

Æstetisk Seminar Efterår 2026

*Torsdage kl. 14.15–16
Institut for Kommunikation og Kultur,
Kasernen, bygn. 1584, Langelandsgade
145, Aarhus C*

Alle er velkomne/All are welcome

*Æstetisk Seminar er tilrettelagt af
Birgitte Stougaard Pedersen og Mads Anders Baggesgaard
Arts, Aesthetics and Communication,
Institut for Kommunikation og Kultur
Aarhus Universitet*

27. august 2026 – lokale 212

Metamodernity and the State of Environmental Comedy

Nicole Seymour

This talk will track five major shifts within the contemporary U.S. comedy landscape, with an eye toward how those shifts pertain to environmental issues. These five include a turn away from satire on the part of progressive environmental artists and a rise in what Seymour and her political scientist collaborator term “conservative camp”—or the Right-wing adoption of aesthetic modes typically associated with the queer Left. Seymour will explore the factors behind these shifts, including the rise of the affective regime that scholars have termed “metamodernity.” She will offer an illustration of metamodernity through close readings of recent cli-fi novels that bear its hallmarks, then conclude with a discussion of what environmental art might look like going forward.

17. september 2026 – lokale 126

Changing the Climate at the Fin de Siècle: Science, Fiction, and the Anthropocene?

Sebastian Egholm Lund

At the end of the nineteenth century, a plethora of literary authors began imagining that humanity could change the global climate. Paradoxically, they did not draw on the scientific paradigm of global warming, but rather its perverse inverse: global climate control. Rigorously contextualized by the atmospheric events, science, and technology of the nineteenth century, this study compares how canonical figures such as Mark Twain and neglected authors such as Rokeya Hossain represented anthropogenic climate change as a deliberate action. In the process, it argues that these authors promoted a hitherto neglected awareness of the Anthropocene not through prophetic representations of catastrophic change but Promethean fantasies of control. Revelatory for scholars working in nineteenth-century studies and the environmental humanities, this is the story of the progressive inscription of climate control into Western modernism and modernity long before the advent of “global warming.”

1. oktober 2026 – lokale 126

Plant fever: Countering Plant Deafness via 'Houseplant art'

Anette Vandsø

We live in an era in which everything from the smallest flower to the broadest landscape is experienced and discussed in relation to environmental degradation unfolding on a global scale. One could even argue that plants have become primary sites where these translations between the local and the planetary, the human and the more-than-human, are experienced. In the research project Hidden Plant Stories, this contemporary sensibility – which we have elsewhere termed an “expanded aesthetics” – is developed into an approach for exploring houseplants in nineteenth-century paintings.

In this presentation, I will introduce this approach and show what happens when it is applied to specific artworks, collections of “houseplant art,” and curatorial practices, as we did in the exhibition trilogy Plantfever – The World on the Windowsill. I propose this work as a form of counterculture that not only challenges plant blindness, but also counters what I call “plant deafness”: our inability to listen to the layered stories of care, gender, class, coloniality, planetarity, and ecology in which both we and the houseplant have taken root.

29. oktober 2026 – lokale 126

Honey, Did You Charge the Robot? A Seminar on Robotic Aesthetics and Intimacy

Hanna Gerda Brøndal og Andrea Tešanović

Ideas about robots have haunted the human imagination since antiquity's self-moving automata, though it was Karel Čapek's 1920 theatre play *R.U.R.* that finally gave them the name, *robota*. They have always been performers and vibrant images: technological artefacts born of cultural fantasies, protagonists of countless science-fiction futures. Today, they inhabit our public institutions — factories, schools, hospitals, shops — and are discreetly crossing into our most private space: the home.

