

# *Æstetisk Seminar*

*Efterår 2022*

*Alle seminarer afholdes torsdage kl. 14.15–16 på  
Institut for Kommunikation og Kultur  
Aarhus Universitet  
Langelandsgade 139, 8000 Aarhus C  
Bygning 1584, lokale 124  
Alle er velkomne/All are welcome*

*Æstetisk Seminar er arrangeret af  
Birgitte Stougaard Pedersen & Morten Kyndrup på vegne af  
Institut for Kommunikation og Kultur, Aarhus Universitet*

15. September 2022

## **Early Modern Naples: Aesthetics of Violence?**

Edward Alan Payne

How was an aesthetics of violence constructed in early modern Naples? The seventeenth century marked a transformative and turbulent chapter in the city's history. A Spanish territory and the second largest city in early modern Europe, Naples endured volcanic eruption, popular rebellion, and plague outbreak. Contemporary paintings chronicled these explosions of manmade and natural disaster. Violent episodes also took the form of legal expressions, which impacted the sensory environment of the city. A painting by an anonymous Neapolitan artist depicts the sights and sounds of the square outside the Tribunale della Vicaria, the main civil and criminal law court in Naples, and the site of public torture and execution. The painting stages the intersection of everyday life with extreme violence, and the collision of social classes. It offers not a literal depiction of the everyday, but an illusion of the everyday, raising the problem of the lived experiences of violence in the city. Simultaneously, the painting functions as a curiosity, with its "catalogue" of actions, activities, and miniaturized figures. This lecture will place the Vicaria painting in dialogue with contemporary images of natural disaster and human conflict. It will question the extent to which the painting articulates an aesthetics of violence, suggesting instead that it plays visual games with the viewer that culminate in a violence of aesthetics.

**Edward Alan Payne**, Assistant Professor, Art History, Aarhus University. His research focuses on the Mediterranean Baroque, in particular the art and visual culture of Spain and Italy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He has engaged with a range of topics including violence, skin, sensory perception, caricature, and ugliness. Before coming to Aarhus in August 2020, Edward taught art history at Durham University, and he worked as a curator for six years in the US, UK, and Spain. He is especially interested in the violent and violated body, which he examined in his Ph.D. thesis on Ribera, and transformed into the volume and exhibition *Ribera: Art of Violence*, co-curated with Xavier Bray at Dulwich Picture Gallery. His research is underpinned by an object-oriented approach, privileging works of art as physical objects, and adopting the practice of "slow looking".

29. September 2022

## **DeepAesthetics as computational experience: engaging machine learning through process philosophy and art**

Anna Munster

Many routinely performed operations of data preparation and optimisation in machine learning(ML)-driven AI seem to be solely quantitative. Yet their execution simultaneously organises data relations according to vectors of similarity and difference. At the very moment data is quantitatively operated upon by the statistical methods of ML, it is also re-spatialised and re-configured with ‘hidden’ or latent potential for pattern and relation. Slippages, then, between quantity and quality compose the ‘experience’ of ML at large.

In this talk, I propose that ‘deepaesthetics’ might be used to probe the quantitative-qualitative oscillations characterising contemporary computational culture.

‘Deepaesthetics’ is a disjunctive contraction gluing together two worlds with seemingly little concern for each other: deep learning, a subfield of machine learning using neural network architectures; and a branch of philosophy traditionally concerned with how judgements about formal or sensory qualities come to be made. Yet in the proliferation of style transfer and the synthetic creation of genres and moods in music, deep learning’s mainstream cultures already affirm and update formalist and cognitivist aesthetic traditions.

Alternatively, deep learning’s (qualitative) operativity lends itself to being thought via concepts from process philosophy, especially Gilbert Simondon’s ‘alagmatics’, with its knowing of technical systems via their dynamic operations. Taken together with techniques honed through critical AI art, I suggest that ‘deepaesthetics’ might be torqued to name a different aesthesia of indeterminacy for autonomous systems, at odds with a ‘predictive’ society.

