

Aesthetic Seminar

Autumn 2019

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

*Seminars are organized by Christian Ulrik Andersen and Jacob Lund
on behalf of the School of Communication and Culture, Aarhus University*

09.09.2019 Mauro Carbone and Paolo Vignola: *Towards a Phenomenology of the Screen* – Moderated by Mitra Azar

What philosophical concepts are necessary in order to understand the proliferation of screens and interface culture? What material understandings and experiences underlie their environments? How can this proliferation be read as symptoms and used to diagnose a current political and social crisis? Engaging such questions, philosophers Mauro Carbone and Paolo Vignola will present and discuss developments in phenomenology – from Plato to Bernard Stiegler – in relation to media technologies.

Mauro Carbone: *Thematizing the “Arche-Screen” through its Variation*

This talk aims at thematizing the notion of “arche-screen,” meant as the ensemble of the conditions of possibility of “*monstration* [showing]” which in the history of our culture have gradually been *opened* by the rupestrian wall, the veil, the curtain, the *templum*, the window, as well as pre-cinema, cinema, and post-cinema screens. This list, however, does not mean to be exhaustive. Therefore, in order to explore at least some of the conditions of possibility of “*monstration* [showing]” that are implicit in the notion of “arche-screen,” we shall go back through history. Nevertheless, once we got so far as the Chauvet Cave, in France, we would have to turn to the mythical Cave that Plato conceived in *The Republic*, Book VII.

Paolo Vignola: *What is Symptomatology?*

Symptomatology is neither a traditional discipline of philosophy, nor a possible application of psychoanalysis. It is rather an interdisciplinary necessity – and as such a concrete strategy - for thinking our present and elaborating a diagnosis which reflects it. Starting from these preliminary indications, the aim of the talk is to give an insight on such an interdisciplinary strategy conceived as a di-

agnose for detecting both the illness of contemporary social life and the decadence of the last century's philosophical concepts. On the one hand – drawing from Deleuze's literary theory and from Stoic philosophy – the talk analyzes the concept of symptom and its ambiguity. On the other hand, it points towards Stiegler's contemporary reading of the Greek notion of *pharmakon* both as source of “exosomatic intelligence” and the cause of proletarianization – conceived by Stiegler as the loss of knowledge (know-how-to-live, know-how, theoretical and conceptual knowledge). Finally, the talk presents concrete examples of the ambiguous relation between symptoms and *pharmakon* in relation to creativity, sociability and social networking, and politics.

26.09.2019 Magdalena Tyżlik-Carver: *Posthuman Curating: The Self in Algorithmic Culture*

In this talk Tyżlik-Carver will introduce the concept of Posthuman Curating by focusing on curating as a technology of the self, an infrastructural practice which performs as a form of biopolitics. This is a very different way of thinking about ‘curating’, which has traditionally been the domain of the museum: protecting, preserving, and cataloguing works which cycle between archives and public display. In an environment where most of us present ourselves to others online, via a range of social webs, and to an audience that we know and do not know, we enter into a complex process of ‘curation by algorithm’ which involves of course not just ourselves and computational models but our feelings, and a stream of content that has been curated to us and, in its reposting or reblogging or re-tweeting, also indicates a personality as we feed the algorithms of the platforms. Asking who gets to write and rewrite themselves, Tyżlik-Carver will consider how the curatorial apparatus exists now as part of an abstract system of ‘modelling by algorithm’. Recognising that curating is now both part of curating content online and management of data-driven user profiling and optimisation she will explore the relation between social media platforms

and their users as part of curatorial apparatus. Taking a cue from Patricia Clough's interest in affect beyond the body-as-organism, this presentation will offer an analysis of curating as a material mode of self-governance and self-censoring performed by a bio-mediated body.

