

## Concepts and Problems in Art, Culture and Aesthetics

Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy, Kingston University London  
Faculty of Aesthetics, Södertörn University, Stockholm, Centre for Research in  
Artistic Practice under Contemporary Conditions, Aarhus University.

3 one-day workshops – spring 2024, 2025, 2026 – one in each institution.  
Each one-day workshop: 12 PhD student presentations from across the three  
institutions.

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### ABSTRACTS

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#### **Contemporary art and curating in an age of transparency: Lutz Bacher's Do You Love Me?**

The age of transparency refers to the omnipresence of the discourse on  
transparency in contemporary political and public life, defined by vocal and sustained  
calls for the disclosure of and unimpeded access to information. The discourse  
seems to be supported by the development in digital information and communication  
technologies and to be compatible with the 'infosphere'. In the field of contemporary  
art, transparency has been imported as an ethical and critical value both at the levels  
of exhibition-making, artistic production and institutional infrastructure. The proposed  
benefits of this value includes accountability, redistribution and participation.

Through a close reading of the late artist Lutz Bacher's work *Do You Love Me?*  
(1995, 2012), I will attempt to unpack some of the meanings or logics of the concept  
of transparency in relation to identity, autonomy and authorship. Bacher often played  
with her own visibility making use of personal conversations and relationships while  
working under an assumed name. In the 12-hour long video and subsequent  
publication *Do You Love Me?* Bacher interviews colleagues and friends about herself  
and her work - enabling a sort of reverse mode of confessing. The piece seems to  
embody an ideology of transparency, laying bare the production relations and the  
author's identity. However, I will argue that Bacher's work rather disrupts or plays  
with mechanisms of transparency.

**Hedy Cohen**, PhD Student, CRMEP, Kingston University.

#### **Adorno and Sound: Concepts as Problems and Problems as Non-Conceptual**

This paper starts with Adorno's critique of concepts: how they fail to capture reality,  
how they are detached from expression, a notion which Adorno refers to as

concepts' "aesthetic dignity" and how they thus fail to present and criticize problems in our culture: alienation, instrumentalization, and so on. Yet, on the other hand, concepts remain "that which establishes an inescapable relationship to the universal and to society". Thus, we cannot reduce them (Adorno's critique of Husserl), erect a new language (Adorno's critique of Heidegger), or use them to imitate a material external to them (Adorno's critique of Rilke). We are thus left with a question: how to use concepts while presenting their inability to express? In Adorno's words: the cognitive utopia "would be to use concepts to unseal the non-conceptual with concepts, without making it their equal". It argues that social and cultural problems can be represented for Adorno through the non-conceptual as sound, yet without making it the concept's equal. Sound, in other words, must be mediated in language, and maintain a sort of perpetual balancing act with it. Some questions are then raised regarding this gentle balance, through several examples in music, literature and sound art.

**Mats Dahllöv**, post-doc in Aesthetics, Södertörn University.

### **The Concept of Suffering in Benjamin Höijer**

In the absolute idealism of the Swedish philosopher Benjamin Höijer, the concept of suffering plays an essential role, both for his conception of the subject and for his conception of art. In this paper, I will explore Höijer's concept in relation to some passages in Adorno on the same subject. Far from the notion of the subject of idealism as the absolute I that sets itself—"a sphere of absolute origins" as Adorno puts it—most evident in Fichte, whom Höijer criticises, the subject has in Höijer a constitutive relation to suffering. As Höijer writes: "Through suffering first, I am able to feel my spontaneity and to become an I for myself. [...] [M]y whole endeavour must be to become independent of that suffering." Suffering is conceived both as *the* basic human feeling, where the absolute "most nobly and properly" appears, and as external constraints to strive against. Following Kantian terminology, the external constraints are termed natural necessity, but Höijer occasionally also associates them with an oppressive and unfree society. The origin of art is also linked to suffering, where the basic feeling of suffering is worked out and transformed into aesthetic pleasure, which, however, retains a remnant of the original suffering. Regarding the individual artwork, Höijer insists that it must have a connection to its time and its society, explicitly criticising the idea of (a new) mythology. In my reading, I will develop Höijer's ideas in a critical direction. In the words of Adorno: "The need to give voice to suffering is the condition of all truth. For suffering is the objectivity which weighs on the subject; what it experiences as most subjective, its expression, is objectively mediated."

