

Aesthetic Seminar

Spring 2016

*All talks held 14.15 at Kasernen, Aarhus University,
Langelandsgade 139, Aarhus C, Building 1584, Room 124,
unless otherwise stated*

*Seminars are organized by Jacob Lund & Jacob Wamberg on behalf of
Fællesæstetisk Forskergruppe, Aarhus University*

03.03.2016 Spyros Papapetros: *The Tectonics of the Soul: Architecture, Animism, and Tree Worship*

Following the emergence of novel theories of tectonics, mid-19th-century architectural discourses were informed by a resurgence of interest in animism. These animist descriptions were a veritable amalgam of earlier philosophical theories of the soul from Aristotle to the early modern medical philosopher Georg-Ernest Stahl and ethnographic accounts of the religious beliefs of non-Western cultures granting agency in natural or manmade objects, including trees, buildings, implements, and bodily adornments. The epistemological impact of animism was implicitly catholic, expanding from imaginative theories of tectonics, such as the study of ancient Greek “tree worship” by the preeminent theorist of tectonics Karl Boetticher to the emerging discipline of architectural history, including the first monographic descriptions of non-Western monuments, such as the study or “tree and serpent worship” retraced on the facades of two Indian monuments by “world” architectural historian James Fergusson.

10.03.2016 Nina Möntmann: *A Fluid Game: The Dematerialization of Society and Its Art Objects*

The lecture examines the immaterial character of digitalization and virtuality as a formative feature of current societal realities against the background of an art historical discussion of the phenomenon of dematerialization in conceptual art as it was analyzed in 1968 by Lucy Lippard. Under different circumstances than in the 1970s today art finds itself again as part of an interdependence structure together with politics and dematerialization.

14.04.2016 Caroline A. Jones: *Visibilities and Invisibilities in the Realm of the Umwelt: Contested Images and the Polis*

Just as every statement requires a silence to render it audible, so regimes of the visible require invisibilities: blanks and voids that shadow and adumbrate what we see and “know.” This lecture examines how the visibility operates through scientific and popular environmental imagery to produce specific kinds of knowledge. In particular, I examine biological notions of the *Umwelt* – potentially incommensurate worlds inhabited by coexistent species, spatially overlapping but epistemically unique. This relates to the special challenge presented to humans by planetary climate change. How can humans make visible global systemic effects, which transcend normal registers of visual culture in their temporal and spatial scales? Which visibilities are most effective in provoking individual and cumulative action? Can we use philosophical tools to shift the balance between visibilities and invisibilities? Are there innovative means of visualization that might produce new collective human sensitivities for the Anthropocene?

29.04.2016 Nikos Papastergiadis: *Underneath and Above the South Only Cosmos*
at 13.15

This lecture will explore the ways the ideas of the South have shifted from the geo-political anti-colonial, pro-development genre, to the cultural-aesthetic regime of transnational hospitality and inter-local affinities. However, whether we zoom in or zoom out, there is always another kind of attention that is often missed, it is the creative practice, the act of making a space attractive to the other, and this is a cosmos, or else we could see this as the world making function of art.

12.05.2016 at Kunsthal Aarhus, J. M. Mørks Gade 13, Aarhus
Peter Ole Pedersen: *Mellem zen og mord: Om syrede detektiver, tilværelsen på kanten af samfundet og hinsides*

I filmens verden findes der et helt andet hold opdagere, som opererer uden for det traditionelle detektivkodes og bevæger sig på den udkoksede vrangside af samfundet. I denne forelæsning vil vi kigge disse skæve karakterer efter i sømmene og forsøge at diagnosticere sammenlignelige træk i deres særlige take på både samfund og eksistens, positioner der bevæger sig lige fra en opgivende nihilisme til et zen-agtigt overskud og samtidig byder os en række væsentlige overvejelser omkring filmanalyse og kunstartens kritiske og emancipatoriske potentialer. For at slå en historisk krølle på fænomenet vil præsentationen cirkulere om tre ikoniske skikkelser inden for det persongalleri, vi passende kan kalde *de syrede detektiver*. Det drejer sig om Robert Altmans provokerende og rastløse 70er-genfortolkning af Phillip Marlowe, Coen-brødrenes mildt sagt tilbage-lægnede zen-detectiv The Dude og P.T. Andersons filmatiserede Pynchon-figur Larry 'Doc' Sportello.

