

# *Aesthetic Seminar*

*Autumn 2016*

*All talks held 14.15  
Please note that venues are changing*

*Seminars are organized by Karen-Margrethe Simonsen & Jacob Lund  
on behalf of the School of Communication and Culture, Aarhus University*

**22.09.2016** Johannes Poulsen: *Patron Saints of Destruction - Violence, Spirituality and the Posthuman in Superhero Comics*

In this seminar, Poulsen will present some of the key aspects of his Ph.D. project through a case study of two recent superhero comic books by the American writer Tom King. Both books, *The Vision* and *Omega Men*, peek into a posthuman future of androids and aliens, but do so without leaving behind two of the strongest forces in human experience: The trauma and power of violence on one side, and the search for meaning and enchantment through spirituality as a response to trauma on the other.

**13.10.2016** Nicholas Mirzoeff: *Appearance Unbound #BlackLivesMatter*

Hannah Arendt famously proposed that politics takes place in the space of appearance. However, the enslaved, women and children were excluded from the classical polis, leading Judith Butler to recently claim 'the right to appear.' In this presentation, Mirzoeff will show how the Black Lives Matter movement has effectively claimed this right to appear using the tactics that he will name as co-presence, persistent looking, articulations of Black and blackness, and fugitive movement. The spaces in which this appearance takes place are spaces of connection and racialized spaces. By claiming the right to appear, Black Lives Matter produces an 'impossible' relation of unboundedness, a moment of liberation.

**10.11.2016** Anette Vandsø: Transduction: *On the Intersection of Technology, Culture and Sound Reproducing Technologies*

How can we understand sound as a constituent of culture, as it is suggested in sound studies? In this presentation Vandsø suggests that we stop thinking about sound as an abstracted, general category detached from its material medium. The presentation uses Gilbert Simondon's concept of 'transduction' as a way to discuss the transducer that transforms acoustic sound to electrical signal – as it is used in various aesthetic experiments and artworks. Through this theoretical perspective she will discuss how such technologies, on a principal level, can act as constituent of culture – of 'us' and 'the world'.

**17.11.2016** William Marx: *'The Two Cultures' Revisited: Reflections on the Hatred of Literature*

On 7 May 1959, at the University of Cambridge, the scientist and novelist C.P. Snow gave a lecture that became instantaneously famous worldwide. Its title was 'The Two Cultures'. It presented the scientific culture and the literary culture as two opposites of unequal value as academic disciplines, and unequal usefulness in the modern world. A heated argument ensued, with the critic F.R. Leavis as the main defender of literature. More than half a century later, what lessons can be drawn from such an episode and controversy? Has C.P. Snow's lecture still retained some topicality? Is the hatred of literature still in the air? And, last but not least, is it still worth defending literature?

**24.11.2016** Anders Eskildsen: *Observing Ephemeral Music-making: Towards an Analytical Concept of Improvisation*

Improvisation might be considered a universal human activity, but only recently (roughly since the 17th century) did the term 'improvisation' begin to serve as a way of making distinctions between different modes of (artistic) agency. In Western musical culture, the concept of improvisation has been used for celebratory as well as derogatory purposes, ultimately marking certain musical practices as distinct from others. Yet even though the centuries-old fight over improvisation's value is still being fought to this day, one of the fundamental ontological problems in the currently emerging field of improvisation studies – how to distinguish improvised from non-improvised activities – remains unanswered. This talk does not provide any finite ontological answers, arguing instead that the distinction between improvised and non-improvised doings should be understood as a practical and analytical operation rather than a distinction between absolute categories. This move toward a pragmatic conception of improvisation allows us to discuss in greater detail what it means to improvise, thus providing a useful vantage point for comparative analysis of different practices of improvised music. The talk draws upon the conceptual history of improvisation and includes ethnographic examples from Eskildsen's ongoing research project on forms of interactivity in contemporary improvised music.

**01.12.2016** Mikkel Bolt: *Samtidskunst, avantgarde, temporalitet*

Forelæsningen vil forsøge at levere et bidrag til diskussionen af spørgsmålet om forholdet mellem avantgardens særlige temporalitet og samtidskunstens ditto, der i flere sammenhænge er blevet gjort til eksemplarisk for bestemmelsen af det kontemporære som multikronicitet eller en sammenføjning af flere tider i en nutid.

**08.12.2016** Ane Petrea Danielsen: *Det middelalderlige ikon som krop: Temporal og spatial nærhed som forudsætning for en alternativ ontologi*

Med udgangspunkt i den materielle vendinger fokus på objektorienteret agens er det forelæsnings intention at pege på en alternativ ontologisk udvikling for det middelalderlige ikon. Gennem analyse af skriftlige kilder vil forelæsningen først pointere det middelalderlige Kristus-ikons pådragelse af relikviets temporale og spatiale nærhed til den guddommelige krop og argumentere for denne pådragelse som forudsætning for konceptualiseringen af ikonet som krop. Baseret på denne analyse vil forelæsningen, gennem skriftlige og visuelle kilder dernæst argumentere for en intensivering af konceptualiseringen op gennem Middelalderen samt dens afsmitning på Maria ikoner.

