

Facts about the empirical basis of the dissertation

The empirical material consists of chosen Lady Gaga music videos and of various data collected amongst the Lady Gaga fans through the following methods: individual and group interviews, questionnaire, netnographic observations in fan forums and on social media sites, offline participant observation, auto-ethnography, and a visual research method. The offline data is collected in New York City and in Denmark.

About Lise Dilling-Hansen

Lise Dilling-Hansen holds a BA in Comparative Literature and Culture of Events, and a MA in Experience Economy. She wrote her PhD dissertation at the School of Communication and Culture, Aarhus University, where she has been part of the research programme Cultural Transformations, and the research groups Sexuality Studies, Fan Studies and Celebrity Culture, and Affect and Methodological Challenges.

Time and place for defence

November 6, 2015, 13-16,
Taasingegade, building 1443, room 112 (Aud. 2)

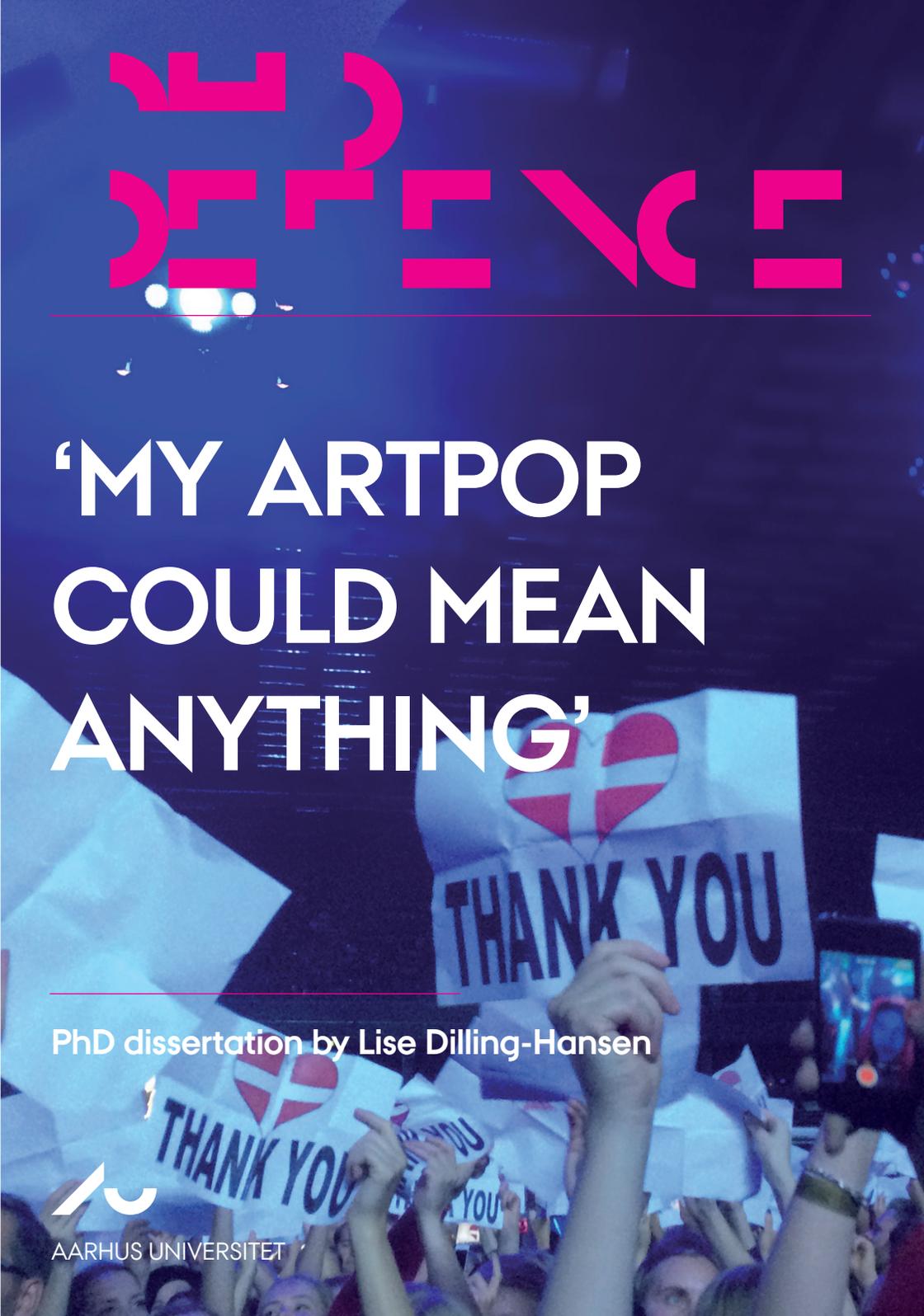
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DEFENCE



