



Berlin, 29 January, 2019

## Field Research in Authoritarian Systems and Self-Censorship in Art History

A Sinologist and an Art Historian contribute to *Die Junge Akademie's* Short Film Series on  
Scholarship and Academic Freedom | Screening and Panel Discussion on January 30, 2019

*Die Junge Akademie* releases two more films in the context of its short film series on scholarship and academic freedom. Anna Lisa Ahlers (University of Oslo) and Nausikaä El-Mecky (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona) add their perspectives in the fields of Sinology and Art History. In the series, five members of *Die Junge Akademie* discuss their academic backgrounds, offer insights into their research areas, and discuss the relevance of academic freedom in their fields.



Film by Anna Lisa Ahlers on *Die Junge Akademie's* Youtube channel: <https://youtu.be/3LkBvB3v4lw>



Film by Nausikaä El-Mecky on *Die Junge Akademie's* Youtube channel: <https://youtu.be/lsWqfMq8PGo>

Sinologist [Anna Lisa Ahlers](#), a member of *Die Junge Akademie* since 2017, regularly conducts field research in China. “Scholarly work in China is possible to a greater degree than the generally conveyed image of censorship, political control and repression would have people believe,” she says. Still, researchers need to be aware of the monitoring through the Chinese government and their responsibility toward their informants, she adds. Ahlers also believes that only funding which is as

independent as possible from normative interests facilitates free research in Sinology. Art historian [Nausikaä El-Mecky](#) – also a member of *Die Junge Akademie* since 2017 – calls for a freer attitude towards art, where anyone can express their opinion without fear of being judged “ignorant”. She believes art historical discourse should not only be shaped by academics and art world insiders, but also by the wider public. “We should accept that art history cannot be conducted entirely objectively. Famous artworks have become a part of the canon for at least partially subjective reasons and, of course, they are created from the artist’s subjective state. So let’s embrace a subjective, more inclusive approach.”

With the help of this series, *Die Junge Akademie* seeks to make the public more aware of how academics work and which obstacles can infringe their academic freedom. Martin-Immanuel Bittner, oncologist at Arctoris & Trinity College Oxford, is currently working on the fifth film. The series is produced in collaboration with the video journalist Antonia Schanze and communication designer Christopher Kuss.

#### **Panel discussion on January 30, 2019**

Together with the Berlin Social Science Center (WZB), *Die Junge Akademie* organizes a panel discussion on “The (un-)wanted limits of academic freedom in Germany” on January 30, 2019 at 6PM. Panel guests include art historian Nausikaä El-Mecky, WZB President Jutta Almendinger, Ilyas Salba (research associate of the WZB department “Democracy and Democratization”) and Uwe Schimank, Professor of Sociology at the University of Bremen. Fabian Schmidt, Astrophysicist at the Max Planck Institute for Astrophysics, whose film within the series on “Dark Matter” was presented in July, will chair the discussion. During the evening, three of the films will be screened. Further information on the event is available [here](#).

You can find additional information on the project, participating scholars and new films [here](#).

Information about [Antonia Schanze](#)

Information about [Christopher Kuss](#)

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*Die Junge Akademie* was founded in 2000 as first academy for the new academic generation worldwide. The members of *Die Junge Akademie*, young academics and artists from German-speaking countries, are dedicated to interdisciplinary discourse and are active at the interfaces between academia and society. *Die Junge Akademie* is supported by the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities (BBAW) and the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina. The office is located in Berlin.

#### **Contact *Die Junge Akademie***

Anne Rohloff

Tel.: +49 (0) 30 203 70-563

E-Mail: [presse@diejungeakademie.de](mailto:presse@diejungeakademie.de)

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Die Junge Akademie an der Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Deutschen Akademie der Naturforscher Leopoldina · Presse- und Öffentlichkeitsarbeit  
Jägerstr. 22/23 · D-10117 Berlin · Tel: +49 (030) 203 70-453 · Fax: -680 · [presse@diejungeakademie.de](mailto:presse@diejungeakademie.de)  
[www.diejungeakademie.de](http://www.diejungeakademie.de) · [www.facebook.com/diejungeakademie](http://www.facebook.com/diejungeakademie) · @Junge\_Akademie