- Mikkel Bolt** er kunsthistoriker og lektor på Institut for Kunst- og Kulturvidenskab, Københavns Universitet. Han forsker i avantgarde, moderne politisk filosofi og den revolutionære tradition. Han er med i redaktionen af tidsskrifterne *K&K* og *Mr Antipyrine* og har skrevet og redigeret en lang række bøger deriblandt *Den sidste avantgarde: Situationistisk Internationale hinsides kunst og politik* (2004), *Livs-form. Perspektiver i Giorgio Agambens filosofi*, m. Jacob Lund (2005), *I sammenbruddets tjeneste*, m. *Das Beckwerk* (2008), *Avantgardens selvmord* (2009), *Totalitarian Art and Modernity*, m. Jacob Wamberg (2010) og *Expect Anything Fear Nothing: The Situationist Movement in Scandinavia and Elsewhere*, m. Jakob Jakobsen (2011), *En anden verden. Små kritiske epistler om de seneste årtiers antikapitalistiske satsninger i kunst og politik og forsøgene på at udradere dem* (2011), *Krise til opstand. Noter om det igangværende sammenbrud* (2013), *Playmates and Playboys on a Higher Level* (2014), *Crisis to Insurrection: Notes on the ongoing Collapse* (2014), *Kapitalisme som religion*, m. Dominique Routhier (2015), *Cosmonauts of the Future*, m. Jakob Jakobsen (2015) og senest *Samtidskunstens metamorfose* (2016).
- Ane Petrea Danielsen** er Ph.D.-stipendiat i Kunsthistorie ved Aarhus Universitet. Ph.d.-projektet med arbejdstitlen *The Medieval Icon as Body* beskæftiger sig med konceptualiseringen af ikonet som en agerende kropslig protese for guddommen. Projektet undersøger det middelalderlige ikons ontologi fra tidlig til sen Middelalder og giver dermed et bud på en alternativ udviklingshistorie, hvor perceptionen af ikonet som krop betinges af dets temporale og spatiale nærhed til dets guddommelige prototype.
- Anders Eskildsen** is a PhD fellow in Musicology at Aarhus University's Department of Communication and Culture, a musician and improviser, and a former visiting graduate student at the University of California, San Diego. His work on forms of interactivity in contemporary practices of improvised music is based on ethnographic field work with various improvisers in Europe and North America, but also addresses fundamental theoretical contentions within the emerging field of improvisation studies.
- William Marx** is a Professor of Comparative Literature at Paris Nanterre University, and a Honorary Fellow of the Institut universitaire de France and the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin. His books, whose translations have been published in many languages, include *Naissance de la critique moderne* (2002), *L'Adieu à la littérature* (2005), *Vie du lettré* (2009), *Le Tombeau d'Œdipe* (2012), and *La Haine de la littérature* (2015; translation forthcoming at Harvard University Press). He has edited Paul Valéry's *Cahiers 1894-1914*. He was awarded in 2010 the Montyon Prize of the Académie française.
- Nicholas Mirzoeff** is a Professor of Media, Culture and Communication at New York University. He is one of the founders of the academic discipline of visual culture in books like *An Introduction to Visual Culture* (1999/2009) and *The Visual Culture Reader* (1998/2002/2012). He is currently Deputy Director of the International Association for Visual Culture and organized its first conference in 2012. His book *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality* (2011) won the Anne Friedberg Award for Innovative Scholarship from the Society of Cinema and Media Studies in 2013. In 2012, he undertook a durational writing project called *Occupy 2012*. Every day, he posted online about the Occupy movement and its implications. Open source anthologies of the project are available. In 2014, he launched *After Occupy: What We Learned*, an open writing project on the lessons of the social movement. His most recent book *How To See The World* was published in 2015. Currently, he is working on a project entitled *The Visual Commons #BlackLivesMatter*. It looks at the formations of the visual commons from the Haitian Revolution, via Reconstruction and 1968 to the Black Lives Matter movement.
- Johannes Poulsen** is a PhD Fellow in Comparative Literature at Aarhus University. He writes his dissertation on the posthuman in popular culture with the Posthuman Aesthetics research group. He is the co-author of a chapter on the analysis of computer games in "Litteratur mellem medier" (Literature Between Media), Aarhus University Press 2016 (in press).
- Anette Vandsø** is a Postdoc Fellow in Aesthetics and Culture, School of Communication and Culture at Aarhus University. In her current research project she explores the relation between technology, sound and culture. She has published on this topic in various journals and book chapters including *Leonardo Music Journal*, *Organised Sound* and *Lexington's Eco Critical Theory and Practice series*. Other publications include *Musik som værk og handling* (2016). Vandsø is also the founder of the Nordic Network for Research in Sound Art.