03.10.2019 Carol Mavor: *Everything is Kleptocratic: Mary Glass dances Happening (1970)* - A performative lecture, rich with picture, sound and moving image

Consuming what one does not need, is kleptomania: desire unleashed. Anorexia is a refusal to consume what one needs. Both are related rituals – forbidden secret activities – compensating for threatened or actual loss. Radically, in 1968, alongside Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* (which argues for zero population growth), kleptomania and anorexia developed as a feminist philosophy for women's rights and the environment. As the practicing psychoanalyst Xenia Godunova said in a lecture at UC Berkeley (1968): "Our irresistible tendency to steal things we do not need from the Mother (Earth), is klepto-parasitism, is kleptocratic." The famed Bay Area choreographer and dancer Anna Halprin was at Godunova's lecture and incorporated Godunova's philosophy into her own dance practice. In Halprin's words: "my concern is form in nature – like the structure of a plant – not in its outer appearance, but in its internal growth process. The plant cannot be kleptocratic." In response, this lecture focuses on Mary Glass, who apprenticed with Halprin. Of note are Glass's own struggles with anorexia nervosa and a tendency towards kleptomania, which shaped her dance piece *Happening* (1970). In Glass's words: "As lover of the sea, I transported my *thalasso-philia* into an imaginary ocean" and tried not to be neither kleptocratic, nor anorectic.

10.10.2019 Joseph R. Slaughter: *Kissing the Book: Slavery, Copyright, and the Making of (Black) Literary Property*

“Kissing the Book” considers the role of plagiarism and translation in the making of “black” literary property within the overlapping contexts of nineteenth-century colonialism, slavery and the slave trade, and the emergent legal logic of copyright, through the literary lens of Caryl Phillips’ novel *Cambridge*. For more than 50 years, the empire-writes-back model of postcolonial reading and textual production has, wittingly and unwittingly, dominated the metropolitan disciplinary study of texts from Pascale Casanova’s “literarily deprived territories”; at their most facile, such readings cast authors from the global periphery as intellectually immature and culturally dependent – as simply derivative of European “originals.” Notions of dependence and derivation are embedded in our dominant models of world literary systems, and even charges of cultural appropriation aimed at defending the integrity of subordinated literatures repeat the identitarianist property logic at the bottom of such systems. Looking at early examples of explicit and illicit acts of plagiarism and translation in 18th and 19th century Anglophone and Francophone writing, by both ex-slaves and pro-slavery propagandists, I am interested in how the logic(s) of personal property, which subtend both our neoliberal economic order and our neoliberal ideas about identity (among many other things), were entangled together in the realms of literature and law, were being “worked out” simultaneously in the languages of literary originality and civil liberty around the issue of slavery.

21.11.2019 Eric Snodgrass: *Units of expression*

"If you want to change culture, you have to understand what the units of culture are." So says ex-Cambridge Analytica employee and whistleblower Christopher Wylie. What is it that makes a trained data scientist, settle on this idea of "units of culture"? This talk will address a notion of units, with a specific focus on how

certain computationally-bounded units are able to take hold and become particularly expressive within greater computationally-informed cultures. Whether one is speaking of the discrete binary digit (bit) as a foundational unit of information in computing, the use of voxels in MRI practices, the move to uniform shipping containers within logistics, or designations such as the PM2.5 measurement threshold within pollution and climate studies, certain units can be seen to gather particular hold, expressivity and power within the cultures within which they develop and operate within. For this talk, a concept of "units of expression" will be developed and read across a few paradigmatic examples of units of expression in computationally-informed cultures, with the aim of addressing questions such as what environments and modes of culture do these units of expression participate and flourish within? What forms of expression can they help facilitate – or foreclose? And, returning to Wylie's call, in what specific ways might one work to productively improve, resist or change the units of expression currently available?

28.11.2019 Beatrice Fazi: *Aesthetics, Computation, Ontology*

In this lecture, Fazi wants to argue for the necessity to approach the relationship between aesthetics and computation from an ontological perspective so as to tackle, philosophically, the discrepancy between the continuity of perception and sensation on the one hand, and the discreteness of digital technologies on the other. According to her proposed view, aesthetics concerns creation and reality's potential for self-actualization. In this lecture, she will demonstrate that aesthetics is a viable mode of addressing computing precisely because such potential is inherent to the axiomatic, discrete, and formal structures of computation. Drawing from her recent monograph *Contingent Computation* (2018), she will contend that an ontological reconceptualization of formal abstraction in computation is necessary, and that through such a reconceptualization it becomes possible to uncover, within the discreteness of

computational formalisms, an indeterminacy that would make computing aesthetic qua inherently generative.

