

Recentring Form(s) in and of the Margins: The Politics of Self-Reflexivity

Keynote speakers:

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In recent years, self-reflexivity has become increasingly widespread in both 'highbrow' and popular arts and across different media, where it has been used especially to emphasize a strong socio-political engagement and the non-hegemonic positionalities of their characters or creators. Since self-reflexive forms, such as metafiction or metadrama, have long been associated primarily with white European or North American male artists (Fenstermaker 2008), the proliferation of these forms and the often topical issues that they help to discuss deserve further attention. Testament to this decidedly political interest in self-reflexivity are, for instance, the prize-winning novels *There There* (Orange 2018) and *Girl, Woman, Other* (Evaristo 2019), plays by Young Jean Lee and Jeremy O. Harris, stage productions by Anta Helena Recke, feminist or Afro-surrealist TV-series such as *Fleabag* (2016) and *Atlanta* (2016), or films like *Get Out* (2017). While most of these works have received much critical praise, scholarly attention for their self-reflexive forms so far has been scarce. Even though academic studies on metafiction and/or metareference (cf. Hutcheon 1980; Wolf 2009, 2011) have developed and systematized the field, they rarely reflect on self-reflexivity in and of the margins (see, however, Mwangi 2009) and remain largely apolitical in their theorizing.

Taking inspiration from new formalist thinking on the intricate entanglements of the politics of form (Levine 2015; Fawaz 2022), this conference attends to the de- and re-centring of form(s) and aims to further develop the theorizing of and criticism on politically engaged self-reflexive artworks. We invite scholars to explore self-reflexivity across media and across geographical and linguistic areas, in artworks from the 1990s onwards that inextricably link it to political engagement.

Topics for contributions include, but are not limited to:

- self-reflexivity in prose, poetry, drama, performance, film, comics, video games, digital/social media, etc., that engages with the politics of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, etc.
- self-reflexivity as a tool for the socio-political mediation of contemporary (planetary) crises
- the potential of self-reflexivity to interrogate cultural, medial and/or generic legacies
- the circulation and reception of self-reflexive artworks in and of the margins
- the transposition of self-reflexive forms between and across media (e.g. film adaptations of novels, plays or video games, performances of a dramatic text, intermedial artworks, etc.)
- the biases in current theories of self-reflexivity, pertaining to Eurocentrism, gendered scholarly discourse (cf. Ommundsen 1992), etc.
- methodologies for researching self-reflexivity and/or reflections on research positionality

Proposals for 20-minute papers (ca. 300 words) and a biographical note (ca. 100 words) may be sent to forms2024@vub.be by **15 December 2023**. Contributions can take the form of classic papers or adopt a creative-critical approach to the conference's topic. Selected contributions will be considered for a peer-reviewed volume. This conference is planned as an on-site event to foster discussion and exchange. For more information, visit forms2024.wixsite.com/conference.