**Anna Munster** is a Professor of Art and Design at the University of New South Wales, Australia and co-director of its newly formed Autonomous Media Lab. Her research currently focuses on new interventions into AI. She has written: *An Aesthesia of Networks* (2013, MIT) and *Materialising New Media* (2006, Dartmouth University); articles on media assemblages, networks and platforms, media art and process philosophy in *Theory, Culture and Event, Journal of Cultural Analytics, Inflexions*; contributed to *Affects, Interfaces Events* (Imbricate, 2021) and has co-authored with Adrian MacKenzie for the anthology *Distributed Perception* (Routledge, 2021). Anna is writing a new book *Deepaesthetics: on computational experience in a time of machine learning*. She is a practicing artist working across sound, video, data, and autonomous systems.

6. oktober 2022

## **Produktionsæstetik: teoretisering af den arbejdende krop i kunsten**

Cecilie Ullerup Schmidt

Feministiske kunstværker har siden 1970'erne gjort opmærksom på kunstnerens arbejdende krop. Værker af Mierle Laderman Ukeles og Yvonne Rainer eller kollektivt organiserede kvindeudstillinger i 1970'erne krævede en forandret fokus i den æstetiske teori, et skift fra receptionsæstetik til produktionsæstetik.

Produktionsæstetik forholder sig til hvordan kunst er co-produceret af en omgivende socialitet og af kunstens økonomiske, temporale og institutionelle infrastrukturer. Ved at flytte den analytiske undersøgelse og teoretiske interesse fra reception til produktion, fra sansning til skabelse, fra erfaring til ramme, bliver den æstetiske teoris hjørnestein - talent, autonomi og skønhed - perifere. Når vi interesserer os for asymmetrier blandt arbejdende kroppe i kunsten, bliver vi opmærksomme på deres indbyrdes afhængighed. Kunstneren bliver en arbejder blandt andre arbejdere. En produktionsæstetik – formuleret i vores historiske samtid – kræver, at vi tænker over og artikulerer kunstnerens materielle, relationelle og infrastrukturelle forhold, og den kræver derfor en vis grad af desinteresse overfor begavede talenter. Men hvis kunststøtten bygger på kunstneren som geni, kunstneren som en undtagelse, der er værd at støtte i samfundet, hvilke konsekvenser vil en produktionsæstetik så have for kulturpolitikens ræsonnement?

**Cecilie Ullerup Schmidt** er adjunkt i Performance Studies og Moderne Kultur og vice-centerleder i Ny Carlsbergfondets forskningscenter Kunst som Forum med base på Institut for Kunst- og Kulturvidenskab, Københavns Universitet. Hendes forskning er informeret af materialistisk feministisk teori, og hun undersøger, hvordan sociale, temporale og økonomiske forhold både politiserer kunstnerisk arbejde og skaber livsformer, særligt med fokus på kunstnerkollektiver. Seneste publikationer omfatter *Everybody Counts. The Aesthetics of Production in Higher Artistic Education and Performance Art Collectives* (2019), "The Fall of Greatness: Toward an Aesthetics of Co-(re)production" (Critical Stages, 2021) og *Produktionsæstetik. En feministisk arbejdskritik mellem kunst og liv* (Laboratoriet for Æstetik og Økologi, 2022).  
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3. november 2022

## **Imagining Musical Sociality**

### **Music and the Social in Late Modern Novels**

Therese Wiwe Vilmar

*The Time of Our Singing* (Richard Powers, 2002) and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (Salman Rushdie, 1999) are two late modern novels that thematise music extensively throughout their narratives. Though set in very different musical cultures – from the scene of European art music in the 1960’s USA to Western rock and pop music – the characters’ relations to music share strikingly similar concepts of collectivity, performance, identity, intersubjectivity, migration, class, race and so on. Additionally, both novels generally regard music (and the musical talent) as something “otherworldly”.

This presentation outlines one chapter of my PhD dissertation about musical imaginaries in late modern literary fiction. In the presentation, I will compare how the novels imagine musical sociality, and suggest with Rita Felski that literary fiction “creates distinctive configurations of social *knowledge*” (2011 p. 14). How does this literary configuration of social knowledge about music take place? By bringing the close reading into dialogue with music sociologists such as Tia DeNora and Georgina Born, I will further ask whether the novels’ *knowledge* of music suggests a shared musical aesthetics (as proposed by Christin Hoene in 2015) that disrupts inherent distinctions of genres and subject positions in music culture.

