

Department of Contemporary
Continental Philosophy

is happy to invite you to the lecture

joy is an act of resistance
art is the joy of resistance

by

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Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main



The lecture will take place
in Academic Conference Centre
Jilská 1, 11000 Praha 1
at 5 PM on Thursday, May 25 2023

Toi Derricotte
from THE TELLY CYCLE
Joy is an act of resistance
For Telly the fish

Telly's favorite artist was Alice Neel.
When he first came to my house,
I propped up her bright yellow shade with open
window and a vase of flowers (post card size)
behind his first fish bowl. I thought
it might give him something
to look at, like the center
of a house you keep coming
back to, a hearth, a root
for your eye. It was a
wondering in me that came up with that
thought, a kind of empathy
across my air and through his
water, maybe the first
word that I propped up between us
in case he could
hear. Telly would stare at the painting
for hours, hanging there with his glassy
eyes wide
open. At night he wanted the
bottom, as if it were a warm
bed, he'd lay there
sort of dreaming, his eyes
gray and dim and
thoughtless. For months he came back
to her, the way a critic or lover
can build a whole
life on the long study of one
great work. I don't know why
he stopped, maybe it was when
he first noticed
me, the face above my hand
feeding for, sometimes, when I'd set the food
on top, he'd still watch me, eye
to eye, as if saying, food
isn't enough. Once, when I
bent, he jumped up out of the water and kissed
my lips. What is a fish's kiss like?
You'd think it would be
cold, slimy, but it was
quick, nippy, hard. Maybe it was just
what I expected. For all
our fears of
touch, it takes so long
to learn how to take in.
When he stopped coming
to the top, I guess I did all the wrong
things—the fish medicine
that smelled, measured
carefully for his ounce of weight,
for his gills worked
so hard and he lay still,
tipped over slightly
like a dead boat.
How do you stop the hurt
of having to breathe?
After, I took him to the middle of the
yellow bridge right near the
Andy Warhol museum—
I had put a paper towel
in a painted egg and laid him in it—
and, at the top,
I opened the casket and emptied him out
into the water.

Bio: Bernd Herzogenrath is professor of American literature and culture at Goethe University of Frankfurt am Main, Germany. He is the author of *An Art of Desire: Reading Paul Auster; An American Body | Politic: A Deleuzian Approach* and editor of a.o. *The Farthest Place: The Music of John Luther Adams and Deleuze | Guattari & Ecology*. At the moment, he is planning a project, *cinapses: thinking | film* that brings together scholars from film studies, philosophy, and the neurosciences (members include António Damasio and Alva Noë). His latest publications include the collections *The Films of Bill Morrison. Aesthetics of the Archive* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), *Film as Philosophy* (University of Minnesota Press, 2017), and *Practical Aesthetics* (Bloomsbury 2021). He is also (together with Patricia Pisters) the main editor of the media-philosophical book series *thinking | media* with Bloomsbury.

Abstract: I am taking my cue from the idea of joy as the anarchistic affect, which is based on my reading of Spinoza, Deleuze, and Kropotkin. Trying to extend Kropotkin's idea (and practice) of mutual aid to the non-human realm, I'd like to include art into the picture, also relating joy and art to an 'infectuous logic,' which was at work in a multi-contributor arts project I curated during the lockdowns in 2020 and 2021. So this talk will basically consist of 2 parts: part one will be more theoretical, while part two will include some networking artefacts.