

# OPENING CELEBRATION

## Affiliated Institute for Medical & Health Humanities and Artistic Research



The opening ceremony of the affiliated *Institute for Medical & Health Humanities and Artistic Research* (IMHAR) took place online on 25 March 2022. Prof. Dr Ralf Rummel-Suhrcke, member of the academic management and one of the two academic principals of the University of Applied Arts and Sciences, Ottersberg (HKS Ottersberg) welcomed the assembled members and guests and presented the institutional background of the new research institute. The HKS Ottersberg, located in the state of Lower Saxony, is privately funded and focuses its research and teaching in the fields of art therapy, theatre and dance in social fields, social work with an artistic focus and fine arts.

Prof. Dr Céline Kaiser explained the mission of the institute, its guiding ideas and its focal points. She took a look back at the origins of the

founding association, the International Association for Medical & Health Humanities and Artistic Research e.V. (<https://www.imhar.net/en/association/>), and highlighted the impact of the international conference on Material Cultures of Psychiatry, conceived and organised at the University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf by Dr Monika Ankele and Prof. Dr Benoît Majerus in 2018 that had brought together many of the current members and thus artists and scientists.

Taking up this joint work, the contributions to the opening ceremony dealt with a concrete object, the chair, in its many forms, functions and possibilities of transformation. In addition to notorious chairs from the history of medicine (and the penal system), the contributions by Dr Monika Ankele, represented by PD Dr Martina Wernli, Raja Goltz, Prof. Dr Gabriele Schmid and Prof. Dr Céline Kaiser addressed casually placed, ostensibly inconspicuous chairs, chairs in artistic works and a chair crocheted from bed sheets as material for performative research. Chairs, it became clear, play a major role in the production and for the performance of social and especially clinical-therapeutic situations ("No psychotherapy without chairs", according to a research result by psychologist Lisa Landsteiner). They serve diagnostics and the production of clinical knowledge. However, they can also be questioned aesthetically and through artistic research, examined in the entanglements of form and function, as Raja Goltz showed





Raja Goltz „Have a Seat“ (2018)



in her research performance "Have a seat", and thus set in motion in their possible meanings. In this way, a series of critical questions can be connected, which - here based on a concrete object - thematise and raise central concerns and questions of the Medical & Health Humanities, which transcend the field of established medical historical research in several respects. As could already be seen in the short lectures, a combination of artistic and cultural studies research strengthens research processes that might start with subjective dimensions of perception and experience, but aim to explore the cultural dimensions of health and medical cultures. In this sense, questions were brought up during the opening ceremony about inclusions and exclusions, about the potential knowledge of the Medical & Health Humanities, about participatory strategies of research

and dissemination, their connections to Disability Studies, to Gender Studies and debates criticising racism. The Institute will be a space for exchange and research and, as a hybrid research institution, will offer the opportunity to collaborate internationally with artists, scholars from the cultural sciences and humanities, but also from the fields of medicine and care.