**Anna Enström**, Fellow and Associate Professor in Aesthetics, Södertörn University.

### **A Kantian category? On the concept of knowledge in relation to contemporary artistic practice**

This project aims to clarify the signification of the 'epistemic' for artistic meaning-making in today's discussions about art and knowledge. For years, research-oriented practices, using archival or documentative methods, have characterized prestigious exhibitions such as the Venice Biennale and Documenta. There has also been extensive debate about the consequences of the academization of fine art by artistic research. Just as 'beauty' was an operative aesthetic category in the 18th century, 'knowledge' is now posited as such a category for the production and reception of art. What are the philosophical and conceptual-historical conditions for such an assumption? This project examines the reunion of knowledge and aesthetics observed both in art with direct knowledge claims and in works that address postcolonial, affect-theoretic, or new materialist critiques of the concept of knowledge. Immanuel Kant's (1724-1804) theories on, and separation of, knowledge and aesthetics have played a crucial role in establishing the autonomy of art in Western modernity. Against this background, the project analyzes how Kant's distinctions between the components of knowledge relate to his depiction of the 'knowing' of art in relation to science and craft. In this way, a new area of meaning-making in Kant's aesthetics can be defined, clarifying the meaning of art's knowing. The project thus intends at contributing to the expansion of our understanding of Kantian aesthetics as well as a central current in contemporary art.

**Mathias Hindkjær Overgaard**, PhD student, Art as Forum and Department of Arts and Cultural Studies University of Copenhagen

### **Enlivenment as a social and aesthetic concept**

In his *Lectures on Fine Art*, Hegel repeatedly ascribes a specific mode and a specific function to works of art. The mode centers around notions of life and reality and how these notions are anything but static; rather they need continuous actualization in order to become what they are. The words Hegel use for this mode through which liveliness and a sense of reality is achieved is *enlivenment* (Belebung or Lebendigkeit), and the corresponding word *realization* (Verwirklichung). It signals a process where shared concepts, ideas, and beliefs that have gone dead or dry (or risk doing so) are revitalized and gains renewed presence and sensible appearance through the artwork. For Hegel, art is important for the maintenance of a culture's practical life because such a life can become alienated if it is not enlivened periodically. With outset in the understanding of the concept of enlivenment as a mode through which a culture or society actualizes its common beliefs in a sensible form, I want to draw a connection between aesthetics and the theoretical tradition within the social sciences that goes under the name ritual studies. Ritual theory is likewise structured around the idea that what is shared among members of a community must be performed and manifested in visual and affective expressions in order to check the force and meaningfulness of these common beliefs, principles,

imaginings etc. That is, society needs the ritual as a social mechanism to “become conscious of itself and keep the sense it has of itself at the acquired intensity,” as Émile Durkheim has phrased it. Through a joint reading, I suggest that a reconceptualization of enlightenment enable us to capture a ritualistic (which is to say, societal) role and function in art. In other word, a concept that enable us to understand art as an integral social infrastructure that is important for society since it gives sensible expression and existential presence to collectively shared concepts or practices so that their meaningfulness may become a topic of critical assessment.

**Katrine Høghøj**, PhD Student, CRMEP, Kingston University.

### **Intersectionality and Social Reproduction**

This paper investigates the relationship between two concepts at the centre of contemporary feminist debates: the concept of *intersectionality* and the concept of *social reproduction*. The first part of the paper situates the problem of intersectionality in relation to the discussions around social reproduction that emerged in the context of the domestic labour debates. Focusing on Angela Davis’ critique of the wages for housework campaign, I explore how discourses on intersectionality from this era can be seen as critiques of dominant ideas of the housewife as *the* subject of the feminist movement. Understood this way, as a response to a problem, intersectionality does not present an opposition to the social reproduction perspective but rather a qualification of it. However, as both intersectionality and social reproduction have developed from being *perspectives* or *interventions* to becoming *theories*, they seem to have become increasingly opposed to each other. The second part of the paper considers more recent critiques of intersectionality by ‘social reproduction theorists’ in order to demonstrate that these critiques are most often directed towards certain versions of intersectionality that considers it to be *a* geometrical theory of social identities rather than a *response to a problem*. In these discussions, I suggest, the question of the relationship between social reproduction and intersectionality becomes a question of two separate and incompatible social ontologies, rather than a question of two supplementary perspectives on the same problems.

