

Æstetisk Seminar

Forår 2023

*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 / 112
Alle er velkomne/All are welcome*

*Æstetisk Seminar er tilrettelagt af
Bodil Marie Stavning Thomsen & Morten Kyndrup på vegne af
Institut for Kommunikation og Kultur, Aarhus Universitet*

23. februar 2023

Postdigital Aesthetics

Jan-Noël Thon

The lecture presents ongoing research that aims to mobilize the concept of the postdigital to better understand contemporary media culture. While postdigital aesthetics could generally be conceptualized as any and all aesthetics emerging under postdigital conditions, the lecture focuses on a more specific kind of aesthetic transfer process that is defined by digital media forms remediating, simulating, or evoking the mediality, materiality, and aesthetics of nondigital media forms in various ways. Salient examples of this specific kind of postdigital aesthetics range from digital photography apps such as *Instagram* offering their users filters aimed at recreating the aesthetics of analogue photographs and digital films such as *Planet Terror* using postproduction effects to evoke the aesthetics of damaged non-digital film material to computer-animated films such as *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* referring to the aesthetics of non-digital comics and video games such as *Cuphead* simulating the aesthetics of non-digital cel animation. Last but not least, the lecture will also explore how and why machine learning-based image generation programs such as *DALL·E* allow their users to easily reproduce this kind of postdigital aesthetics.

Jan-Noël Thon is Professor and Chair of Media Studies and Media Education at Osnabrück University, Germany. Recent books include *From Comic Strips to Graphic Novels* (co-edited with Daniel Stein, De Gruyter 2013/2015), *Storyworlds across Media* (co-edited with Marie-Laure Ryan, University of Nebraska Press 2014), *Game Studies* (co-edited with Klaus Sachs-Hombach, von Halem 2015), *Transmedial Narratology and Contemporary Media Culture* (University of Nebraska Press 2016/2018), *Subjectivity across Media* (co-edited with Maike Sarah Reinerth, Routledge 2017/2019), *Comicanalyse* (co-authored with Stephan Packard, Andreas Rauscher, Véronique Sina, Lukas R.A. Wilde, and Janina Wildfeuer, Metzler 2019), *Comics and Videogames* (co-edited with Andreas Rauscher and Daniel Stein, Routledge 2021), *Comics and Agency* (co-edited with Vanessa Ossa and Lukas R.A. Wilde, De Gruyter 2022), and *Bildmedien* (co-edited with Frauke Berndt, De Gruyter 2023).

9. marts 2023

Posthumanisme in the Feminist Avantgardes of the 1970s

Katrine Annesdatter-Madsen

Within the last 10-20 years, art institutions and academia have shown great interest in the feminist avantgardes of the 1970s. The reactualization of the 1970s coincides with contemporary artistic and philosophical practices of the so-called material and posthuman ‘turn(s)’. What does contemporary aesthetics owe to the explorations of the agency of matter in 1970s feminist art? My PhD project is part of the research project The Feminist Legacy in Art Museums (FLAME). FLAME investigates the institutionally marginalized practices of a Norwegian feminist avantgarde of the 1970s. My presentation will challenge the myth of the so-called essentialism of the 1970s, a critique that goes hand in hand with the prevailing discomfort with body and matter in Western culture. I will do so by sharing my work on artist Sidsel Paaske’s (1937-1980) graphical score *Blått brev* (Blue Letter). The piece measures 22 meters in length and was made for Molde jazz festival in 1979. At the opening of the festival, musicians improvised to the piece made in watercolor on parchment. *Blått brev* is an exploration of the watery rhythms and flows shaping the human body as well as deep time geological events. Differing from the explicit political art that characterizes the practices of many of Paaske’s male colleagues, I will discuss how *Blått brev* can be said to embody a feminist material politics.

