

Aesthetic Seminar

Autumn 2017

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

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

21.09.2017 Lionel Ruffel: *Towards a Contemporary Imaginary of Publication*

A tale haunts Western modernity: The tale of a literary public sphere. It places literary communication via the book as the idealized model for a democratic society on the march towards rationality. Moreover, it seems that there is a metonymic link between this literary imaginary and the very notion of modernity itself. Our contemporaneity disrupts this imaginary, especially the very notion of publication, which has again become central during the digital era, which is also an era of hyper-visibility. Publication has returned to its original sense of making public; it no longer denotes a private expression aimed at precise correspondents, but rather one aimed at more and more diverse publics. The whole of human communications is producing a publishing sphere, thanks to the democratization of tools formerly limited to privileged authorities, notably the publishers. If it is true that the imaginary of modern literature is constitutive of the fantasy of a “good” public sphere of democracy then we must find out what kind of societies are emerging from the publishing sphere. And if it is true that the literature embodied in the book is merely the modern actualization of the literary cultures, then how could we define contemporary literary cultures, superimposing practices in and outside of the book (performances, public readings, sound and visual work, fieldwork, literary residencies and festivals, salons, groups, diverse digital spaces, creative writing courses)? These are the main lines of inquiries this talk will follow, after a theoretical introduction based on Lionel Ruffel’s last book, *Brouhaha – Worlds of the Contemporary* (Minnesota Press, 2017), which is a global investigation of the meaning of the word “contemporary”. Ruffel will try to argue that literature has been one of the key concepts of modernity, just as publication is in the process of becoming one of the key concepts of the contemporary.

12.10.2017 Lutz Koepnick: *Figures of Resonance: Reading at the Edges of Attention*

The introduction of new media has recurrently produced fierce arguments and fears about the future of attention, our ability to attend to meanings, objects, and ideas with care and persistence. In his talk, Koepnick revisits past and present debates about the relation of audiobooks and paper-based texts in order to argue for the need to move beyond worn concepts of aesthetic attentiveness. In Koepnick’s view, the mobile listening of audiobooks as much as the roaming passage through contemporary sound installations offer compelling test cases to rethink the very logic that makes us discuss (and often misunderstand) new technologies with old arguments. As it (re)introduces the category of resonance to cognitively centered understandings of reading, Koepnick’s presentation explores the pleasures of half-attentive receptivity as a springboard to develop expanded attitudes about attention and aesthetic experience that meet the realities of a world saturated with information technology.

31.10.2017 Terry Smith: *Deconstructive States in the Contemporary Condition*
At Aros Aarhus Art Museum, Aros Allé 2, Aarhus C

Abstract TBA.

16.11.2017 Mikkel Bolt: *What’s the Relation Between ‘Contemporaneity’, the Capitalist Mode of Production and Contemporary Art?*
At Kunsthall Aarhus, J.M. Mørks Gade 13, Aarhus C

The notion of ‘contemporaneity’ suggests that we are living in what Peter Osborne has termed “a planetary present” where similarities and differences between geopolitically diverse forms of social experience are being represented and explored within the parameters of a common world. The argument being that if the

postcolonial world was characterised by the parallel existence of a multiplicity of times, today is characterised by the interconnection of times that together constitute a global present. In discussions of contemporaneity the question of capital is often downplayed in favour of a focus on art, culture and technology. The lecture will try to approach the question of contemporaneity and capitalism with a special focus on the question of crisis. A side-note will be the complicated question of the presence, disappearance or re-emergence of the avant-garde that historically was characterized by mixing and critiquing different temporalities, aristocratic, bourgeois and popular in the attempt to realize art.

30.11.2017 Hans Lauge Hansen: *Erindringens etisk-politiske modalformer*

Da Erdogan tidligere i år anklagede Holland for at være ansvarlig for masse mordet i Srebrenica, eller da Milosevic i 1989 henviste til slaget på Solsortesletten 600 år tidligere som optakt til Balkankrigene i 1990'erne, var det klare eksempler på, at fortiden kan bruges antagonistisk og inflammatorisk. Denne anvendelse af fortidens konflikter bevirker ofte, at glemsel kan virke mere tiltrækkende end erindring som virkemiddel til at opnå reconciliation og fredsbygning. Den spanske overgang til demokrati blev berømt for sin succes, der byggede på blot at lægge fortiden bag sig og se fremad, men det varede kun indtil erindringsdiskurserne eksploderede omkring år 2000. Et samfunds voldelige fortid kan ikke fortrænges fra den offentlige sfære i et demokratisk samfund, og erindringen af den indgår som led i de sociale processer, der har til sigte at råde bod på tidligere tiders overgreb og uretfærdigheder. Men erindringsdiskursernes effekt kommer helt an på, hvordan de bruges, hvilken narrativ form de gives og hvilke medier de kommunikeres igennem. I dette oplæg vil Hans Lauge Hansen diskutere kunstens ansvar i forhold til bearbejdningen af fortidens konflikter og analysere de forskellige narrative og etisk-politiske modalformer i romankunsten efter 2000.

07.12.2017 Two public lectures as a part of Simon Roy Christensen's thesis seminar:

Thomas Hare: *Zen in love*

Abstract TBA.

and

Simon Roy Christensen: *'Places of Not Doing': Articulating Silences in Japanese Art*

What does it mean to do nothing? Not make a sound? Not think a word? In this lecture, questions such as these will form the primary pivot in a reading of (and listening to) articulations of silence in Japanese arts and aesthetics. In particular, the lecture focuses on the work of Noh actor, playwright, and theorist Zeami Motokiyo (c. 1363-c. 1443) and the broader cultural context of Japanese medieval aesthetic thought, which helped inform Zeami's pioneering ideas of acting. While tracing how forms of silence occur in both as concepts and phenomena of, it will be argued, principal significance, the lecture aims at the same time to present a more general discussion of the aesthetic potentials of silence within artistic practices.

