

# *Æstetisk Seminar*

## *Efterår 2023*

*Alle seminarer afholdes, med mindre andet er  
anført, 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 tilrettelagt af  
Nicolas Malevé og Jacob Lund, med hjælp fra  
Annelis Kuhlmann og Jussi Parikka, på vegne af  
Institut for Kommunikation og Kultur, Aarhus Universitet*

28. september – Kl. 15.00 i Kunsthal Aarhus, J.M. Mørks Gade 13

## **Operational Images and Martial Aesthetics**

Jussi Parikka, Anders Engberg-Pedersen, and Daniela Agostinho

Jussi Parikka, Anders Engberg-Pedersen, and Daniela Agostinho discuss two new books: “*Operational Images*” and “*Martial Aesthetics*”. In a conversation led by Agostinho, the authors will address some of the links between digital aesthetics and images, media culture and war, but also other forms of violence through concepts and ideas from philosophy to contemporary visual culture and art. *Operational Images* by Parikka stems from a multi-year research project on transformations of photography and technical visual culture drawing on Harun Farocki’s pioneering artistic work. *Martial Aesthetics* by Engberg-Pedersen examines the historical merger of aesthetics and warfare: it addresses how military discourses and war media from star charts, horoscopes, and the Prussian wargame to contemporary synthetic training environments and theories of military design are entangled with ideas of creativity, genius, and possible worlds in philosophy and aesthetic theory.

We recommend securing a seat on Billetto: <https://billetto.dk/e/book-launch-and-discussion-operational-images-and-martial-aesthetics-billetter-862627>

*The event is hosted by Kunsthal Aarhus and the Digital Aesthetics Research Centre (DARC) at Aarhus University and it is co-organised with the Aesthetic Seminar series*

5. oktober

## **Curating the Networked Image**

Gaia Tedone

Online curation is shaped and defined not merely by its content, but just as much by the nature of the structure and the systems that are used by curators and artists. It is not merely concerned with presenting art, but it functions within a wider ecology of social and technical power relations. This shift is characterized by a collision of different interests driven by economic, cultural, and socio-political agendas, and can be framed as a new space of performativity: signaling a move from curating a set of objects to a conceptual and operational process that puts different constellations of human and machinic agents, images, objects and practices into relation with one another.

12. oktober

## **In and Against the Present**

Joen Vedel

For the past 10 years, Joen Vedel has been working with moving images as the main apparatus for the representation of historical time and developed a performative method of video live-editing – normally deployed in live TV – as a materialist investigation into the temporal aspects of various forms of political events. His presentation will elaborate this methodology by taking its starting point in a series of live TV programs that he created for the local TV station, Offener Kanal, as part of his contribution to Documenta 15. By live-editing video materials from the official Documenta archive (from 1955 to 2017), with material shot over the duration of the exhibition and live-streaming cameras from different locations in Kassel, these TV programs attempted to capture the mega-event of Documenta 15, while it was happening. In close collaboration with different local media-activist groups, as well as Kassel-based musicians and others, he approached Documenta 15 as a revolt, and used the TV medium as a capturing tool and a meeting place between different forms of aesthetics, voices, temporalities, and historical layers seemingly separated by linear time.

26. oktober – **Bygning 1584, lokale 126**

## **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, Dias 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*, Dias will discuss how some of the cases can be understood 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.

Mandag, 6. november – **Bygning 1584, lokale 126**

## **Heat Work: Performance against Extractivism**

Samir Bhowmik

We explore whether performance could offer us novel methodologies to address extractivism. While extractive thermodynamics remains de-linked from intelligent technologies, computation is productively abstracted apart from its energetic infrastructures and environmental damage. Mineral-rich landscapes and indigenous populations of the Global South are as such casualties in the battle with knowledge and resources-for-technology extractivism. We believe cultural techniques of resource collection, i.e. an extractivist vocabulary, is inscribed in body movements along with thermodynamic affect in computational machines themselves. Especially, dances and performances from the extractive Global South, as non-western cultural sources, offer insights into the socio-cultural framing and trajectory of extractivism. Simultaneously, we think the extractive landscape performs itself as a spatial (and visual) recorder of performative movement. Our goal is to bring together these aspects: thermal cultures of AI with indigenous movements (as cultural techniques) and corresponding extractive landscapes. By this, we get to investigate whether (re)generative choreography between bodies, landscape and AI could offer methods to engage with computational, algorithmic and extractive discourses. Our goal is to foreground heterogeneity and non-western epistemic ideas that may affect the dominant governance, literature and ethics of AI.