**Therese Wiwe Vilmar** is a PhD Fellow at the Department of Aesthetics & Culture at Aarhus University. She has a bachelor’s degree from Comparative Literature and Musicology, and a master’s degree from Comparative Literature, all from Aarhus University. Her research is placed within the interdisciplinary field of Word and Music Studies, and she is especially interested in the occurrences of music in prose literature. Her scholarly interests include intermediality studies, digital humanities, and music sociology.

24. november 2022

## **Public Poetry. Lyric in Urban Space**

Claudia Benthien & Norbert Gestring

Poems can be found in public spaces in many cities: in subways from New York to Seoul, on facades in Charlotte and Leiden, on billboards in London, on notes in parks in Hamburg and Vienna, on bookmarks raining down from an airplane in Berlin and Milan – to name just a few examples.

In an interdisciplinary research project that brings together approaches from literary studies and urban sociology, we are not only interested in the aesthetics of these different works. Public poetry is also investigated by looking at the production of space through poetry at concrete sites. Our theoretical background thus relies on approaches from poetics, art theory, and interdisciplinary theories of space; its empirical approaches include on-site exploration and interviews with passers-by, locals, poets, and initiators.

The lecture will present the theoretical foundations of the study and exemplary analyses of two or three poetry projects from our mutual book publication in progress (to appear in 2023).

**Claudia Benthien** Professor, Modern German literature at the Institute of German Language and Literature, Universität Hamburg, and Principal Investigator “Poetry in the Digital Age” (ERC). Main research interests: literature and cultural theory, visual culture, contemporary poetry. Publications i.a.: *The Literariness of Media Art*, with Jordis Lau and Maraike M. Marxsen, London/New York: Routledge, 2019; „Public Poetry: Encountering the Lyric in Urban Space”, in: *International Journal for Comparative Cultural Studies* 2 (2021): 345-367.

**Norbert Gestring** Dr., Dipl. , urban sociologist at the Institute of Social Sciences, Carl von Ossietzky University Oldenburg. Main research interests: urban development and public space, migration and integration. Publications i.a.: *Urbanität im 21. Jahrhundert*, ed. with Jan Wehrheim. Frankfurt a.M., New York: Campus, 2018; *Stadt und soziale Bewegungen*, ed. with Renate Ruhne and Jan Wehrheim. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 2014.

1. december 2022

## **Rhythms of Reading**

Birgitte Stougaard Pedersen

The presentation will from a cultural geographical as well as phenomenologically based perspective of rhythm investigate how practices of reading are changing due to digitization. With new media follow new habits and possibilities for reading. The paper will, with a point of departure in the increasing use of audiobooks during the pandemic in Denmark, propose this change of reading rhythms as part of a cultural transformation. Reading has, historically, primarily during the last 200 years, been related to isolated, aesthetic contemplation. However reading is also, as Siri Hustvedt frames it “a bodily feeling of rhythms, sounds, and meaning within a human that lives in, and is part of a culture”(2022). The paper wishes to investigate digital reading practices in dialogue with this bodily taking part in a culture. By bringing reading in to dialogue with aspects of rhythms, the paper will form an interdisciplinary relational concept of rhythm that from both a sociological, an affective, and aesthetic perspective investigates how rhythms of reading are performed and experienced in the digital reading condition.

**Birgitte Stougaard Pedersen** is Associate Professor of Aesthetics and Culture at the School of Communication and Culture, Aarhus University. Her research interests fall within the fields of sound, literature, digital culture, reading, music, medialization, and phenomenological aspects of aesthetic experience. Furthermore, she focuses on the unique epistemological potential of sound with respect to how we sense and experience the world, and she has researched how sound is constituted and changed by the cultural discourses in which it is active. Together with Iben Have, she founded and edits the international, online journal SoundEffects. 2019-2022 she has been working on the project “Reading Between Media – Developing and Encouraging Children’s Multisensorial Reading in a Digital Age”, funded by the Novo Nordisk Foundation. The manuscript of the project's forthcoming book, *The Digital Reading Condition*, is published with Routledge 2022.

