

## EPISODE: Conference at Tate Britain

{tab= Introduction}

EPISODE: Pleasure and Persuasion in Lens-based Media

One-day Conference

Clore Auditorium

Tate Britain, Millbank

London SW1A

Friday 28th November 2008

The event included the launch of the new anthology:

'Episode: Pleasure and Persuasion in Lens-based Media',

published by Artwords Press.

Curating Video presented a one-day conference on Friday 28th November 2008 at Tate Britain inviting nine speakers from the fields of visual arts, art history, cultural studies, media studies, philosophy, psychoanalysis and cultural studies to explore a new matrix of issues that have become crucial to the understanding of the affect of mediated images in our lives. Rethinking the power of fact that images generate, this conference sought to put forth new dialogues, strategies and propositions to explore what is now at stake for a politics of the mediated image.

Conference Abstract:

Media-culture is an undeniable force in our lives. Its pervasive and pleasurable power has primarily been located in discourses on 'spectacle' and the persistent connections between technology and power in democracy. But when artworks can be seen to share the same experiential field as media-culture, both using and producing a media-culture, the question of how our experiences of it constitute the political is now imperative. How do media-culture and artworks, and the spaces they inhabit, produce and reform the naturalised and assumed realities of everyday praxis?

Speakers included:

Bridget Crone, Director, Media Art Bath; Dr. Graham Harman, Associate Professor, Dept. of Philosophy, American University in Cairo, Egypt; Professor Ahuvia Kahane, Director, Arts & Humanities Research Centre, Royal Holloway, University of London; Dr. Sharon Kivland, artist & Reader in Fine Art, Sheffield Hallam University; Professor Norman Klein, California Institute of Arts, Los Angeles, USA; Dr. Suhail Malik, Critical Studies Course Leader for Postgraduate Fine Art in the Department of Art at Goldsmiths, University of London; Dr. Philippe-Alain Michaud, Film Curator, Musée national d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges-Pompidou, Paris; Dr. Uriel Orlow, artist & AHRC research fellowship in Creative Arts at the University of Westminster; and, Dr. Johanna Sumiala, Lecturer at the Department of Communication, University of Helsinki, Finland.

Throughout the day, three panels were each be chaired by: Dr. Amanda Beech, Dr. Jaspar Joseph Lester, and Matthew Poole.

This event was supported by:

Chelsea College of Art & Design, University of the Arts London; Department of Art History & Theory, University of Essex; and, Sheffield Hallam University.

{tab= Programme}

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Programme

10.00 Registration and Coffee

10.30 Introduction: Doris Pearce, Tate Britain

10.35 Introduction: Curating Video research team - Amanda Beech, Jaspar Joseph-Lester, & Matthew Poole

11.00 Panel 1 – Artworks: Art as Media Culture

Bridget Crone - Director, Media Art Bath, UK

Dr. Philippe-Alain Michaud - Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges-Pompidou, France

Dr. Uriel Orlow - University of Westminster, UK

Chair: Matthew Poole - University of Essex, UK

12.30 Lunch

13.30 Panel 2 – Experiential: Image – Space

Prof. Ahuvia Kahane - Royal Holloway, University of London, UK

Dr. Sharon Kivland – Sheffield Hallam University, UK

Prof. Norman Klein - California Institute of Arts, Los Angeles, USA

Chair: Dr. Jaspar Joseph-Lester - Sheffield Hallam University, UK

15.00 Tea Break

15.15 Panel 3 – Force: Images in Action

Dr. Graham Harman – American University of Cairo, Egypt

Dr. Suhail Malik – Goldsmiths College, University of London, UK

Dr. Johanna Sumilia – University of Helsinki, Finland

Chair: Dr. Amanda Beech - Chelsea College of Art, University of the Arts London, UK

16.45 Plenary discussion

17.45 Book launch and reception, Clore Foyer

{tab= Panel Abstracts}

Panel 1 Artworks: Art as Media Culture

Artworks have traditionally been privileged above media culture as able to deliver or contain a greater 'truth quotient' than media-culture, such as television, movies, news media and advertising. The legacy of the history of Modernism has left us with a tendency to believe that art has a much greater integrity than media-culture because it holds a 'truth'. This 'truth' has not so much been located in art's ability to tell us things about an empirical world, nor to reveal accurately the facts about certain histories and events. Instead it is rooted in subjective perception, choice and interpretation.