16. november

## **Melodrama and Immersion on the Nineteenth Century London Stage**

Kate Newey

In this lecture, Kate Newey wants to think about the nineteenth-century melodrama stage as an experimental three-dimensional space, where managers, playwrights, scenic artists and technicians, and actors collaborated to create a new theatrical language. She is interested in the way we can see melodrama at

the forefront of British aesthetic modernity in the nineteenth century, and in the way that melodrama and the melodramatic becomes an epistemology – a kind of knowledge and way of knowing.

Melodrama was the single most important generic innovation of the early nineteenth century theatre, and worked aesthetically and ideologically to resituate human subjectivity within a structure of feeling, seeing, and understanding which was radically altered from preceding classical modes. While there has been a tendency to locate melodrama within a broadly textual field, linked to Romanticism in this paper Newey wants to explore the consequences of placing melodrama in an emergent visual and material culture, and with it, a new kind of affective economy. She is interested in the ways we can interpret the three-dimensional *mise-en-scene* of early melodrama from the archival record, and find ways to read that record with a focus on the embodied, sensory environment physically created on the boards of the theatre stage.

30. november

## **Customising Images: On Photography, Machine Learning and the Logic of the Archive**

Estelle Blaschke

**TBA**

14. december

## **Whose *Bildung*?**

### **The Life and Afterlife of Institutional Self-Critique in Art Exhibitions on Colonial History**

Pernille Lystlund Matzen

Since at least the 1960s both academic, activist and artist-driven critiques have successfully demonstrated how museums are not just containers of public cultural knowledge, but institutions where power is distributed unequally along structures of race, class, and gender. However, it is relatively new that large-scale, mainstream art museums have *themselves* started to challenge and renegotiate their own disciplinary frameworks in public view through temporary exhibitions – particularly with a focus on the entanglements of colonial history and art history.

Lystlund Matzen's research project is focused on exploring both the lives and

afterlives of such institutional self-critiques in selected temporary exhibitions in the Nordic countries. That is; how is the museum's changing perception of its own role, in a sense, "put on show" to an audience through the exhibition, and what traces are left of the temporary, outward forms of critique once the temporary exhibition has gone away? The presentation will take its starting point in a case study from the dissertation, namely the temporary exhibition "Call Me by My Name" (2021) at the Munch Museum, Oslo.

## BIOGRAPHIES

**Daniela Agostinho** is Assistant Professor at Aarhus University. She works in the fields of visual and digital culture, and artistic and curatorial research, with a focus on colonial archives; care and display of contested heritage; and artistic responses to war and imperial histories. At Aarhus University, she is co-founder of the research unit "Postcolonial Entanglements" and the Center for Critical Data Practices. She is co-editor of the books *(W)archives: Archival Imaginaries, War, and Contemporary Art* (Sternberg Press, 2020) and *Uncertain Archives: Critical Keywords for Big Data* (MIT Press, 2021). She currently co-directs the network "Reparative Encounters: a transcontinental network for artistic research and reparative practices" with colleagues from Denmark, the US Virgin Islands, Ghana and Kalaallit Nunaat.

**Samir Bhowmik** is a Helsinki-based multi-disciplinary artist, architect and scholar. He is currently an Academy of Finland Research Fellow (2022-27) at the Academy of Fine Arts (Uniarts Helsinki) where he teaches and explores extractivism & ecology through film, installation and performance. His ongoing project "[Terra-Performing](#)" examines extractivism through intelligent performance research. Samir received a Doctor of Arts (2016) from Aalto University, Finland, and a Master of Architecture (2003) from the University of Maryland, United States. His collaborative artistic works and writings have appeared in *Leonardo* (MIT Press), Helsinki Biennial 2021 and the Venice Architecture Biennale 2021. <https://samirbhowmik.cc>

**Estelle Blaschke** is a professor in media studies at the University of Basel and teaches photography history and theory at ECAL Lausanne. Her current research focuses on concepts of photography as information technology. She held research positions at the University of Lausanne, the University of Geneva, the Max-Planck-Institute for the History of Science in Berlin and the Visual Studies Research Institute at the University of Southern California. She is the author of the book *Banking on Images: The Bettmann Archive and Corbis* and a member of the editorial board of the scientific journal *Transbordeur. Photographie, Histoire, Société*. The exhibition *Image Capital*, a collaboration with Armin Linke, is on show at Centre Pompidou, Paris from September 2023 to February 2024.



