s *Rude Girl* (on May 22, 2023).

This represents certainly only a small overview of the most important events and publications from the German-speaking countries in recent years. In addition to research, it should not be forgotten that teaching is also a central part of the actual practices that comic scholars engage in. For this area, too, the ComFor editorial team has repeatedly put together **helpful overviews**,<sup>581</sup> which I would once again like to refer to at this point. Last but not least, comic researchers are also readers, so it is quite wonderful that the staff continued their years end-tradition to put together quite wonderful **lists of reading recommendations**<sup>582</sup> of primary literature from some of our members. The most useful resource of ComFor’s website, at least for myself, is perhaps also its least glamorous one: the continuous stream of continuously updated **Call for Papers**<sup>583</sup> which might be interested in contributions from comic research.

On a final note, I am particularly proud to say that the **Martin Schüwer Publication Prize for Excellence in Comics Studies**,<sup>584</sup> created as a joint venture between ComFor and the Committee for Comics Studies in 2019 and endowed with 1.000€ annually since, will be awarded for the 5th time this year. Its international recognition and visibility can perhaps best be seen from the fact that our last two laureates, Benoît Crucifix with his article “Drawing, Redrawing, and Undrawing” (2021) and Felipe Gómez with his contribution “Will it be possible? Apocalypse and Resistance in Latin American Graphic

581 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/category/magazin/veranstaltungen-magazin/kurse/>.

582 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/category/comicgesellschaft/neues-aus-der-comfor/leseempfehlungen>.

583 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/category/magazin/cfps-ausschreibungen/>.

584 <https://www.comicgesellschaft.de/en/schuewer-preis>.



Novels” were both from the international community of comic scholarship. As part of the newly elected Schüwer jury 2023, having had the great pleasure to look at the new contributions that just came in, I can already say that the decision about who will receive the award in its 5th year will not be an easy one. The laureate will be announced, as usual, at the annual conference of the German Society for Media Studies in Saarbrücken (October 4 to 10, 2023) and celebrated at the upcoming ComFor annual conference soon after. Please do consider applying for the Martin Schüwer Publication Prize next year if an article of yours should appear in the course of this year that you are especially happy with – or even better, recommend a (perhaps institutionally younger?) colleague’s outstanding work in the spirit of *comic solidarity* that we all need to hold on to!