In this way, the criticality of art has been intrinsically linked to its autonomy, where it has been distinguished from the anonymity and mass production of media-culture. Art has produced worlds of potentiality, fiction and invention. By contrast media-culture supposedly operates without such self-consciousness, irony or self-reflexivity.

However, as the media-culture of news, reportage, reality shows and documentaries increasingly represent subjective and interested viewpoints; such as the overtly partisan news channels in the United States; and art practices embrace a renewed proliferation of realism; such as in socially engaged practices, and also in recent video art like that of Douglas Gordon and Philippe Parreno for example; we begin to see that both art and media-culture share, traverse and exchange the same territories.

If we recognise that lens-based art works frequently use, produce and embody media culture, then we must also rethink art's autonomy, criticality and political effectivity. Does art require a definitive ideological separation from media-culture for it to have any political agency? How are these boundaries drawn? How a new politics of lens-based art reconfigures the operations of art and its curation is central to our exploration of art after media culture.

## Panel 2      Experiential: Image-Space

New developments in image production have led to practices in which visual images no longer have any reference to the position of an observer in a 'real', optically perceived world. For theorist such as Guy Debord, Fredric Jameson and Jean Baudrillard, the ubiquity of the image and the perceived loss of a dependable referent, renders the image a threat to our ability to struggle against and resist new modes of ideological control.

In contrast to these theorisations, we will be asking if our experience of the image serves as a means to comprehend how we both live in and produce images; how the image is a physical, architectural and embodied construct and; how this experiential and immersive image-space is both monumental and fragmented, both forceful and fragile.

Consequently, this panel will take up ideas that touch on our engagement with visibility, scripted space and architectural spectacle. Here we will consider how images are lived out in space; how they are mobile, fragmented and subject to competing formulations and; how we, the embodied subject, continually construct and reconstruct the image-space that surrounds us.

## Panel 3      Force: Images in Action

The power of images in both art and media culture can be increasingly located through a culture of liveness, immediacy and sensuality. This politics of presence seen in news media, as well as in art, television and in film appears as central to the facticity of the mediated image. What this means is that rather than represent power, or hide power - the image is power and its power is set out in the dimension of force. Here, we encounter a collapse between the force of the image and the image of force, between representing and performing and between form and content.

To debate the force of images we must also speak of an image of force. This is significant when we can associate force not only with the immediacy of the image as a performative form but also how images that depict, relate to and are violence emphasise the exact conditions of media power as some form of ideal agent. It's easy to think of those speeding images of the camera on the rocket that we are more than familiar with after the Gulf War.

This panel seeks to examine the production of the image in its complex aesthetic and operational form, that is, in the way philosophy has returned to those issues of the being of images and their time or temporality as well as how images mark out place and time – in form, content, communication and distribution.

What makes an image forceful? What act and property of power do images hold and exact - or does power reside only in our intentions for the image? What are the connections between an image of force and the force of the image? If the agency of inanimate objects is located in presence, then how does this affect our lives with lens-based media and each other?

{tab= Biographies}

#### Dr. Amanda Beech

Amanda Beech makes artworks, writes and collaborates on curatorial projects. Entangling narratives that take in particular biographies, sites, and social mythologies with the bounds of philosophical inquiry, her work examines democracy as a space of seductive power, will and force - emphasising decisiveness as a guiding principle of current liberalisms and looking to our share in it. Her recent work has included projects in Norway, Scotland, Japan and Canada, as well as Falk, MOT International, London, December 2006 and 'One Way Street' Sheppard Gallery, University of Nevada, Reno and KX Gallery, Hamburg, Germany, 2007. Her most recent video work Statecraft is a new commission for Harlow, Essex. Beech is Course Director of MA Critical Writing and Curatorial Practice at Chelsea College of Art and is a member of the steering committee of The Political Currency of Art research group, [www.gold.ac.uk/visual-arts/poca](http://www.gold.ac.uk/visual-arts/poca). She is represented by MOT International, London, [www.motinternational.org](http://www.motinternational.org).

