

Call for Papers

International Workshop

Doing Gender in Practices of Doing History: Engendered Performances of the Past

2–3 March 2023

at Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO), Leipzig

Organizers: Juliane Tomann (University of Regensburg), Karin Reichenbach (GWZO)



Image: Reenactment in Biskupin, Photo: Chrumps, © Wikimedia Commons

Whenever history – as a narrative about the past – is displayed, performed, or staged publicly, gender is performed as well. Memory studies have already acknowledged the strong intersections of memory and gender and reflected on the question of how gender shapes memory (Penkwitt and Moos 2007; Paletschek and Schraut 2008; Reading 2016; Altınay et al 2019). Studies in the broad field of public history have thus far largely focused on institutions like museums and historic sites and have analyzed the ways in which they display and represent gender (Muttenthaler and Wonisch 2006; Spanka 2019; Vinitzky-Seroussi and Dekel, 2019). By addressing the ways we do history and the practices of reviving, restaging, recreating, citing, and emulating past events in the present, this workshop will rather shift the focus towards bottom-up or do-it-yourself, ephemeral, and performative modes of public history. It will mainly address

such forms that hinge on embodiment, immersive, affective, and experiential approaches, which in turn highlight playful, corporal, multi-sensory and personal engagements with the past. Thus, the workshop focusses on constructing and creating meanings of the past that lie outside but are not unrelated to academic history and archaeology and further sheds light on the effective power history performances may have on the production of historical knowledge and on transformations of historical awareness in public audiences. Additionally, it stresses the connection of doing history and doing gender. The concept of doing gender was first established by Candace West and Don Zimmerman as early as the 1980s and emphasized the notion of gender as a routine embedded in everyday interaction (West and Zimmerman 1987). Judith Butler further stressed the performative and constructivist aspects of gender as a historical and reflexive concept (Butler 1990; 2004).

Since practices of doing history and doing gender are inextricably linked, the workshop aims to explore this nexus in more detail. How are notions of history and gender being co-produced in practices of doing history when, for example, the unstable categories of gender are regarded and performed as stable, and conservative gender behavior is thus further cemented? How do perceptions of history and gender reinforce or challenge each other in action? How are practices of invoking past gender positions in the present positioned in relation to current gender conceptions? And what kind of history performances can create situations in which gender is "undone" (Hirschauer 2001; 2014), rendered neutral and irrelative, or in which expectations of binarity are subversively undermined? Laying emphasis on sensorial, bodily approaches to history opens up further questions about the role of body knowledge. In which ways are notions of gender and history located in or attached to the bodies performing them, and what epistemic power is attributed to physically experiencing gender and/in history?

We especially want to discuss these issues in forms of living history and historical reenactment, where the enactment of gender (roles) seems particularly strongly attached to specific images of past events and societies. We would also like to include other types of public history that have performative or theatrical elements but lie in different cultural fields such as education, tourism, religion, and music as well as other leisure activities like LARPs that specifically focus on historical settings, other forms of role play (Steampunk, Cosplay, etc.), and Virtual Reality applications related to historical events. From a historical perspective, phenomena such as attitudes, tableaux vivants, pageants, performatively staged exhibits in World Fairs, or early Living History approaches in the museum context, ranging from the 18th to the early 20th century are also of interest. Analyzing such phenomena in both the present and the past, we would like to inquire how notions of gender are being staged, emphasized, or concealed, challenged, re-affirmed, or re-negotiated while performatively engaging with the past.

We welcome contributions that reflect on theoretical and methodical aspects of doing gender while doing history, reflecting on, for example:

Different aspects of the interdependence of gender and history performances

The way gender is connected with authenticity: When and to what extent is gender a prerequisite for historical "accuracy"? Can this connection be transgressed?

Performative approaches stress that meaning is produced in an interplay between different aspects: What is the role of the audience, the public, or spectators in this process?

How does gender determine (field) research, for example, female researchers in male-dominated communities of history performers, and how does it impact interactions with actors/interviewees, etc.?

We further encourage papers on gender relations, roles, stereotypes, and the norms that are (re-)produced, performed, staged, reaffirmed, or questioned, asking, for example:

Do masculinity and femininity play a role? How are these notions displayed and acted out, and how are their boundaries re-affirmed or re-negotiated?

How are representations of gender connected to aspects of race and class and how is intersectionality at play?

Are there forms of subverting/transgressing binary gender-orders? What roles do gender-cross-dressing and gender-bending play? Which forms of gender-cross dressing occur and how do they differ from subcultural forms such as drag or travesty?

As a third angle, we are looking for contributions that discuss issues of body, nature, and knowledge, approaching, for example, questions

of interrelated sensory experiences of gender and history

of how the body is conceptualized in forms of doing history, what role does it play and how is "the body" addressed as a historical and relational concept?

of how notions of the body are being re-negotiated, challenged, or reaffirmed

of how the performative production of gender is linked to notions of naturalness and primordality? Which role does the "natural" body play?

The workshop will take place 2–3 March 2023 at the Leibniz-Institute for History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO), in Leipzig, Germany. We aim to provide travel costs and accommodation for speakers according to the official regulations of the GWZO.

We are looking forward to receiving an abstract of no more than 350 words along with a short biographical note by **15th December 2022**. Please send to both:

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