This talk moves past questions of function and utility to ask how aesthetics shapes the ways we encounter, imagine, and form relationships with robots. Focusing on the intimate spaces of domestic life, from speculative life-sized sex bots to soft robotics and non-anthropomorphic companions, Brøndal and Tešanović ask what happens when robots, surpassing their instrumental role, start living alongside us in our homes. Drawing on art history, aesthetics, science fiction, theatre and performance, and current research in Human–Robot Interaction (HRI), the seminar traces the unfolding human-robot intimacies.

5. november 2026 – lokale 126

Platformisation of Museums

Bjarki Valtýsson

In this talk, Bjarki Valtýsson will talk about his new book *The Platformisation of Museums*, which will be published by Palgrave Macmillan later this year. This open access book critically engages with the influence digital platforms and platformisation have on museums' practice and politics. Museums increasingly communicate and conserve via digital media (digital collections, podcasts, websites, etc.) and digital platforms (TikTok, Instagram, Wikipedia, etc.). Consequently, the power to preserve and represent is fashioned by platforms and platform providers such as Meta, Alphabet/Google, X and ByteDance. The book investigates the opportunities and challenges that museums face when using digital platforms, asks critical questions regarding the museum's role in a field of cultural production, preservation and dissemination that is increasingly affected by AI driven content curation, and the logics of platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and YouTube. To do so, it collects and analyses a unique set of empirical material from renowned European museums to draw out insights on the pros and cons of museum communication on digital media and digital platforms.

Den implicerede tilskuer i nyere dansk dramatik

Thomas Rosendal Nielsen

En del samtidsteater har det med at sætte tilskueren i en ret ubekvem situation. Når Christian Lollike for eksempel iscenesætter *Jeppe på Bjerget* på Aarhus Teater (2025, 2026), så skaber iscenesættelsen den ene situation efter den anden, der gør det tydeligt, at både publikum og kunstnere bl.a. gennem deres deltagelse i teaterbegivenheden er med til at reproducere forskellige former for undertrykkende, udbytende, polariserende og voldelige strukturer. Man kan finde mange tilsvarende eksempler på implicering af tilskueren både i et dansk og i et bredere europæisk teaterlandskab. Den hollandske teaterforsker Maaïke Bleeker har fx på et tidligere æstetisk seminar introduceret til sådanne eksempler med teoretisk inspiration fra Michael Rothbergs bog *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators* (2019). I mit oplæg vil jeg i forlængelse af dette fokusere på, hvordan sådanne impliceringsgreb kan tage sig ud allerede i dramateksten. Jeg vil tage afsæt i tekster af Joan Rang Christensen (f. 1979) og Julie Maj Jacobsen (f. 1982). Hensigten er at skærpe fornemmelsen for forskellene: hvordan fungerer impliceringen af tilskueren som dramaturgi, altså som form og handling i teksterne – på hvilke forskellige måder? Og hvad implicerer impliceringen? Med god grund er der mange, der ser de her dramaturgier i forlængelse af Bertolt Brechts episke teater, men jeg vil tilføje, at der er nogle ret vigtige forskelle, som det vil være ærgerligt at overse.

BIOGRAPHIES

Nicole Seymour is professor at California State University, Fullerton (US), and fellow at Center for Applied Ecological Thinking. Seymour specializes in environmental cultural studies with a particular focus on queer ecology, affective ecocriticism, and environmental justice. Key publications include *Strange Natures: Futurity, Empathy, and the Queer Ecological Imagination* (University of Illinois Press, 2013) and *Bad Environmentalism: Irony and Irreverence in the Ecological Age* (University of Minnesota Press, 2018).

Sebastian Egholm Lund is a Research Assistant at Comparative Literature, Aarhus University. He has been a Visiting Scholar at the Oslo School of Environmental Humanities, and he holds a PhD in Comparative Literature from Aarhus University. For the last two years, he has been a Junior Research Fellow at the Faculty of English, University of Oxford. He has published numerous articles in field-defining international journals such as *Interdisciplinary Studies of Literature and Environment* and *Comparative Literature*. He has received four academic prizes, most recently, Interdisciplinary Nineteenth-Century Studies' Richard Stein Essay Prize. *Changing the Climate at the Fin de Siècle* is his first monograph.