19.05.2016 Hans Ruin: *Signs of Death: On Burial and Writing in Deconstruction and Cultural Memory Studies (Derrida, Assmann)*

In this lecture Ruin picks up a theme that was first explored in Derrida's early work, on the connection between writing and death. The written sign could be seen as a technology of survival (of meaning), that at the same time inserts a principle of death at the center of life, this opening a new way of looking at tradition as inhabited by an irreducible strife between decay and rejuvenation. In the early work of Egyptologist Jan Assman and the group "Archeologie der literarischen Kommunikation", which he and Anglicist Aleida Assmann established in the late seventies in the university of Heidelberg, this topic is taken up in the context of creating a new theoretical approach to the workings and possibility of tradition as such, now understood as a subform of "Cultural memory". While incorporating important elements of a deconstructive understanding of writing, this school at the same time signified the reestablishment of (technically mediated) cultural memory as the over-arching framework for the historical-human sciences, that in the end distances it from the original ethos of deconstructive practice. In the lecture Ruin explores the hitherto scarcely addressed issue of the relation between deconstruction and cultural memory studies, and shows how this hidden link can help us develop a more nuanced understanding of the workings of cultural memory, in particular in what concerns the culture of death.

- Caroline A. Jones** Professor of Art History at the Department of Theory, History and Criticism, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She studies modern and contemporary art, with a particular focus on its technological modes of production, distribution, and reception. Her books include *Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist* (1996) and *Eyesight Alone: Clement Greenberg's Modernism and the Bureaucratization of the Senses* (2005). She co-edited *Picturing Science, Producing Art* (1998) and edited *Sensorium: Embodied experience, technology, and contemporary art* (2006). She has published on subjects ranging from Francis Picabia to John Cage to new media art to biennial culture, in journals such as *Artforum*, *Critical Inquiry*, *Res*, *Science in Context*, *caareviews online*, *Texte zur Kunst*, and *Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne*.
- Nina Möntmann** Professor of Art Theory and the History of Ideas at the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm, curator and writer. Recent curated projects: Harun Farocki *A New Product* (Deichtorhallen Hamburg, 2012); *If we can't get it together. Artists rethinking the (mal)functions of community* (The Power Plant, Toronto, 2008); *The Jerusalem Show: Jerusalem Syndrome* (together with Jack Persekian), 2009; the Armenian Pavillion for the 52nd Venice Biennial. Recent publications include the edited volumes *Brave New Work: A Reader on Harun Farocki's film, A New Product*, engl./dt. (Cologne, Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2014); *Scandalous: A Reader on Art & Ethics* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013); *New Communities* (Toronto: Public Books/The Power Plant, 2009) and *Art and Its Institutions* (London, Black Dog Publishing, 2006).
- Spyros Papapetros** Associate Professor of history and theory in the School of Architecture and a member of the executive committee of the program in European Cultural Studies and the program in Media and Modernity at Princeton University. He is the author of *On the Animation of the Inorganic: Art, Architecture, and the Extension of Life* (University of Chicago Press, 2012) and the co-editor of *Retracing the Expanded Field: Encounters between Art and Architecture* (MIT Press, 2014). He is currently a fellow at the American Academy in Berlin completing a second personal book project entitled *World Ornament: Body, Architecture, and Adornment on a Global Scale*.
- Nikos Papastergiadis** Director of the Research Unit in Public Cultures, based at The University of Melbourne. He is a Professor in the School of Culture and Communication at The University of Melbourne and founder – with Scott McQuire – of the Spatial Aesthetics research cluster. He is Project Leader of the Australian Research Council Linkage Project, 'Large Screens and the Transnational Public Sphere', and Chief Investigator on the ARC Discovery Project 'Public Screens and the Transformation of Public Space'. His publications include *Modernity as Exile* (1993), *Dialogues in the Diaspora* (1998), *The Turbulence of Migration* (2000), *Metaphor and Tension* (2004) *Spatial Aesthetics: Art Place and the Everyday* (2006), *Cosmopolitanism and Culture* (2012). He is also the author of numerous essays, which have been translated into over a dozen languages and appeared in major catalogues such as the Biennales of Sydney, Liverpool, Istanbul, Gwangju, Taipei, Lyon, Thessaloniki and Documenta 13.
- Peter Ole Pedersen** Adjunkt ved Aarhus Universitet og beskæftiger sig med populærkultur, dokumentarfilm og samtidskunst. For tiden arbejder han på et praksis-baseret forskningsprojekt om samtidens dokumentationskultur og dens relation til kunst og film. Projektet er støttet af Novo Nordisk Fonden.
- Hans Ruin** Professor of Philosophy at Södertörn University, Stockholm. He is President of the Nordic Society for Phenomenology, Co-editor of Nietzsche's Collected Works in Swedish, Member of the Board of Nietzsche Studien, Sats and Jahrbuch für Hermeneutische Philosophie. He is also Co-Editor of Södertörn Philosophical Studies and responsible for the 6-year research program Time, Memory and Representation (www.histcon.se), 2010-16. Ruin has published around one hundred articles and chapters in peer reviewed journals and books, mainly on phenomenology and hermeneutics. He has edited and published around ten books, most recently *Teknik, fenomenologi och medialitet*, ed. with L. Dahlberg (2012); *Frihet, ändlighet, historicitet. Essäer om Heideggers filosofi* (2013), and *Historiens hemvist* (2016).

