

July 8, 10:15am

(Wednesday)

ELP 3, Room 1.13

UNIVERSITÄT GREIFSWALD  
Wissen lockt. Seit 1456



# THE LESBIAN ICON

BETWEEN  
AUDIENCE, INDUSTRY,  
AND ALGORITHM



If the 90s were, as *Entertainment Weekly* dubbed them in 1995, the “gay 90s,” we may well consider the mid-2010s onwards the age of the lesbian. Over the last decade and a half, increased representation in film and television and a growing emphasis on queer female culture as distinct from a broader, often male-centric gay culture in the mainstream have produced a new wave of visibility for – and often by – queer women. One manifestation of this has been in the form of the lesbian icon, a figure that has shifted from a subcultural phenomenon to a status that mainstream Hollywood stars, both queer and heterosexual, have openly and eagerly started to embrace.

This talk places the lesbian icon centrally in an investigation of queer female (in)visibility in contemporary film and platform culture. Working with the popular dual definition of the lesbian icon as either a lesbian who is an icon or a woman who is an icon for lesbians, it explores the coming together of the queer politics of visibility, platform economies and film stardom. Focusing among others on the memetic circulation of Cate Blanchett’s image, it will show how queer reception strategies that have historically functioned as a form of resistance, such as gossip, are becoming a form of promotional labour. Overall, the talk will thus investigate the visibility of the lesbian icon is always paradoxical: at once empowering and exploitative, relying on queer labour, identity and reception to be rendered visible, but simultaneously shaping and controlling this visibility through its embedding in the platform economy.

**Guest Lecture by Esmé Hogenkamp, PhD (Stockholm)**

**Part of the Seminar “Celebrity Culture” – Open to All**