Anette Vandsø is an associate professor in Aesthetics and Culture, and co-director of the research programme Environmental Media and Aesthetics at Aarhus University. Her current research explores the aesthetics and culture of environmental concerns often with a focus on ubiquitous phenomena of plants and sound. Vandsø is PI on several research and dissemination projects on environmental humanities in collaboration with art museums, including Hidden Plant Stories (2023-2026) partnering Ordrupgaard, the Hirschsprung Collection, and Faaborg museum, supported by the Velux Foundation, and The Garden (2016-2020) in collaboration with ARoS. Latest publications include *The Botanical grotesque*, 2026, the co-authored book *Plantfever – the World on the Windowsill*, 2025, and the projects 'position paper' Hidden Plant Stories, 2025.

Hanna Gerda Brøndal is a PhD student and Fulbright Scholar at the School of Communication and Culture at Aarhus University who focuses on the intersection between art history and social robotics. Her research examines how robots aesthetically enact notions of sociality, with a particular focus on materiality. She has published two articles in *Passepartout – Journal for Art History*, and has presented her research at the Royal Danish Embassy in Tokyo. In addition, she is an associate of the SDU Soft Robotics Lab and a member of Patient-Centered Art and Culture, an advisory board of the hospitals of the North Denmark Region that aims to integrate art and technology into patient healing and staff well-being.

Andrea Tešanović is a PhD student at the University of Southern Denmark whose research explores the intersection of robotics, aesthetics, and science fiction. As part of the research project *The Aesthetics of Bio-machines and the Question of Life*, her PhD project examines how emerging robotic technologies reshape understandings of embodiment, companionship, and artificial life. With a background in transdisciplinary humanities spanning media art, performance, digital media, and cultural and aesthetic studies, she has previously worked with organizations including Art Electronica, the United Nations, and Dimension Lab. She is a member of the SDU Soft Robotics research lab and associate of the Center for Culture and Technology.

Bjarki Valtýsson is Professor of Digital Culture at the Department of Arts and Cultural Studies at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark. His research interests include digital cultures, digital platforms, AI, cultural institutions, cultural production and cultural policy. Valtýsson is currently leading the DFF2 research project Follow Me: The Influence of Danish Digital Media Creators, and co-editing the anthology Nordic Creators: The Conditions of Digital Platform Production in the Nordic Welfare State, to be published by Nordicom in 2027.

Thomas Rosendal Nielsen (f. 1981) er lektor i dramaturgi ved Aarhus Universitet. Han har især arbejdet med dramaturgisk analyse af publikumsinvolverende teaterformer i samtidsteatret. Redaktør på tidsskriftet Peripeti gennem mange år. Relevante publikationer: *Dramaturgies of Immersion: Analyzing Poetics of Immersion and Emersion* (redigeret med Janek Szatkowski), Routledge, 2025. "The displeasure of implication in Fix & Foxy's *Dark Noon* (2019)", *Nordic Theatre Studies*, 36:1, 2025. "Europas tabte sjæl: Post-episk dramaturgi i Julie Maj Jacobsens *Aftenlandet* (2017/2020)", *Edda*, 111:1, 2024.

Æstetisk Seminar

Efterår 2026

Torsdage 14.15 – 16.00

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| 27. august | Metamodernity and the State of Environmental Comedy
(afholdes i 1584-212)
v/ Nicole Seymour |
| 17. september | Changing the Climate at the Fin de Siècle: Science, Fiction, and the Anthropocene?
(afholdes i 1584-126)
v/ Sebastian Egholm Lund |
| 1. oktober | Plant fever: Countering Plant Deafness via 'Houseplant art'
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| 5. november | Platformisation of Museums
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| 3. december | Den implicerede tilskuer i nyere dansk dramatik
(afholdes i 1584-118)
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