



PRESS RELEASE

Essen, 10.10.2022

Environmental Crisis and the Problem of Realism

Monday, 24 October 2022, 6 pm

**Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities Essen (KWI), Gartensaal
Goethestraße 31, 45128 Essen**

The literary scholar Ursula K. Heise is the 2022 Visiting Professor for Public Humanities of the Wissenschaftsforum zu Köln und Essen. The pioneer of Environmental Humanities will be a guest at KWI Essen on 24 October 2022, giving a lecture about environmental communication.

Environmental journalists, novelists, filmmakers, and artists have traditionally preferred realist genres and styles to highlight the materiality and scientific grounding of environmental crises. Over the last twenty years, this convention has increasingly come into question. On one hand, climate change and other rapidly evolving ecological crises have diminished the relevance of stories and images focused primarily on individuals and families, particular places, and events commonly considered plausible. On the other hand, narrative themes and plots from speculative fiction have increasingly spread into environmental journalism and nonfiction. Concepts such as the “new normal,” the “New Weird,” and “hyperobjects” have sought to capture this altered type of realism.

This lecture will explore the controversies about what kinds of realism are appropriate and effective in environmental communication today. It will argue that the narrative strategies of science fiction, traditionally considered a secondary or minor genre merely designed for entertainment, offer the most interesting foundations for thinking and talking about global environmental change.

SPEAKER

Ursula K. Heise holds the Marcia H. Howard Term Chair in Literary Studies and serves as Interim Director of the Lab for Environmental Narrative Strategies (LENS) at the Institute of the Environment and Sustainability at UCLA. As Visiting Professor 2022 for Public Humanities of the Wissenschaftsforum zu Köln und Essen, Heise will focus on the role of the humanities in the academic and public discourse on climate change and

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biodiversity and ask what role the analysis of narratives, images, and knowledge systems play in the context of environmental and climate science research. This year's Forum Professorship is organized by the Cultures of Climate research group.

PARTICIPATION

If you wish to attend, please send an e-mail to christine.cangemi@uni-due.de with the subject line "Participation in person – 24.10.2022", by 16 October 2022.

Note: As seating is limited, attendance is only possible after written registration. Wearing medical or FFP2 mask is mandatory upon entry into the building.

ORGANISATION

Organised by the Institute for Anglophone Studies of the University of Duisburg-Essen, the University of Cologne, the Wissenschaftsforum zu Köln und Essen, the Rhine-Ruhr Center for Science Communication Research (RRC), and the Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities (KWI) Essen.

FURTHER INFORMATION

[Event on the KWI website](#)

We would appreciate the circulation of this press release.

About the Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities (KWI):

The Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities (KWI) Essen, Germany, is an interdisciplinary research centre following the tradition of international Institutes for Advanced Study. In its role as an inter-university institution connecting the Ruhr-University Bochum, the Technological University Dortmund and the University of Duisburg-Essen, the institute works together with researchers and scientists from its neighbouring universities as well as other partners from the federal state NRW and places in- and outside of Germany. Within the Ruhr area, the KWI is a place to share and discuss the questions and results of ambitious research with interested parties from the city and the greater region. Currently, work at the KWI focusses on the following areas: "cultural studies of science and science policy making", "sociology of literature and culture", "science communication", and a "teaching lab". Projects in the established research field "culture of communication", as well as individual projects, will be continued.

www.kulturwissenschaften.de

Please note: If you do not wish to receive any further press releases from the Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities (KWI), please send a short message to presse@kwi-nrw.de. Many thanks.

New: The KWI newsletter provides news about the institute twice a semester. Please click [here](#) to register.

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