

Eva-Sabine Zehelein (Otto-Friedrich-Universität Bamberg - Germany)

Dates de séjours : September 1 – October 16, 2022

Sujet de recherche: “ART and Family Trees – Genes, Genealogy and New Family Narratives”

I aim to sketch out the various functions and problematics of family trees as mnemonic tools for *ars memoriae* as well as *ars reminiscitiae*, but also as a genealogical pictorial paradigm to establish interpersonal and transgenerational connections based on genetic inheritance (*arbor consanguinitatis*). Often, these concatenations are the results of the – today contested – practice of marriage.

To draw a family tree constitutes one way of defining or clarifying identity through progeny. The tree as organic semiotic system is a perfect template for a family diagram, which, based on linear sequentiality brings order and structure, simplicity and clarity into family chronicles. “Who am I” is answered based on genetic inheritance. Family trees also represent and affirm class, ethnic, gender and racial categories of both difference and belonging. We can thus argue that family trees are a pictorial formula for cultural memory and cultural identity, replacing oral storytelling and knowledge transmission in processes of family formation and delineation. I will employ past and recent examples of paintings and drawings and “re-drawings” of modern family trees as cultural practice and a strategy of memory to illustrate and complicate a variety of discourses – for instance, what happens if genetic kinship loses capital in favor of social belonging (adoption, sperm and egg donation, surrogacy)?

CV: Eva-Sabine Zehelein is adjunct professor of American Studies at the Otto-Friedrich-University Bamberg (Germany). From 2017-20 she was Visiting Scholar at the Brandeis Women’s Studies Research Center (supported by the Fritz Thyssen-Stiftung). She specializes in 20th and 21st century North American literatures and (popular) cultures, is currently investigating “family narratives” through a reproductive justice lens, and co-leads an international and interdisciplinary research group on “Family Matters” with Cécile Coquet-Mokoko (UVSQ) and Andrea Carosso (Università di Torino). The group has met nearly every year since 2015 and investigated a variety of “family matters”: “family matters 2.0” (Regensburg, 2015), transnational families (Villa Vigoni, 2017), families and/in crisis (Majorca, 2018), families without borders/families unbound (Tours/UVSQ, 2021), families and/as home (Bamberg, 2022), and family and work (Torino, 2023). Publications include special issues of *CoSMo* (2018) and the *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics* (2019), as well as the volume *Family in Crisis? Crossing Borders, Crossing Narratives* (Transcript, 2020).

Program: Programme Directeurs d’Etudes Associés DEA 2022, FMSH

<https://www.fmsch.fr/fr/actions/programme-dea-chercheurs-invites-2022>

Référente : Cécile Coquet-Mokoko