**Soim Lee**, PhD Student, CRMEP, Kingston University.

### **Contemporaneity as Distributive Unity – Techno-Aesthetic Reconstruction**

This paper discusses the relation between elements of Deleuzian aesthetics and contemporaneity. More specifically, I want to ask how further implications of the concept of contemporaneity – a concept which can be originally extracted from a Hegelian phenomenological account of historical time – can be discussed through Deleuzian structuralism. Deleuze’s anti-Hegelianism poses a challenging question about the differential structure of singularity which coincides with the sense-event. In the Deleuzian model, the production of sense results from the composition and

decomposition of structure which is described through linguistic and psychoanalytic notions like conjunction and disjunction. In discussing these matters the paper will present ontological presuppositions of a technoaesthetics, expanding the aesthetic and political implications of contemporaneity. It will proceed in three steps. First, it will recapitulate how Deleuze's definitions of three temporal syntheses in *Difference and Repetition* set out what one might call a structuralist experience of time, through which the different forms of time – past, present and future – are brought forth in the unconscious and preconscious of our sense of time. Here the first synthesis of the living present is followed by the second synthesis of the past which coexists in the representation of the present, leading up to the third synthesis of the empty time of the future. Second, concentrating on the complex structure of the third temporal synthesis, the paper will examine Deleuze's differentiation of the virtual. Here it is claimed that it is possible to bypass the historical and social-ontological complex of negativity and negation and rehabilitate a non-logo-centrist and culturally egalitarian structure of the image, which I want to interpret in the context of the techno-aesthetic genesis of images. Based on these discussions I will then, finally, discuss the structural relationship of contemporaneity to a distributive unity of experience that allows us to understand how contemporaneity relates to technical images.

**Tom Morris**, PhD Student, CRMEP, Kingston University.

### **Rhythm and Duration in Popular Music and Sound-Based Art**

Approaches to rhythm and duration in experimental music and sound art have tended, when presented as installations or in gallery form, towards the absence of discernible rhythm, occurring over long, unrepeating durations, when compared to both classical and popular forms. Well-known examples of the extremes of this approach would be Jem Finer's 1000year *Longplayer* and the Halberstadt 639-year performance of John Cage's *As Slow as Possible*. This paper places this approach in dialogue with a more rhythmic and repetitive form represented by, for example, Adrian Piper's *Funk Lessons*; Jay-Z's performance of Marina Abramović's *The Artist is Present*; and popular music in its broadest sense. It explores the concept of extended pieces and how this contrasts with music and sound that is reused and reimagined over both short and long periods of time. The philosophical implications for technically mediated musical experience will then be considered through the work of Henri Bergson and Paul Ricœur.

**Niclas Nørby Jochumsen Hundahl**, PhD student, Department of Musicology, Aarhus University.

### **The sound of Hope: Muñoz on Music**

José Esteban Muñoz' *Cruising Utopia* (2009) today stands as one of the central texts dealing with utopia and popular culture. Muñoz' draws on Ernst Blochs in theorising that there is "a performance of futurity embedded in the aesthetic" (87), leading him

to closely examine several queer works of art from the 1960/70's, showing how utopia, like queerness, is always in a state of "flux, a temporal disorganization [...] where the here and now is transcended by a *then* and *there* that could be and indeed should be." (97) Always lurking on the edge of Muñoz' thinking is, however, the role of music. Bloch himself theorized music as the utopian art par excellence, in part due to its inherent capacity for *affecting*, rather than describing. Ruth Levitas comments that while the connection between music and utopia is often evoked, closer examination of this connection is rarer – in part because "the skills of musicologist and utopist rarely overlap". (Levitas: 218) Well, here I am! This paper seeks to further Muñoz' thinking onto popular music, firstly by examining how popular music figures in his sources, in particular the black feminist tradition, where music can figure in a different role and are more often seen as "contributors to ongoing conversations, not as 'raw material'" to be analysed. (James: 124) and secondly by examining how his thinking can be applied onto contemporary Danish popular music. I identify a yearning to transcend the now in this music, something that is almost explicitly anti-programmatic and instead gestures towards something different.

