CRUISING THE SEVENTIES: UNEARTHING PRE-HIV/AIDS QUEER SEXUAL CULTURES

FINAL REPORT: GERMANY
The German research team, made up of PL Andreas Kraß, postdoc Benedikt Wolf, and PhD student Janin Afken, organised an international and interdisciplinary conference in Berlin, published a conference volume, wrote two monographs and seven articles, produced a film documentary, and archived a literary estate.

OVERVIEW

The conference, entitled A Golden Age for Queer Sexual Politics? Lesbian and Gay Literature and Film in 1970s Germany was organised by Janin Afken, Andreas Krass, and Benedikt Wolf at the Humboldt University in July 2017. The conference program comprised thirteen talks, a panel discussion, and a film screening.

The outcomes were published in 2019 with Palgrave/Macmillan in a conference volume entitled Sexual Culture in Germany in the 1970s: A Golden Age for Queers?, edited by Janin Afken and Benedikt Wolf. This book is the first attempt to present a comprehensive picture of LGBT culture in the two German states in the 1970s. Starting from the common view of the decade between the moderation of the German anti-sodomy law in 1968 (East) and 1969 (West) and the first documented case of AIDS (1982) as a “golden age” for queer politics and culture, this edited collection traces the way this impression has been shaped by cultural production. The chapters ask: What exactly made the 1970s a “legendary decade”? What was its revolutionary potential and what was its path-breaking political and aesthetic strategies? Which elements, movements, and memories had to be marginalized in order to facilitate the historical construction of the “legendary decade?” Exploring the complex picture of gay, lesbian and — to a lesser extent — trans* cultures from this time, the volume provides fascinating insights into both canonized and marginalized texts and films from and about the decade.

The conference volume comprises an extensive introduction by Janin Afken and Benedikt Wolf (Introduction: Constructing and Revisiting the Golden Age of Queer Sexual Culture in Germany), a chronology of relevant cultural events from the end of the 1960s to the early 1980s by Janin Afken and Benedikt Wolf (Chronology 1968–1982), an article on the German writer Verena Stefan by Janin Afken (From Sisters’ Skin to Womb Ego: Temporality, Solidarity and Corporeality in Verena Stefan’s Shedding (1975)), an article on the German writer Hubert Fichte by Benedikt Wolf (Hubert Fichte’s Language of Desire: From ‘the Impure’ to ‘Oymeln’ in the Hamburg Novels), and an article on fictions of Berlin in British and American literature, theatre, and film by Andreas Kraß (Queer Fictions of Berlin: Gender Trouble in Cabaret (1971) and Hedwig and the Angry Inch (2001).
FURTHER PUBLICATIONS

Further publications by the German research team include a monograph by Benedikt Wolf on the German writer Felix Rexhausen entitled *Mit Deutschland leben: Felix Rexhausens literarische Sabotagen* (Hamburg 2020, forthcoming) as well as a PhD thesis by Janin Afken on lesbian-feminist literature in the 1970s in West and East Germany titled *Lesbische*°*Eigenzeiten: Temporalität, Subjektivität und Identität in lesbisch-feministischer Literatur der 1970er in DDR und BRD* (manuscript to be completed in spring 2020); two articles by Benedikt Wolf on the German writer Felix Rexhausen titled *Cruising auf der Jakobsleiter. Homosexualität und Poetik in Felix Rexhausens unveröffentlichtem Roman Zaunwerk (1964)* (in: *Limbus: Australian Yearbook of German Literary and Cultural Studies* 12: “Sexualities,” ed. by Franz-Josef Deiters et al., Freiburg 2019, forthcoming) and *Cruising, Travelling, Marching toward the Center. The Spatial Parameters of Male Homosexuality in Felix Rexhausen’s Novels of the 1960s* (in: *Monatshefte* 112 [2020], peer reviewed, accepted) as well as an article on the representation of the 1970s in German AIDS memoirs by Andreas Krass titled *Berlin and Its Metaphors: Cruising the Seventies in German AIDS Memoirs* (manuscript completed).

DOCUMENTARY FILM

Together with the feminist film collective TINT, Janin Afken co-produced a documentary film on the history of a subcultural lesbian feminist bar in Berlin, established in the spirit of the 1970s in a former fashion store specialising in fur. The film is titled *Pelze Multimedia (1981–1996). Ein Dokumentarfilm* (filming completed, post-production in process). It portrays the protagonists of the bar that existed from 1981 to 1996 and reconstructs its significance for the lesbian feminist community. In addition to being a meeting place for lesbians, the bar also housed various social projects and activist groups including a self-organised association of female sex workers (*Hydra*), provided shared apartments for endangered women and girls, cooperated with a lesbian magazine (*Die Schwarze Botin*), and organised cultural events such as film screenings. The film also investigates how the lesbian feminist community dealt with the issue of AIDS, interacted with trans* people, and contributed to the cultural history of sexuality.
ARCHIVAL WORK

Benedikt Wolf edited the estate of the German writer Felix Rexhausen (1932–1992). Rexhausen was a human rights activist and a pioneer of German gay literature and journalism from the 1960s to the 1980s in West Germany. Benedikt Wolf sorted and indexed the archival materials kept at the Schwules* Museum in Berlin. He also composed an extensive bibliography listing works written by and on Rexhausen.

ACADEMIC CAREERS

In spring 2019, Benedikt Wolf took up a full-time Postdoc position at the University of Bielefeld (six years). Janin Afken will take up a part-time Postdoc position at the Humboldt University starting in January 2020 (three years).