#### Bridget Crone

Bridget Crone is the director of Media Art Bath, a publicly funded organisation that aims to develop new art and ideas by providing a space to explore practice and experimentation through engagement with lens-based, performance and research-based practice. Before coming to Media Art Bath, Bridget was at The Showroom, London where she developed new projects with artists such as Diann Bauer, Daria Martin, Aaron Williamson, Subodh Gupta and Juneau/projects. Before arriving in London from Australia, Bridget worked for the Melbourne International Biennial where she was as a project manager and at other contemporary art galleries. Bridget has curated numerous freelance projects, such as The Body. The Ruin. at the Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne (2005) which included Joan Jonas, Diann Bauer, Lebbeus Woods (catalogue text), Ian Burn among others and addressed ideas of materiality and the body within situations of conflict or violence. She has been a visiting lecturer in the Department of Visual Cultures, Goldsmiths, The University of London where she has taught courses on the history and politics of museums' collections and on contemporary curating, and is currently an Associate Lecturer at Chelsea College of Art and Design, University of the Arts, London.

#### Dr. Graham Harman

Graham Harman is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the American University in Cairo, Egypt. In 2007 he was Visiting Associate Professor of Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Science at the University of Amsterdam. He is the author of Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects (2002), Guerrilla Metaphysics: Phenomenology and the Carpentry of Things (2005), Heidegger Explained: From Phenomenon to Thing (2007), and Prince of Networks: Bruno Latour and Metaphysics (just completed). His current book project is a systematic work of metaphysics entitled Object-Oriented Philosophy.

#### Dr. Jaspar Joseph-Lester

Jaspar Joseph-Lester is an artist and writer. His work explores the role that images, fictional narratives and experiential placemaking have in determining urban planning, community and everyday praxis. He has exhibited widely in the UK and abroad with solo exhibitions at: Asprey Jacques Gallery, Perry's Motors and The British School at Rome. Recent exhibitions include '13+', domoBaal Contemporary Art and Florence Lynch Gallery, New York, 2008; 'One Way Street', Sheppard Gallery, University of Nevada, Reno and KX Gallery, Hamburg, 2007; 'Ubiquitous Media', Tokyo University, Japan, 2007; and 'All for Show: an international retrospective of UK Video', 2006. Forthcoming exhibitions include 'Epidermis', Kaohsiung Fine Arts Museum, Taiwan. He is author of Revisiting the Bonaventure Hotel, Copy Press, 2008; co-author of Disorientation and Spectacle in Retail Architecture, Artwords Press, 2004 and co-editor of Transmission: Speaking and Listening, 2005-07. He is a Senior Lecturer in Fine Art at Sheffield Hallam University. More information can be found at [www.jasparjosephlester.com](http://www.jasparjosephlester.com).

#### Professor Ahuvia Kahane

Ahuvia Kahane is Professor of Greek at Royal Holloway, University of London. He is also Director of the Humanities and

Arts Research Centre at RHUL ([www.rhul.ac.uk/research/harc](http://www.rhul.ac.uk/research/harc)), Senior Research Fellow at the University of London Institute in Paris, and Senior Associate at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies. He is currently completing a collection of essays entitled *Monumentality and the Illegible*, and editing a volume entitled *Antiquity and the Ruin*. A monograph entitled, *Epic, Novel, and the Historical Progress of Antiquity*, is forthcoming, as is an extended essay in a collection on Lacan's *Antigone*. His most recent published book is *Diachronic Dialogues* (2006). Ahuvia's interests span psychoanalysis, visual theory, contemporary critical thought, classical philology, and other topics. Ahuvia Kahane lectures widely around the world.

