



## INVITATION

Essen, 17.04.2024

### ***Is anyone else seeing this? A visuality of risk in Jeff Nichols' *Take Shelter* (2011)***

Keynote as part of the Workshop "Seeing Danger: Risk, Security and the Visual"

**25 April 2024, 18:00-19:30 (CET),  
Online (via ZOOM) & Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities Essen (KWI),  
Room 106, Goethestraße 31, 45128 Essen**

**When Jeff Nichols released his feature film *Take Shelter* in 2011, the effects of the 2007/2008 financial crisis were still very much palpable in US-society. At the same time, effects of climate catastrophe started to increasingly impact everyday life. The film follows Curtis LaForche, a young working-class father in rural Ohio, who experiences a number of disquieting visions that point towards the coming of a storm of unseen dimensions.**

Hannes Becker argues that the visual representation and fictional logic of Curtis LaFoche's struggle resonate with the powerful, century-old narrative of *Self Reliance* (and other forms of what Lauren Berlant termed *Cruel Optimism*) as a specific form of socially advised risk-taking in US-culture and history. Drawing from Niklas Luhmann's differentiation between risk and danger, Becker interprets Curtis LaForche's defective course of action as an example of *Self Reliance* gone awry, where those devoid of real decision-making power or communal support end up being burdened with responsibilities beyond their reach, or grasp.

**HANNES BECKER** is a German and American studies scholar. He studied modern German literature, literary writing, American studies and history in Berlin and Leipzig. Together with Benjamin Bühler, Sandra Pravica and Stefan Willer, he edited the anthology *Zukunftssicherung: Kulturwissenschaftliche Perspektiven* published by transcript in 2019. He also writes theatre and radio plays as well as short stories, and works as a translator of plays and poems.

### **PARTICIPATION ON SITE**

To participate on site, please register with Marion Fiekens ([marion.fiekens@kwi-nrw.de](mailto:marion.fiekens@kwi-nrw.de)) by 24 April 2024.

### **PARTICIPATION ON ZOOM**

To participate via Zoom, use the [following link](#).

#### PRESS CONTACT

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## ORGANISATION

The keynote is organized by the Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities Essen (KWI).

## FURTHER INFORMATION

[Event on the KWI website](#)

### **About the Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities (KWI):**

The Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities (KWI) Essen, Germany, is an interdisciplinary research centre following the tradition of international Institutes for Advanced Study. In its role as an inter-university institution connecting the Ruhr-University Bochum, the Technological University Dortmund and the University of Duisburg-Essen, the institute works together with researchers and scientists from its neighbouring universities as well as other partners from the federal state NRW and places in- and outside of Germany. Within the Ruhr area, the KWI is a place to share and discuss the questions and results of ambitious research with interested parties from the city and the greater region. Currently, work at the KWI focusses on the following areas: “cultural studies of science and science policy making”, “sociology of literature and culture”, “science communication”, “visual literacy” and a “teaching lab”. Projects in the established research field “culture of communication”, as well as individual projects, will be continued.

[www.kulturwissenschaften.de](http://www.kulturwissenschaften.de)

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