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International Conference of the Research Center "Cultures in Contact (KiK)"

January 27–30, 2027 (Ágnes Heller House, University of Innsbruck)

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Conference languages: German, English

Since antiquity, the arts and sciences have had a dynamic, fruitful, and conflict-ridden relationship. For many centuries, there was no precise conceptual, theoretical, or pragmatic differentiation between art, craft, technology, and science. Nevertheless, there have always been lively debates about the boundaries between philosophical, scientific-technical, craft-related, artistic, and similar attempts to master and shape the world. To this day, transdisciplinary ideas and approaches are widespread in all scientific disciplines and artistic genres and can be interpreted as an exchange of (*knowledge*) *cultures in contact*, which is the focus of the Research Center "Cultures in Contact" at the University of Innsbruck.

In this conference, we ask how the relationship between the sciences and the arts can be conceived today, in a time of multiple crises (and crisis moods) and growing doubt about the possibility to overcome them. While the second half of the 20th century was still driven by the belief that art and science—either individually or in joint efforts—could have enlightening effects, this belief seems to have become fragile in the 21st century. At the same time—and perhaps precisely because of this?—we are seeing a trans- or even post-disciplinary orientation of many academic disciplines toward the arts and an increased interest of artists in academic research logics. For example, theorists of critical posthumanism see a potential to revitalize and strengthen the humanities and social sciences with the creative power of literary and artistic practice. The hope that art can stimulate reflection, evoke emotional and aesthetic knowledge, make implicit knowledge visible, raise ecological awareness, etc. is shared across an increasing number of academic disciplines. Conversely, contemporary artists and curators in various fields are dealing with ideas, theories, and methods from the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences.

Since our living environments and technologies (like AI, robotics, the internet) are increasingly perceived as actors, theoretical and practical approaches to science, art, and their

relationship to each other need to be reconsidered. In this conference, we want to do just that: We want to reflect on the mixing and merging of science and art from a social sciences and humanities perspective: How do their modes of knowledge production differ and where do they intersect? Where, when, and why do different academic disciplines come into contact with art? Which theoretical impulses, political debates, and social transformations play a role in this process? How does this dialogue change academic research questions, practices, modes of representation, methodologies, concepts, and theories? Which epistemic, cultural, and institutional potentials arise from crossing the threshold between science and art, and where might the dangers lie?

We particularly welcome contributions on the following topics:

- Historical perspectives on the relationship between the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and the arts
- Theory and practice of the sciences and the arts; theory as a reflection of science, art, and social reality; terminological questions (e.g. *rhizomatic* vs. *systematic* thinking, *collaboration*, etc.)
- Modes of research and knowledge production: Art as science and science as art? The interdisciplinary field of *artistic research*, its history and present state; practice-based research through the arts and the sciences; different interests and relations to the sciences in different art fields.
- Historical and contemporary practices of knowledge production and transdisciplinary collaboration in the arts, humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences; methodological implications of artistic-scientific collaboration
- Aesthetic practices in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences: postmodernism and deconstruction, *écriture féminine*, critical posthumanism, essayistic writing, etc.
- Historical and contemporary institutionalization processes and production sites of science and art (universities, art colleges, museums and galleries, autodidactics, etc.); artists and scientists as producers – questions of institutionalization, economic situation, and legal regulation
- Scientists as artists/curators and artists/curators as scientists
- Indigenous knowledge practices: epistemological tensions and synergies (in everyday life, the humanities, social and cultural sciences, and art)

- Logics of knowledge production: understanding and explaining, poiesis and practice, knowing-how and knowing-that, *explicit and tacit/personal knowledge*, fictional and factual writing, *Mitvollzug* and *Nachvollzug*, cognition and practice, knowledge and experience (aesthetic experience, life experience), etc.
- Comparison of learning processes in the sciences and arts (*learning by doing*, learning through practice, learning through the application of rules); levels of knowledge and skill (from beginner to mastery)
- The relationship between science/scientists and the arts/artists as a theme, motif, and material in literature and art (e.g., in Künstlerromanen, biopics, etc.)

The conference invites scholars (especially from the humanities, social and cultural sciences) and artists to reflect on, defend, deconstruct, and actively work on the boundaries and permeabilities of the two fields in their artistic and/or scientific work. Collaborative projects are welcome.

The conference will take place from January 27 to 30, 2027, at the University of Innsbruck. Please send an abstract (maximum 2,500 characters including spaces) for a 20-minute lecture or other form of presentation in German or English, along with a short biobibliographical note, by March 20, 2026, to kulturen-im-kontakt@uibk.ac.at . You will receive a response by April 30, 2026.