Subject: Call for Papers
52nd International AICA Congress Germany 2019
Art Criticism in Times of Populism and Nationalism
1–7 October 2019
Cologne – Berlin
A project by AICA Germany in cooperation with the German Federal Cultural Foundation

Populist tendencies, regardless of their colour, characterise the contemporary media landscape and the field of art and cultural criticism. Discussions about the removal of controversial works of art or the infiltration of the "Me Too" debate into the art discourse take their place in reporting. Ethical evaluation criteria are brought into the field, where male and female artists consciously make provocative or seemingly naive cultural appropriations through their works and actions. But where and how does the border to the curtailment of artistic freedom of expression run? What does the course of disputes between ethical and aesthetic fronts say about our understanding of politically "responsible" art and art-critical approaches that seem "appropriate" to this art.

The 52nd International AICA Congress is dedicated to the possibilities of critical engagement with art as a socially embedded yet aesthetically free form of expression. If simplification no longer serves to convey complex contexts and turns into the simplifying rhetoric of those who address their audience with the aim of defending their own claims to power, popularity becomes populism. How can art criticism help to shape spaces of seriously divided public spheres and thus assume a central role in social processes? How can it accept the challenge of dealing sensitively with political questions and self-confidently intervening where political correctness threatens to restrict the freedom of art and art criticism?

In order to be heard and to position art as an expression of society rather than as a luxury good and financial investment, the intervention of critique in cultural-political debates about "populist" decisions by influential actors seems unavoidable – with a view to international developments as well as to one's "own front door". What other power does art criticism have in
dealing with neo-nationalism, racism and discrimination? What path does it take in the debate about colonialism and the associated calls for reparation? How can it position itself in the field of tension between identity politics and criticism of identity politics?

We observe that populism has become part of our daily business not only in politics, but also in artistic practice. It can be the subject of artistic criticism, but it can also be used as a strategy that promises to attract attention to a position by one-sidedly inclining towards a certain political alignment or by deliberately choosing polarising forms of representation. But how can art criticism find formats to react to such art?

How criticism can remain independent when a large part of the precariously working freelancers are dependent on every job seems like a mystery. The economic necessity of constantly finding paying clients may be a possible reason why many critics are increasingly writing about popular or even populist themes and exhibitions. The contributions are intended to differentiate which manifestations of populism become relevant for art criticism, how exhibiting institutions or critics present themselves in a "populist" manner, and what role the uncritical adaptation to an assumed majority taste plays in the cultural sphere.

The concern of the Congress is to enter into conversation about art, its conditions and possible consequences, thinking and speaking openly to oneself and others without having to submit to censorship or attention-economic necessities – a Congress, which dedicates itself to this thematic field through democratic-theoretical, art-scientific, journalistic and artistic approaches.

The following topics can be addressed:

- the concept and history of populism, particularly in the cultural field
- art criticism as a reaction to populist tendencies in (cultural) politics
- interaction and conflicts between ethical and aesthetic approaches in art and art criticism
- the tension between freedom of expression and political correctness
- censorship, iconoclasm and terror as strategies of cultural populism
- effects of populism, Neo-Nationalism and censorship in art critical practice challenge of critique through populism as a topic and style of artistic practice

Art critics, creative artists and scholars are invited to submit proposals for a 20-minute contribution and, if possible, to assign them to one of the listed topics.

Please send your abstract (max. 2000 characters) in English and optionally also in German, French or Spanish with a short biography (and a statement on the Congress topic in one sentence, approx. 600 characters in total) including a portrait photo and corresponding copyright information to Marja-Terttu Kivirinta (mtkivirinta@mac.com) by 7 April 2019.

The Notification about acceptance of contributions can be expected at the beginning of May 2019. If the proposal is accepted, the abstracts and biographies with photos will be used online and in print as part of the publicity work of the Congress. The speakers will be accommodated during the Congress days.