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

**Anders Engberg-Pedersen** is Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Southern Denmark, Chair of Humanities at the Danish Institute for Advanced Studies, and Director of the Nordic Humanities Center. He is the author of *Empire of Chance - The Napoleonic Wars and the Disorder of Things* (Harvard University Press, 2015), *Martial Aesthetics: How War Became an Art Form* (Stanford University Press, 2023 – a German translation is forthcoming with Konstanz University Press in 2024), and he has edited and co-edited numerous volumes, most recently *War and Literary Studies* (Cambridge University Press, 2023), and *War and Aesthetics: Art, Technology, and the Futures of Warfare* (MIT Press, forthcoming 2024). He also serves as editor of the book series *Prisms: Humanities and War* with MIT Press.

**Pernille Lystlund Matzen** is a PhD fellow at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art and The Department of Art History, Aarhus University with a project focusing on the practice of institutional self-critique in recent temporary exhibitions on colonial history in the Nordic countries. She was co-organizer of the conference *The Politics and Poetics of Exhibiting – Proposing new institutional models through exhibitions* (February 2023) at the Louisiana Museum. She has previously worked as art curator at *BLOOM – festival on nature and science* and as part of the curatorial team for the exhibition *The Moon* (2018-2019) at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art.

**Kate Newey** is Professor of Theatre History at the University of Exeter. She works in women’s writing and nineteenth century British popular theatre. Her publications include *Politics, Performance and Popular Culture* (Manchester UP, 2016), *Women’s Theatre Writing in Victorian Britain* (Palgrave, 2005), and *John Ruskin and the Victorian Theatre* co-authored with Jeffrey Richards (Palgrave, 2010). Newey has contributed numerous essays on the nineteenth century theatre and popular culture to collections published by Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press, Routledge, Blackwells, and Ashgate. From 2024, she is Principal Investigator on a project funded by the European Research Council and the United Kingdom Research & Innovation Council, ‘Women’s Transnational Theatre Networks, 1789-1914.’ She has held research Fellowships at Harvard University, the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington DC, and the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre, University of Texas (Austin).

**Jussi Parikka** is professor in Digital Aesthetics and Culture at Aarhus University where he is also the director of the Digital Aesthetics Research Centre as well as the co-director of the new research program “Environmental Media and Aesthetics”. For the past five years he led the research project “Operational Images and Visual Culture” at the Academy of Performing Arts, Prague. His earlier books include “*Digital Contagions*” (Peter Lang Inc, 2007/2016), “*Insect Media*” (University of Minnesota Press, 2010), “*What is Media Archaeology?*” (Polity Press, 2012), “*A Geology of Media*” (University of Minnesota Press, 2015), and “*The Lab Book*” (University of Minnesota Press, 2022, co-authored). In addition, he has published several co-edited volumes, such as “*Photography Off the Scale*” (Edinburgh University Press, 2021). Parikka’s books have been translated into 11 languages including Japanese, Korean, Chinese, Czech, Italian, French, Spanish and Portuguese. More info: <https://jussiparikka.net/>

**Gaia Tedone** is a curator and researcher with an expansive interest in the technologies and apparatuses of image formation. In 2019, she completed her PhD at the Centre for the Study of the Networked Image, London South Bank University with a practice-based research entitled ‘Curating The Networked Image: Circulation, Commodification, Computation’(2019). Around this topic, she writes, teaches and curates. She collaborates with several universities, research centres and art academies in Italy, Switzerland and United Kingdom where she lectures on the topics of digital culture, post-critical museology and multimedia languages. She carries out her curatorial practice independently, also under the moniker ://ftp, a curatorial agency she started with Marialaura Ghidini in 2021.

**Joen Vedel** is a visual artist, writer, and organizer, educated from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Whitney Independent Study Program in New York, and currently a PhD candidate at the Art Academy in Trondheim, working on an artistic research project titled *In Search of Now-Time: Live-editing as a mode of research*.

