

Meiji University, Tokyo – University of Edinburgh
Research Partnership in Intermedia Studies



Source: GFreihalter, *Passage Verdeau*, 3 February 2016, *Wikimedia Commons*.

Workshop: ‘Walter Benjamin Inter-Media’

University of Edinburgh, Friday 10 March 2023

Call for papers

300-word Abstract Submission deadline: 15 December 2022

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Our next research event focuses on Walter Benjamin and the relevance of his work for intermedia studies.

This follows the success of our first series of workshops on ‘Image-Music-Text’ and ‘Border Crossings’ in 2022, which led to the inaugural publication of our partnership (*Intermedial Encounters Between Image, Music and Text: With and Beyond Roland Barthes* (forthcoming with Peter Lang in Spring 2023)).

Like Barthes, Benjamin developed a transversal approach to a broad range of art forms (photography, film, painting, theatre, architecture...) and their interrelations, paying particular attention to the political, perceptual, and historical status of the media he analysed. In this respect, some of the cultural forms in which he was interested could be used as fruitful starting-points for reflection on intermedial relations, from advertisements, leaflets, brochures and placards to ruins and panoramas, from phantasmagoria to architectural spaces such as arcades, and from world exhibitions to artistic movements such as Surrealism. The same applies to the

figures that preoccupied him most, like the *flâneur*, the translator, the wanderer or the “Angel of History”, and some of the particular artists he wrote about, like André Breton. Similarly, concepts such as the “aura” are useful for intermedial analysis and have heavily influenced other seminal thinkers of visual culture and image-text relations such as Barthes in *Camera Lucida*. The “Arcades Project” may also serve as a possible source of inspiration, Benjamin having organised a variety of different historical objects from different media to create a “magic encyclopaedia” providing an image of the city life of Paris in the nineteenth century.

We invite abstracts for twenty-minute papers in English exploring the topic of the workshop as broadly and creatively as possible. Contributions on other topics related to intermedia studies will also be considered.

Questions to explore include:

- Benjamin on history, melancholy, and ruins as intermedial sites of memory
- Benjamin and/on Surrealism as a multi-art, intermedial aesthetic movement
- Benjamin on translation between languages (in “The Task of the Translator” he claims that the purpose of translation is to “express the central reciprocal relationship between languages”) and media, i.e. intermedial translation processes
- Benjamin as an intermedial practitioner (e.g. his “Angel of History” as an example of ekphrasis, and his general use of collage, fragmentary structures, and resistance to linear narrative) and/or collector
- intermedality as a Benjaminian means of excavating the past
- Edinburgh and Tokyo as Benjaminian cities (everyday urban spaces, arcades, architecture...)



Paul Klee, *Angelus Novus (New Angel)* (1920).