- Mikkel Bolt** is Associate Professor at the Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen. The author of, most recently, *Crisis to Insurrection* (Minor Compositions, 2015), *Samtidskunstens metamorfose* (Antipyrine, 2016) and *Trumps kontrarevolution* (Nemo, 2017). Co-editor of *K&K* and *Mr Antipyrine*.
- Simon Roy Christensen** is a PhD student at the Department of Aesthetics and Culture, Aarhus University. He works at the interface of theory and practice in the fields of arts and aesthetics with a particular interest in intersections of Eastern and Western cultures. With a background in electronic music and several years of studies in Japan, Simon is currently engaged in a research project exploring forms of silence in traditional and contemporary art practices.
- Thomas Hare** is William Sauter LaPorte '28 Professor in Regional Studies, Professor of Comparative Literature. He works in Japanese drama and literature through the eighteenth century, Buddhism in Japanese cultural history, the music of Noh drama and ancient Egyptian literature and arts. His most recent book, *Zeami, Performance Notes* won the Kanze Hisao Memorial Prize in Noh Drama, awarded by Hosei University, in 2008.
- Lutz Koepnick** is the Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt Professor of German, Cinema and Media Arts at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, where he also chairs the Department of German, Russian and East European Studies and serves as the director of the joint-PhD program in Comparative Media Analysis and Practice (CMAP). Koepnick has published widely on film, media theory, visual culture, new media aesthetic, and intellectual history from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century. He is the author of, most recently, *On Slowness: Toward an Aesthetic of the Contemporary* (2014). His current book projects include *The Long Take: Art Cinema and the Wondrous* (forthcoming, 2017), a book investigating the representation of time and duration in international art cinema and moving image art today, and a monograph, *Michael Bay: World Cinema in the Age of Populism* (forthcoming, 2017).
- Hans Lauge Hansen** er MSO professor i spansksproget litteratur og kultur ved Institut for Kommunikation og Kultur, AU. Han er specialiseret inden for erindringsstudier, og var 2011-2014 leder af FKK projektet Den Romanfortalte Erindring (La memoria novelada) om aktuel spansk romankunst om borgerkrigen 1936-39. Han er pt. vice-projektleder for Horizon 2020 projektet Unsettling Remembering and Social Cohesion in Transnational Europe (UNREST, 2016-2019), hvis målsætning det er at fremme en såkaldt "agonistisk" erindringsdiskurs i Europa som alternativ til de antagonistiske og kosmopolitiske diskurser som ofte dominerer offentlighedens etisk-politiske tilgang til fortidens konflikter. Blandt hans seneste publikationer kan nævnes udgivelsen af *Memoria novelada I, Hibridación de géneros y metaficción en la novela española sobre la guerra civil* (Peter Lang, 2012), *Memoria novelada III, Memoria transnacional y anhelo de justicia* (Peter Lang, 2014), y *Conflictos de memoria/Memoria de los conflictos* (Museum Tusulanum, 2015) og artiklerne "Modes of Remembering in the Spanish Memory Novel" (*Orbis Litterarum*, 71:3 2016) og "On Agonistic Memory" (*Memory Studies*, 9:4, 2015).
- Lionel Ruffel** is Head of Department and Professor of Comparative Literature at Université Paris 8 where he has founded and is still running the program in creative writing. He has been the incumbent of an interdisciplinary Research Chair 'Archaeology of the Contemporary' held at the Institut Universitaire de France (2011-2016). Lionel Ruffel is involved in French and international literary and artistic life as a publisher and curator. Among his latest projects, he has convened (together with the artist Kader Attia) "Theory Now" at La Colonie in Paris, "The Publishing Sphere" at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt (Berlin) and "Radio Brouhaha" at Pompidou Center, Paris. He is the founding director of the online literary journal "chaoïd", and of the subsequent series "chaoïd" at Verdier publishing house. He's the author of three monographs: *Le Dénouement* (2005); *Volodine post-exotique* (2007); *Brouhaha – Worlds of the Contemporary* (2016 French, 2017, English), and more than 40 book chapters and articles, published in five languages. His research thread (covering literary theory, cultural studies, contemporary arts and literatures) is a global investigation of the meaning of the word "contemporary" and why the term has imposed itself within the field of representations and practices. Lionel Ruffel has held visiting positions at the University of St-Andrews, Boston University, Moscow State University, Bern University of the Arts and has been a Humboldt Fellow at the Peter Szondi Institute (Freie Universität/Berlin).
- Terry Smith** is Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Contemporary Art History and Theory in the Department of the History of Art and Architecture at the University of Pittsburgh, and Professor in the Division of Philosophy, Art, and Critical Thought at the European Graduate School. From 1994–2001 he was Power Professor of Contemporary Art and Director of the Power Institute, University of Sydney. In the 1970s he was a member of the Art & Language group (New York) and a founder of Union Media Services (Sydney). His most recent books include *The Architecture of Aftermath* (2006), *Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity, postmodernity and contemporaneity* (with Nancy Condee and Okwui Enwezor, 2008), *What is Contemporary Art?* (2009), *Contemporary Art: World Currents* (2011), *Thinking Contemporary Curating* (2012), *Talking Contemporary Curating* (2015), and *The Contemporary Composition* (2016).