**Sophie Pousette**, PhD Student CRMEP, Kingston University.

### **'The Proper': a Property of Nature or Culture according to Rousseau?**

In view of Rousseau's two discourses, both of which presented the world with a groundbreaking, and partially unsurpassed, critique of all those achievements bound up with human civilization and culture, it is only to be expected that he would be remembered as hosting a sentimental longing for our return to an undefiled state of nature. Yet, this fails to consider that Rousseau's own view of human nature remained largely determined in the negative, and that his proposition could be defined as the suggestion, summarized by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, that 'The nature of man is not to have a nature.' Rousseau, observes Lacoue-Labarthe, advanced a thesis of 'transcendental negativity', or 'the idea of an originary lack in man, of an essential defect (*defaut*) of nature'. Hence the curious fact, as Derrida remarks in *Of Grammatology*, that 'supplementarity makes possible all that constitutes the property of man: speech, society, passion.' The seeming contradiction is brought to a climax in Rousseau's analysis of *amour-propre*, the 'perverse supplement' that substitutes authentic need for those unnatural desires that prompts our degeneration into civilization. *Amour-propre* is all but 'proper' to Man and, yet, the condition of possibility for her acquiring those properties that she is born to possess - most remarkably freedom itself. In this paper, it will be suggested that the notion of 'the proper' could aid us in dissecting the strange relationship between nature and culture that haunts Rousseau's oeuvre.

**Frida Sandström**, PhD Student in Modern Culture at the Department of Arts and Cultural Studies at the University of Copenhagen.

### **Carla Lonzi and the critique of the crisis in 1969**

Departing from the Italian critic, art historian, and feminist Carla Lonzi's essay "La critica è potere" [Critique is power] from 1970, this paper discusses a crisis immanent to the concept of art, history, and sexuality that dominated Italy in the 1960's. This crisis was the consequence of an orthodox reception of Hegel in both communist and in art historical practice, in a post-fascist context of reproductive politics for the preservation of the nation's "blood line." (Gissi and Stelliferi 2023) During the so-called "hot autumn" of 1969-70, when the "Italian miracle" was facing its first decline, a critique of the crisis (Lonzi 1970) emerged in both artistic practices and in the social activities of the operaist [worker's] movement. The merging of "opera d'arte" [artwork] and operaismo (Bonito Oliva 1970) resulted, quite different from the American or French tendency, in an *informal* modelling of experience with a critical distance from the presumed universalism of party and institution. The withdrawal of 1969 is discussed as a "negative thinking," (Cacciari 1969, Tronti 2011), which in 1970 showed a more affirmative, practical activity in extra-parliamentary critical contexts. In this paper, the feminist, separatist and anti-authoritarian network Rivolta Femminile, which Lonzi founded in 1970, will be discussed as a main example. For them, as for many others, (Tari 2011) negation was imagined as a possibility different from the historical-philosophical horizon within which orthodox Marxism and the Hegelian history of art then operated. To understand the critique of the crisis as it was written 1969-1970, the relation between negation and praxis is discussed departing from Lonzi's notion of the "unexpected subject," (1970) which she never fully defined herself. In this paper, it becomes a philosophical model for a practical negation of the formally critical subject, in the movement of struggle as well as of history.

**Cecilia Schuback**, PhD Student in Aesthetics, Södertörn University.

### **Form and transformation in Lyotard**

In this presentation, a discussion on the concept of form and transformation in Lyotard will be carried out departing from his book *Duchamp's Transformers*, where Lyotard studies Marcel Duchamp and proposes to replace the concept of performer with transformer. In this text, Lyotard looks at how Duchamp seeks the effects of transformation through the concepts of projection, redistribution of energy, machines of metamorphosis and others. This experimental text is an attempt of thinking analogically with how Duchamp worked plastically. What are the implications of form in art and aesthetics in this kind of analogy?