

# CRUELTY AND BRUTALISM TODAY



**INTERDISCIPLINARY CONFERENCE**

Call for  
Conference Papers:



Technology  
and Socialization  
Project:



**4-5 NOV 2024**

**TECHNO-HUMANITIES LAB,**

**FACULTY OF „ARTES LIBERALES”,**

**UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW**





# Call for Papers

Papers and panels are invited for the interdisciplinary conference, “Cruelty and Brutalism Today”, which will take place in Warsaw from 4-5 November 2024. The conference is organized by the Faculty of “Artes Liberales ” at the University of Warsaw (Poland) and is part of the “Technology and Socialization” project.

Cruelty has many faces. Indeed, the cruelty of war is incomparable to the silent cruelty taking place in the privacy of our homes, and this is different from the cruelty of “cold institutions” that often use the letter of the law. However, what is disturbing is the scale of cruelty and the laughter of torturers acting not only without a sense of guilt but also with a dubious justification for the “greater necessity” of using violence.

In his book *Coldness and Cruelty*, Gilles Deleuze asks questions about contemporary forms of sadism and masochism. We want to reflect on the forms of the “sadistic Superego” utterly devoted to cruelty, but also the forms of the “masochistic Ego” ready for



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“affective contact”. The affective constellation of our world gives the impression that we are already operating outside Hegel’s dialectic of recognition, which is the dialectic of recognizing the desire of the Other. Contemporary politics has become devoid of mediation, armed with naked violence that can only escalate.

Andrew Culp claims that our era is not the “age of sad passions but of the masochistic contract that is sealed by fusing the cruel thrill of exploiting others with the self-destructive delights of being oppressed.” This masochistic contract is accompanied by widespread de-medialization, which – as it seems – ends the era of representation. Everyone wants to be present today and present their opinion without the help of a mediator. The representation gives way before the presentation. Does this state of affairs always end with a shitstorm of media that allows immediate release and which becomes – as Byung-Chul Han writes – a kind of “communication reflux” that destroys not only the order of power but also the very possibility of expressing respect. The screen is no



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longer a window to the world or even a frame but an information board on which data, images, inscriptions and texts move. Today, the screen is a frame for affectation and a seat of indifference. This is a severe problem.

During the conference, we will try to diagnose the sources and forms of atrocities in a world increasingly devoid of intimacy and sensitivity and increasingly filled with brutality. As Achille Mbembe rightly argues, brutality today “is not an architectural style or a type of leading aesthetics, but the very essence of politics”. We argue that this brutality goes deeper, i.e., the principles of operation of our affects, the libidinal economy. The tools of brutality are cold (calculated) and hot (expressive) cruelty. Deleuze, citing Roberto Rossellini, concludes that art today is either lament or cruelty. Rossellini himself suggested that cruelty always consists of the violation of someone’s personality, forcing someone to be entirely and unreasonably exposed. Isn’t this the type of total exposure we see daily on our computer screens? We

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may live in an era of chaos, but does it justify the appeal to “pure factuality” and the policy of “final resorts”, in which the militarization of the police and the politicization of the army have turned our lives into a state of constant occupation?

Presentations are expected to be between twenty and thirty minutes. Please send abstracts of up to three hundred words, attached in a Word document, with a short bio to [technologyandsocialization@gmail.com](mailto:technologyandsocialization@gmail.com) by the 31st of August, 2024. Should you need any further information, do not hesitate to contact us at the same e-mail address. All information about the conference and the “Technology and Socialization” project can be found here. We are looking forward to your participation and to hosting you in Warsaw.

Organizing Committee :  
Professor Szymon Wróbel  
Dr Krzysztof Skonieczny  
Dr Katarzyna Szafranowska  
Mgr Adam Cichoń



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