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MEETING EINSTEIN

Phonopost:
Rediscovering a Forgotten
Chapter of Media History

Lecture and discussion with Thomas Y. Levin,
Einstein Visiting Fellow and Associate
Professor of German at Princeton University

4 December 2012, 7 pm
Museum für Kommunikation,
Leipziger Straße 16, 10117 Berlin



Phonopost: Rediscovering a Forgotten Chapter of Media History

The spiral groove of the record, the brittle voices: gramophones are normally remembered as the means our forefathers used to listen to music. What is largely forgotten today is that gramophone discs also served a very different purpose from the 1920s to 1950s as a means to record private spoken letters that were then sent by mail – a widespread form of communication known as “Phonopost”. While already imagined as a possibility by Thomas Alva Edison upon the invention of the phonograph in 1877, extensive cultures of the “Sprechbrief” only really developed with the advent of the flat gramophone record in the early 20th century. In his lecture Einstein Visiting Fellow Thomas Y. Levin will present some key moments in this media

archeology of voice mail and will officially launch a new digital archive he has created for this overlooked facet of media culture.

Programme

- 6:30 pm Admission
- 7:00 pm Welcome
- 7:15 pm Lecture
- 8:30 pm Reception

Please register at www.einsteinfoundation.de

Kindly note that registered guests will be seated in the order of their arrival.

Thomas Y. Levin

Thomas Y. Levin is Associate Professor of German at Princeton University. His research encompasses theoretical works on aesthetics as well as comparative studies on old and new media. Since November 2010, the renowned scholar, translator and curator has been Einstein Visiting Fellow at the Friedrich Schlegel Graduate School of Literary Studies. Together with his Berlin research group, Thomas Y. Levin is reconstructing the media archaeology of the acoustic letter. The “Phonopost” collection and archive is the first landmark of this project.

Einstein Visiting Fellow

The aim of the funding programme “Einstein Visiting Fellow” of the Einstein Foundation Berlin is to integrate outstanding foreign scientists and scholars into the Berlin research landscape.



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David Mooney, Harvard University

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Location

Museum für Kommunikation
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