#### Dr. Sharon Kivland

Sharon Kivland is an artist and Reader in Fine Art at Sheffield Hallam University. She is currently working on a series of books, *Freud on Holiday, Volume I, Freud Dreams of Rome*, is published by Information as Material, 2006. Volume II, *A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis* is published by information as material and cubearteditions, 2008. A third volume will reconstruct Freud's last visit to Rome in 1923. Recent solo exhibitions have taken place at Bastart, Bratislava; Sleeper, Edinburgh; and, Chelsea Art Space. She is also Visiting Fellow in the Institute for Germanic and Romance Studies, University of London.

#### Professor Norman Klein

Norman Klein is a Professor at California Institute of Arts, Los Angeles, USA. He is a cultural critic, media historian and novelist. His work concentrates on how consumer spectacle and confused urban planning hide social conditions. Among his best-known work is *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory*, Verso Books, 1997; *The Vatican to Vegas: The History of Special Effects*, The New Press, 2004; *Freud in Coney Island and Other Tales*, Otis Books/Seismicity Editions, 2006; and *Seven Minutes: the Life and Death of the American Animated Cartoon*, Verso Books, 1993. He is currently working on a novel set in Coney Island and LA during the 1950s, and *The History of the Present, Media, Cities and Power, 1973-2009*.

#### Dr. Suhail Malik

Suhail Malik is Reader in Critical Studies for Postgraduate Fine Art in the Department of Art at Goldsmiths College, University of London where he is also Director of The Political Currency of Art Research Group. Malik has written catalogue essays for major shows by the Chapman brothers, Nigel Cooke, Aya Ben Ron and Ian Monroe among others. He has also written on the market and critical conditions of contemporary art, and on current technical and political theory, and is currently working on a philosophy of American power. Malik has an extended essay in the forthcoming collection *The Art of the Chapman Brothers* (ed. Chris Townsend), edited the special section on 'Visual Culture and the War in Iraq' for the *Journal of Visual Culture* (April 2006) and curated the exhibition *Gewalt in Tel Aviv* (2004). For more details on Malik's research access: [www.goldsmiths.ac.uk/art/research/staff](http://www.goldsmiths.ac.uk/art/research/staff)

#### Dr. Philippe-Alain Michaud

Philippe-Alain Michaud is Film Curator at the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges-Pompidou in Paris. He has produced many exhibitions of film and video at galleries and museums worldwide showing the work of both contemporary artists and historical figures. He has contributed to many anthologies and catalogues on film and video works, and is the author of *Le Peuple des images*, 2005, and, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion*, published by MIT Press, 2007.

#### Dr. Uriel Orlow

Uriel Orlow is an artist well known for video and multi-media installations. His work brings disparate places, archival research and varying image-regimes into correspondence, following associative and conceptual threads that encompass ethics, translation, history and his own biography. He is currently research fellow at the University of Westminster, and in 2008 he won the prestigious Swiss Art Award at Art Basel. He has shown widely internationally and his publications include the monographs *The Benin Project*, 2007, *Deposits*, 2006, and *Re: the archive, the image, and the very dead sheep*, 2004.

## Matthew Poole

Matthew Poole is Programme Director of the Centre for Curatorial Studies, and Director of the MA in Gallery Studies & Critical Curating at The University of Essex. He is a freelance curator and collaborates with a variety of contemporary artists, arts organisations and galleries both in the public and private sectors.

## Dr. Johanna Sumiala

Johanna Sumiala is a lecturer at the Department of Communication, University of Helsinki, Finland. She is a media scholar specialising in media anthropology and visual culture. Her research and writing explore the interplay between media images and construction of social life in contemporary media society. Her most recent work includes articles on the death of Swedish Foreign Minister Anna Lindh, 2005 and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, 2007, a forthcoming historical study on national Finnish catastrophes, 2008, and the circulation of Abu Ghraib images, 2008. Her latest book co-authored with Matteo Stocchetti is entitled *Images and Communities: The Visual Construction of the Social*, 2007.

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