

Ekphrasis Centre

I. General aim of the EKPHRASIS Center

To create a trans-disciplinary research environment, bringing together the academic and professional resources of specialists from diverse fields at the intersection of the humanities and social sciences, who can carry out applied studies in innovative fields such as new creative industries, new media and other liberal arts. This approach is all the more important as the new digital and visual technologies have permeated society in ways that profoundly affect our existence and produce major changes at social, psychological, human and communicational levels. Thus, the interdisciplinary study of these new realities and the resulting innovative cultural products must be the main object of activity for a dedicated Research Center.

We believe that contemporary academic studies must take into account the development of communication technologies and the broadening of areas of interest in society to include experiences generated by new media. Therefore Ekphrasis Center aims to set an example for transdisciplinary studies and their convergence with the development of creative technologies. The Ekphrasis Center is open to all teaching staff of Babeş-Bolyai University who adhere to the common objectives of the Center.

II. Preamble on the current situation in the academic and professional environment

Today we are talking about socio-technological systems whose human, cultural, political and industrial impact is indisputable. The relationship between these innovative technologies and society, the interaction between them, and the human and social impact of communication media based on online platforms must be understood in an academic context.

First of all, we must start from an institutional necessity – the establishment of a Research Center dedicated to the fields of liberal arts and creative technologies or the various manifestations of multiple visual media in society stems from the fact that, although there are 60 research centers and institutes operating at Babeş-Bolyai University, the study of new creative technologies, new and old media cultures as a whole and, especially, the application of studies in the specific field of liberal arts studies is underrepresented.

Since the founding of the famous New School for Social Research in the 1940s in the United States, the field generically called liberal studies has been one of the most important sources of knowledge and innovation in the academic world. An interdisciplinary approach, bringing together the social sciences and the humanities in general, offering the possibility of large-scale studies through transdisciplinary approaches, is imperative. And the possibility of integrating art (photography, advertising, visual design) with political science, of linking the artistic or aesthetic dimension with the cultural dimension or of

Cultural studies and, in particular, the relationship between multiple areas of knowledge need to be connected in a coherent approach.

Although today all American universities offer such programs, and more than half of European universities have such studies (in countries such as Hungary, Poland or even Bulgaria), in Romania there is no program dedicated to the study of creative technologies in the context of liberal arts.

Situated at the convergence of classical and innovative humanities studies, such an interdisciplinary endeavor is necessary not only because new media are everyday realities. We are now witnessing forms of content production that combine modes of creativity that integrate multimedia technologies; our young students want to acquire skills from the

performing arts area to couple with computer-generated forms of expressivity; we are witnessing 3D audio-visual productions, the making of gaming design, interactive software and games, as well as writing for interactive narrative, visual media and interactive multimedia studies, new media and contemporary arts.

III. Mission of the EKPHRASIS Center

Babeş-Bolyai University is currently well represented in terms of specializations in the humanities as well as in all the exact sciences. The mission of the Ekphrasis Center is to bring together in a single collective as many of these research directions as possible, as well as to bring together the resources of several specializations and areas of teaching and research from all faculties of Babeş-Bolyai University.

The main result of the Center is to stimulate excellence in transdisciplinary research by involving professors and researchers of high teaching, academic and professional competence in joint projects. The Center will also bring together young researchers, who wish to achieve scientific performance in innovative areas. By involving all these experienced specialists and the younger generation, we aim to realize topical projects that will lead to the increase in the level of knowledge, research and academic competence needed for a University of international prestige. Another secondary goal is to identify new forms of teaching and research that are innovative and generate ideas to improve the Romanian higher education system, as well as to synchronize it with the most innovative directions of study in the European and global academic system. The most difficult objective to achieve in all contemporary sciences, which is a goal of the Ekphrasis Center members,

is the critical understanding of current phenomena and manifestations.

Last but not least, the Ekphrasis Center aims to collaborate with specialists in the field of creative technologies, providing them with conceptual, theoretical and knowledge support for the realization of competitive products in a dynamic market.

IV. Mode of operation

The Ekphrasis Center will operate according to the regulations and provisions of the Babeş-Bolyai University, as a part of the STARR-UBB Institute. The Center will establish its own administrative base and manage its own infrastructure. The Center will have a collegial management, composed of a Director elected by a vote of all its members and a Scientific Council, composed of one representative from each of the existing specializations at UBB, with activity within the Center.

The Center encourages both academic research through participation in international and national competitions for grants and project funding, but also encourages involvement in practical partnerships, with an end in the local, national and international community.

The Operating Regulations will detail the hierarchical structure (Director, Scientific Council, Scientific Board, College of the Center) and will describe the administrative attributions, regulate the internal and external relations of the Center. This documentation will be drawn up at the first meeting of the College of the Center.

V. Activities of the EKPRASIS Center

Modeled after North American centers such as the University of Southern California's Institute for Creative Technologies, the Ekphrasis Center's overall goal is to combine research in related fields such as film, television, advertising or the computer games industry with practical activities in the fields of research.

Specifically, the Center will be able to carry out research and creative activities in the field of all creative technologies, combining diverse forms of knowledge, from art and literary studies to interactive media and online media technology sciences, from psychology and political studies to video production or 3D image production, from mobile communication systems to

web services, animation or computer graphics, from traditional journalism to narrative in interactive and non-traditional media.

Training courses for writing narratives in virtual environments, workshops for analyzing and developing narrative structures in virtual worlds, and studying how to design narratives in various media specific to the creative industries.

Development of interdisciplinary programs and research projects in the field of liberal arts and creative industries such as: animation, gaming design, interactive software and games, writing for interactive narrative, visual media studies and interactive multimedia, new media and performing arts, cinema and television studies, applied research in the area of new technologies.

Consultancy in areas such as visual communication, creative industries management and online platform management. Organization of programmes dedicated to related activities in the creative industries.

Refresher courses to improve critical thinking and communication skills in social media and new technology contexts.

Creation of new academic programs and realization of continuous training projects for young graduates from different fields working in the creative industries, allowing the acquisition or certification of interdisciplinary skills acquired non-formally. The Centre can provide specialized training, coaching and consultancy in areas not currently covered by the traditional education system.

Organization of summer schools, public seminars, meetings, conferences and other public communication activities. Editing and publishing the journal Ekphrasis: Images, Cinema, Theory, Media currently in CEEOL, ERIH, EBSCO databases.

Organization of contests, festivals, workshops and master classes allowing interaction with specialists in similar fields, benchmarking one's own development, acquiring new skills and competences in the use of complex digital software as well as integrating new means of expression in cross-media productions.

Collaboration with other similar centers at home and abroad.

Production and development of profit-generating commercial projects as well as non-commercial productions contributing to the national and international recognition of EKPRASIS.

Stimulating the association of public and private institutions, in the form of consortia or associations, in order to set up a common base and a high-level infrastructure for studies and results.

The Center will be oriented to the current needs of the creative industries community and will integrate into its activities any areas of interest of professionals in the field.

VI. Research Staff

Members of the EKPRASIS Centre are nationally and internationally recognized researchers with results in various fields of scientific research, their previous achievements as reflected in their biographies and lists of publications. In the future the Center will also be able to welcome post-doctoral researchers, other specialists in the field from foreign universities, as well as professionals from creative industries.