

## **Female Figures: Present and Future of Storytelling, Play and Characters**

### **The Young Academics Workshop at the Clash of Realities 2022**

Wednesday, September 28, 2022

**Guest Scholar:** The guest speaker will be announced at a later date.

**Committee:** Jimena Aguilar (ifs Cologne), Katja Aller (CGL), Su-Jin Song (CGL)

Organized by the Cologne Game Lab, TH Köln – University of Applied Sciences (Germany) in cooperation with ifs international film school cologne (Germany).

### **Call for Papers**

This year marks the fifth edition of the Young Academics Workshop. The workshop will again be held as part of this year's Clash of Realities conference. In this edition we will explore the representation of women in games, films and digital media, with a focus on the present and possible futures of female representation. Cultural products take a part in the continuous construction of gender according to the dominant cultural discourses, creating a particular vision of how women should be and who is considered to be a woman. Teresa de Lauretis wrote in the 1980s about the close relationship between cinema and its representation of women in the construction of the social concept of "woman", explaining that gender itself is a representation and, at the same time, the representation of gender is part of its construction.

The 21st century has brought forward never-before-seen achievements in matters of women's- and LGBTQI+ rights, as well as major setbacks and backlashes due to these advances. Critical engagement with the role(s) that cultural products play in the construction of gender thus becomes imperative for cultural creators, academics and designers.

Games, films and digital media portray women in ways that can reproduce stereotypes, gender roles, and systems that perpetuate violences against women, particularly trans women and non-binary people. However, they can also be places where the male gaze is subverted with the female gaze, where complex female characters and narratives are built, and female bodies can be shown in all their diversity that goes beyond the cis heteronormative bombshell, damsel in distress or mother figure. Games, film and digital media support new modes of embodied experiences and negotiate positions of reception and agency. They open up a space for creators and researchers to imagine possible futures and creative answers to the question of representation.

It is also important to review the literature related to the portrayal of women in games, films, and digital media in terms of adult women's well-being, and the research question of whether the portrayal of women leads to female self-objectification and negative body image in adult

women. For example, analyzing complex topics such as female (mental) well-being related to video game play, self-objectification, and self-efficacy. Female characters are often portrayed unequally in video games compared to male characters, with female characters usually portrayed as subordinate to the male hero of the game, objectified, and hypersexualized with disproportionate body parts.

The Young Academics Workshop's aim in 2022 is to focus on gender studies and female representation and their relationship to film, media and game studies, game design and interactive media design (VR, AR etc.).

The Young Academics Workshop is open to:

- researchers working on representations in the context of games and new media
- scholars with a focus on gender studies and feminism
- scholars from all academic fields and disciplines (psychology, media and film studies, art history, philosophy, architecture, literature, etc.) who can share their insight on how they engage with the representation of female characters
- designers and creators, who have developed specific techniques or visions of how women can be represented in games and other media
- game developers and game development students (future game artists, game designers, game programmers, sound designers and all other students learning to make games)

As this is a Young Academics Workshop, we invite all those who have recently entered the academic world, including Bachelor, Master, and PhD students, as well as Postdocs.

Possible submission topics might include, but are not limited to:

- connections between representation and games/film/digital media
- futuristic and speculative visions of female representation
- social and cultural relevance
- the male and the female gaze
- representation of trans women and nonbinary people
- body and age (e.g. representation of older women in film/digital media)
- narratives and stereotypes
- commodification
- resistance, games and activism, collaborative practices
- representations of other female bodies
- fandom/audience discourse on the role(s) of women
- mental health / female well-being
- intersectional perspective: race, colonial histories and socio economic status
- women's work in games/digital media

Applicants should focus on the relationship between storytelling, play and characters from the unique perspective of their home discipline. Submissions with a focus on futuristic and speculative visions of representation, both from creators and researchers are welcome. We also highly encourage work-in-progress contributions.

## **Format of the Young Academics Workshop 2022**

The workshop will take place on September 28, 2022 as an online or hybrid format, dedicated to presenting projects and papers and will leave room for discussions and feedback afterwards.

Applicants should submit abstracts (no longer than 300 words, excluding bibliography) along with a (preliminary) bibliography/ludography to [youngacademics@clashofrealities.com](mailto:youngacademics@clashofrealities.com)

All submissions will be assessed by a peer-review committee.

## **Important Dates**

Deadline for submissions: June 20, 2022

Notification of acceptance/rejection: Mid July 2022

Publication of the Workshop Program: End of August 2022

Young Academics Workshop: September 28, 2022

Clash of Realities Conference: September 28-30, 2022

## **Contact**

[youngacademics@clashofrealities.com](mailto:youngacademics@clashofrealities.com)