05.12.2019 Vadim Keylin: *Things to Do with Sound: Towards a Pragmatist Aesthetics of Listening and Soundmaking*

The understanding of sound as the object of listening has dominated sound studies and sound aesthetics ever since the invention of the phonograph shifted the focus from the voice to the ear, from production to perception. However, in the past century, a plethora of new soundmaking practices emerged – from sound synthesis to beatboxing, from interactive sound installations to autotuned cat videos – that demand to reconsider the dominance of listening-centered epistemologies in the sound discourse. The lecture attempts to sketch a pragmatist theory of sound – one that emphasizes the proactive, expressive and creative aspects of sound culture – by revisiting John Dewey's aesthetics. Dewey envisioned the aesthetic experience as proceeding in cycles of doing and undergoing, which manifest in equal measure both in the production and the reception of art. Drawing on actor-network theory, media theory and creativity studies, as well as a number of artistic practices, the lecture explores how the dialectics of doing and undergoing – soundmaking and listening – suffuses contemporary sound art and culture.

Mauro Carbone is Full Professor of Aesthetics at the Faculté de Philosophie of the University Jean Moulin Lyon 3, and an Honorary Member of the Institut Universitaire de France. He is the founder and co-editor of the journal *Chiasmi International. Trilingual Studies concerning Merleau-Ponty's Thought*. Influenced by phenomenology, in particular by Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, his current research focuses on the connections between philosophy and contemporary visual experience. His publications include: *The Flesh of Images. Merleau-Ponty between Painting and Cinema* (2015); *Être morts ensemble: l'événement du 11 septembre 2001* (2013); *An Unprecedented Deformation: Marcel Proust and the Sensible Ideas* (2010); and his most recent book is titled *Philosophy-Screens. From Cinema to Digital Revolution* (2019).

Paolo Vignola is a PhD in philosophy, and a Prometeo researcher at Universidad de las Artes of Guayaquil (Ecuador), where he teaches "Philosophy of Literature." He is a scholar of contemporary French philosophy, aesthetics, moral philosophy, and philosophy of technology. He is the co-founder of the journal *La Deleuziana* and has published several essays and books in Italian, English, and French. Recently he has edited a special issue of *Ethics & Politics* dedicated to Deleuze's political actuality (2016) and, with Sara Baranzoni, a special issue of *Aut Aut* dedicated to Stiegler's philosophy of technology (2016).

Emanuele Andreoli / Mitra Azar is a filmmaker and PhD candidate at Aarhus University working on new philosophical understandings of the notion of POV (Point of View). He is also part of the IRI (Institute of Research and Innovation, Pompidou Centre, Paris) run by Bernard Stiegler and member of *Ways of Machine Seeing* (think tank at the Cambridge Digital Humanities Network). His theoretical work has been featured at conferences held in Cambridge, NYU, MOMI (Museum of Moving Image), Goldsmith University London, among others. His practice-based work has been exhibited at the Havana Biennial, the Venice Biennial, The Influencers, Spectacle

cinema NYC, Berlinale Film Festival, and more.

Magdalena Tyżlik-Carver is Assistant Professor in the Dept. of Digital Design and Information Studies at Aarhus University and independent curator. Her research investigates intersections of computation and practices of participation in contemporary art and culture bringing together art history, software studies, affect theory, curatorial practice and new materialism. She is co-editor of *Executing Practices* (Autonomedia 2017, Open Humanities Press 2018) and her most recent curatorial project *Screen Shots: Desire and Automated Image* was exhibited in Galleri Image, Aarhus in March and April 2019. <http://thecommonpractice.org/>