Katrine Annesdatter-Madsen is a PhD Fellow in art history at the University of Bergen, Norway. She holds a BA and MA in Scandinavian studies and visual art and visual culture from Aarhus University. She is part of the NFR-funded research project The Feminist Legacy in Art Museums (FLAME). Her project develops a (new) materialist and posthuman approach to feminist art in 1970’s Norway. She explores themes such as water and rhythm, metamorphoses of body and nature, care for matter, play and imagination. Her overall research interests are: women’s avantgarde art in the 20th century, relational art, affect theory, posthumanism and (new) materialism.

16. marts 2023

Affekter, interfaces og begivenheder i kunst og kultur

Bodil Marie Stavning Thomsen

Walter Benjamins essay “Kunstværkets i dets tekniske reproducerbarheds tidsalder” (1936) nævnes ofte i studier af digitale medier. Benjamin så filmmediet som en kirurgisk kunstform, der var mere på niveau med de sansemæssige betingelser i de nye metropoler, end dadaismen og surrealismen. Gilles Deleuze beskrev senere filmen som ’en åndelig automat’ for hvilken ’hjernen var skærm’ (Deleuze 1983 og 1985). Begge så filmens uafhængige bevægelse og redigeringsteknikker som en gevinst, der kunne inspirere tanken. Deleuze udviklede et begreb om tidsbilledet som begivenhed og foregreb de affektive virkninger af det elektroniske og digitale (lyd)billedes signalstøj med begrebet ’det signaletiske materiale’.

Ud over målinger og analyser af data-trafikkens globale spredning ser man i dag sjældent studier af de affektive potentialer i vores tids digitale interfaces. Tværtimod er interessen for indholdsanalyser vedholdende, skønt alle ved, at ‘indhold’ er udskiftelig og især skal intensivere trafikken. Dette oplæg vil diskutere interfacets affektive og æstetiske potentialer i en tid, hvor såkaldte AI-løsninger siges at udfordre humanistiske studier. Lars von Triers, Jesper Justs og Anne Imhofs værker fremviser på forskellig vis de affektive relationers betydning for, om interface-møder engagerer eller reducerer intensiteten i kunstneriske performances og begivenheder. Oplæggets afsæt er Imhofs eksplicite iscenesættelse af former for fravær og melankoli i performance *Faust* (2017).

Bodil Marie Stavning Thomsen er professor i kultur og medier ved Nordiske Studier og Oplevelsesøkonomi, Institut for Kommunikation og Kultur, Aarhus Universitet. Hendes interesse ligger inden for felterne visuel kultur, film- og mediefilosofi. Seneste udgivelser på engelsk er *Lars von Trier’s Renewal of Film. Signal, Pixel, Diagram* (2018); “The Automata of Movement” in *Immediation I* (2019); “Interfacial Modulation of Affect” in *Affects, Interfaces, Events* (2021); “DOGMA and *The Idiots*” in *A Cultural History of the Avantgarde in the Nordic Countries since 1975* (2022).

30. marts 2023

The University as a Work of Art

Tobias Dias

Working and living amidst the daily disasters of the neoliberal university, it is tempting to look at the history of artist-led university projects as emancipatory escape routes to the “edu-factory” of academic capitalism. From Joseph Beuys’ iconic Free International University in the 1970s to more recent cases such as Copenhagen Free University (2001-08) or The Silent University (2011-), artists have long experimented with constructing institutional infrastructures for free, collective, and creative education and research. This has been particularly manifest since contemporary art’s so-called “educational turn”. In this talk, I will revisit the history and present of alter-university projects. Why has the university remained a pivotal point of attraction for socially engaged artists? What does the university have that artists and activists want? And not least: to what extent can the artist-led universities be seen as models for a new or future university? Rather than simple utopian “solutions” or a kind of aesthetic Ersatzpolitik, I will discuss how some of the cases can be seen as contradictory “formal” refusals of the “prison house of knowledge”. In an age in which knowledge is primarily seen as a private and financial asset, sanctioned by the authority and infrastructure of the university, the history and present of artistic alter-universities delineate a living archive of practices distributing, propagating, and organizing knowledge otherwise.