'MY ARTPOP COULD MEAN ANYTHING'

PhD dissertation by Lise Dilling-Hansen



AARHUS UNIVERSITET

'MY ARTPOP COULD MEAN ANYTHING'

- AN INVESTIGATION OF THE GENDER AND BODY PERFORMANCES OF LADY GAGA AND OF THE NEGOTIATION PRACTICES AND AFFECTIVE RESPONSES OF THE GAGA FANS

Summary of the main points of PhD dissertation 'My Artpop Could Mean Anything' - an investigation of the gender and body performances of Lady Gaga and of the negotiation practices and affective responses of the Gaga fans by Lise Dilling-Hansen, School of Communication and Culture, Aarhus University.

The dissertation focuses on the performative work of the singer Lady Gaga and discusses the subversive potential of the gender and body expressions of the artist. It also examines the fan culture of Gaga, especially the affective states of the fandom.

The norm-challenging performativity of Lady Gaga

The dissertation examines the norm-challenging performativity of Lady Gaga placed within a rich tradition of artists reiterating the contemporary norms and ideals, and at the same time challenging the norms by presenting new identity related constellations. It argues that while Gaga challenges the norms of popular culture and paves the way for a more diverse visual culture, she is also limited by the expectations of mainstream popular culture.

The affective level of the fans experience of Lady Gaga

Analyzing the affective level of the fans experience of Lady Gaga, the dissertation argues 1) that Gaga, through especially strategies of authenticity and intimacy in her fan communication, establishes an affectively primed space online as well as offline, 2) that affect fan studies provides an understanding beyond semiotic meaning of the fan experience and thus a more complete fandom study. The dissertation presents four methodological approaches to and readings of the affective Gaga fan experience.

Leaving the era of inauthentic authenticity

Following a review of how the term authenticity is generally perceived today, and how it has been and is currently linked to different musical expressions, the dissertation discusses how Lady Gaga is perceived as authentic by her fans. It argues that in spite of widespread skepticism concerning the sincerity of the artist, her fans, first, experience Lady Gaga as authentic and, second, reiterate perceptions of authenticity linked to rock music. This indicates that we may be leaving the era of inauthentic authenticity characterizing the pop music.

Conclusion

Lady Gaga is a great example of how gender and body ideals are negotiated through media, and, at the same time, influence academic debates on the topic. In addition, the study of an artist such as Lady Gaga emphasizes that fans are important to examine because they provide insight into how people in general appropriate culture, e.g. how media platforms play a role in their consumption practices, and into how celebrity figures reflect the social norms and values of contemporary society, while at the same time serve as symbolic leaders who can guide the public in new directions.

Perspectives

The examination of Lady Gaga in this dissertation appropriates modern culture as a culture concerned both with the economic dynamics of the cultural system in which it is inscribed and with the intense, personal and emotional experiences it can provide its audience. In this perspective, the fact that Lady Gaga earns a lot of money and is aware of the unwritten rules of the industry does not prevent the fans from perceiving her as authentic and real, and as someone who they love deeply and who fills their life with strong experiences of intense happiness.