Carol Mavor is a writer who takes creative risks in form (literary and experimental) and political risks in content (sexuality, race in America, child-loving and the maternal). Her *Reading Boyishly: Roland Barthes, J. M. Barrie, Jacques Henri Lartigue, Marcel Proust, and D. W. Winnicott* was named by Grayson Perry in *The Guardian* as his 2008 'Book of the Year.' Mavor's *Blue Mythologies: A Study of the Colour* "coaxes us into having a less complacent attitude...even when it comes to something as apparently innocuous as a color" (*Los Angeles Review of Books*). Maggie Nelson describes Mavor's sixth monograph, *Aurelia: Art and Literature Through the Eyes and Mouth of the Fairy Tale*, as "enigmatic, and full of magic as its subjects." Currently Mavor is working on a new book, *Serendipity: The Alphabetical Afterlife of the Object*. She is also writing a trilogy of short novelesque books on the art of the 1960s in Northern California: *Like a Lake* (2020), *Like the Sea* and *Like a Tree*. For the calendar year of 2019, Mavor is the Novo Nordisk Foundation Professor in Art History and Visual Culture at the University of Copenhagen. Listen to a new interview with her on the colour blue as part of Phoebe Judge's intriguing series on love: <https://www.thisislovepodcast.com/episode-10-blue>

Joseph Slaughter specializes in literature, law, and socio-cultural history of the Global South (particularly Latin America and Africa). He's especially interested in the social work of literature – the myriad ways in which literature intersects (formally, historically, ideologically, materially) with problems of social justice, human rights, intellectual property, and international law. Slaughter is a founding co-editor of *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development*, President of ACLA in 2016. Selected Publications: *Global South Atlantic* (Co-ed., 2017), *Human Rights, Inc.: The World Novel, Narrative Form, and International Law* (2007) (2008 René Wellek prize); “Hijacking Human Rights: Neoliberalism, the New Historiography, and the End of the Third World,” *Human Rights Quarterly* (2018), “Enabling Fictions and Novel Subjects: The Bildungsroman and International Human Rights Law,” *PMLA* (2006-7).

Eric Snodgrass is a senior lecturer at the Department of Design+Change, Linnaeus University, Sweden. His research looks into the intersections of computation, culture, politics and technology, with a current focus on computational infrastructures and politically-oriented forms of intervention. His recent work includes the co-edited volume *Executing Practices* (Data browser 06, Open Humanities Press) and a PhD dissertation, *Executions: Power and expression in networked and computational media*.
<https://lnu.se/en/staff/eric.snodgrass/>

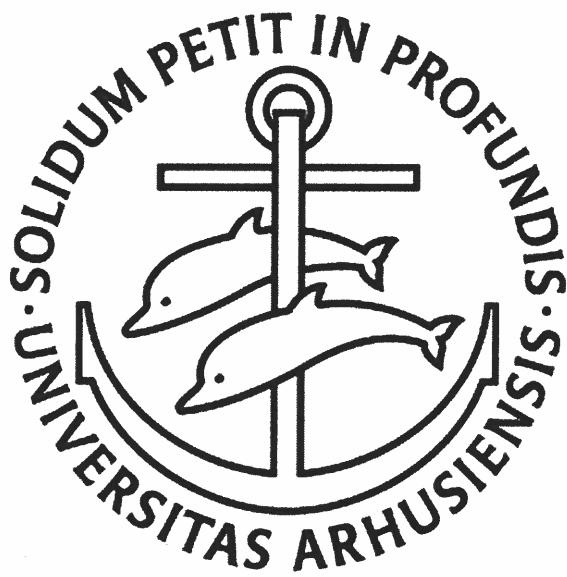
Beatrice Fazi is a research fellow at the Sussex Humanities Lab (University of Sussex, United Kingdom). Her research focuses on the metaphysics and epistemologies engendered by contemporary technoscience, particularly in relation to issues in artificial intelligence, computation, and the impact of the latter upon culture and society. She has published extensively on the limits and potentialities of the computational method, on digital aesthetics, and on the automation of thought. Her monograph *Contingent Computation: Abstraction, Experience, and Indeterminacy in Computational Aes-*

thetics has been published by Rowman & Littlefield International in 2018.

Vadim Keylin

is a Russian-born, Aarhus-based sound art scholar and artist. He is currently a PhD student at the School of Communication and Culture, Aarhus University. Keylin's research concerns sound as a mode of creative expression and the conditions of sound production – material, (inter)medial, social, aesthetic – in various genres of sound art and experimental music. He has published articles in peer-reviewed journals like *Organised Sound*, *Gli Spazi della Musica*, *Opera Musicologica* and others, and presented his work at international conferences across Europe and Russia. Keylin also serves as editor of the book reviews section of the *SoundEffects* journal.

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