Tobias Dias is a postdoctoral researcher in Art History at Aarhus University. He is currently working on the project *A Nameless Science: Art, Expertise, and Infrastructure*, funded by the Novo Nordisk Foundation. His writings have appeared in journals and magazines like *e-flux journal*, *Art-Agenda*, *Texte zur Kunst*, *Periskop*, *ARKEN Bulletin*, and in several anthologies. He is currently completing a book manuscript on the prehistory of “artistic research”. He is also a member of the extra-disciplinary collective Organ of the Autonomous Sciences.

27. april 2023

The modus operandi of hybridity

How text and images work together in photographer's memoirs.

Arnaud Schmitt

The last section of Timothy Dow Adams's seminal *Light Writing & Life Writing – Photography in Autobiography* focuses on autobiographers who are also photographers. My presentation will move from Dow Adams's historical approach to a semantic one, studying how the text/image relationship builds but also disrupts the autobiographical narrative. In terms of theoretical approach regarding the visual analysis, and more precisely "visual narratology," I will draw from obvious sources such as W.J.T. Mitchell's *Picture Theory* but also from less obvious ones whose primary subject is graphic narratives, such as Scott McCloud's *Making Comics* or Thierry Groensteen's *Bande dessinée et narration. Système de la bande dessinée 2*.

Beyond the usual references such as Roland Barthes's *Camera Obscura* and Susan Sontag's *On Photography*, the use of photography in autobiography has been amply explored, though rarely from a semantic point of view, even in landmark texts such as François Brunet's *Photography and Literature*, Marianne Hirsh's *Family Frames* or Linda Haverty Rugg's *Picturing Ourselves ... Photographers* obviously have a much more complex approach when it comes to the use of pictures in their autobiographical accounts as, in their case, words are the 'extraneous element'. Their primary mode of expression is visual, but writing a memoir complicates the way they relate to their art and they have to make do with a form that is not familiar.

Arnaud Schmitt is a Full Professor at the University of Bordeaux, France. He has published several books and multiple articles on autofiction and autobiography, more recently *The Photographer as Autobiographer* (Palgrave 2022).

8. juni 2023

Performing Nationalism: The Russian Case

Yana Meerzon

When Russia started its unlawful invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, many Russian citizens took to the streets to protest the actions of their government. The regime responded immediately: it shut down independent media, artistic projects, and companies, and it introduced administrative fines, criminal charges, and imprisonment up to 15 years as punishment for any Russian citizen who dared to doubt the regime and its military actions. The war has only intensified mechanisms of oppression and censorship that have come to define what sociologist, Lev Gudkov calls Russia's new nationalism or "recurring totalitarianism" (2022).

In this presentation, I will discuss my current research project "Between Migration and Neo-Nationalism(s): Performing the European Nation - Playing a Foreigner", which was funded by The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and my first forthcoming book publication related to this work. Following Homi Bhabha's (1990) prompt on reading "nationalism" as a set of discursive and performative practices, my book *Performing Nationalism: The Russian Case* (Cambridge *Elements in Theatre, Performance and the Political* 2023) examines a range of performative strategies used by the Russian state to uphold its nationalist project. Simultaneously, it maps artistic strategies of resistance to the ideology of nationalism as employed by Russian theatre artists and companies. In my presentation, I will discuss such important practices of resistance to homogenizing practices of nationalism as restoring forgotten historical figures and events, feminist performance practices, strategies of decolonization and representation of racialized migrants on Russian stage.

Professor Yana Meerzon teaches for the Department of Theatre, University of Ottawa. For the past two decades of her scholarly career, Dr. Meerzon has been studying theatrical representations of migration created by migrant artists in Europe and North America. With the rise of political populism, religious fundamentalism, and return of the idea of nation state, Dr. Meerzon turned to the questions of borders and politics of nation building, within which the current practices and discussions of global migration take place, the subject of this presentation.

Dr. Meerzon is the author of three books, with the latest volume *Performance, Subjectivity, Cosmopolitanism* published by Palgrave in August 2020. She co-edited nine collections of scholarly articles, most recently *Palgrave Handbook on Theatre and Migration* (2023), with Professor Stephen E. Wilmer (Trinity College, Dublin).

