

POLITICIZED PRACTICE RESEARCH GROUP

Guest speaker series 2016-17



Contemporary Art and Democracy

Dr Emma Mahony

National College of Art and Design, Dublin



Wednesday 14 December 2016

2.00-3.00pm



63.1.07, Edward Barnsley Building



aed.research@lboro.ac.uk



Jonas Staal, Democratic Self-Administration of Rojava and Studio Jonas Staal, New World Summit – Rojava, 2015-16 Construction of public parliament, commissioned by the autonomous government of Roja (northern-Syria), in the city of Derik. Photo: Ruben Hamelin.

Dr Emma Mahony is a Lecturer in the School of Visual Culture at the National College of Art and Design, Dublin. From 2004-8 she was Exhibitions Curator at the Hayward Gallery, London.

Emma will talk about the role that politicized art practice can play in radicalizing democracy. It considers how, by mobilizing a number of values that are the antithesis of the normative values disseminated within our liberal democratic and neoliberal order (including dissensus, philistinism, imagination, possibility and love) Dutch artist Jonas Staal and Irish artist Kerry Guinan are variously testing out and disseminating alternative democratic forms. Guinan ran as an independent candidate in the 2016 Irish General Election on a platform of liberating art from class. Her Marxist-inspired manifesto of provocative proposals for radical alternatives to the current art system, highlighted not only art's systemic and class-based inequalities, but also the ultimate inadequacy of liberal democracy: its fundamental inability to deliver on an egalitarian society and, by extension, an art system that is not fraught with class divisions. For Jonas Staal, the false limits of actually existing democracy is the catalyst for his New World Summit, an artistic and political organization that provides an alternative and agonistic forum for political organizations that are currently excluded from their state's democratic systems. Both Guinan and Staal envisage art as an alternative political space with a radical capacity to imagine things otherwise. As Staal puts it, art is a space 'where the promise of an emancipatory, fundamental democracy can take shape' (New World Summit, 2016).

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R.D. Laing and the Problem of Experience: Therapy, Community and Education

Dr Vlad Morariu and Jaakko Karhunen
Loughborough University



Wednesday 25 January 2017

11.00am – 12.00pm



RADAR Artspace, Edward Barnsley Building



aed.research@lboro.ac.uk



Photo: Hag, R.D. Laing, 1978, Print made for the National Portrait Gallery UK. Available at: <http://hagsphotography.com/r-d-laing>

'If we agree that you do not experience my experience, we agree that we rely on our communications to give us our clues as to how or what we are thinking, feeling, imagining, dreaming, and so forth. Things are going to be difficult if you tell me that I am experiencing something which I am not experiencing. If that is what I think you mean by unconscious experience.' (Laing, 1971, p. 27)

Work cited: Laing, R.D. (1971). *Self and Others*, 2nd ed. London: Penguin Books

A hero of the British counter-culture and protagonist of an unorthodox approach to psychiatry and of a practice that intersected art and politics, R.D. Laing's legacy deserves reevaluation. It has the potential to provide tools for working through the contemporary connections between the capitalist semio-sphere and the aetiology of mental health. The concept of 'experience', which he develops by reading Jean Paul Sartre and, by extension, Martin Heidegger's phenomenology, is key to understanding how Laing's work sets itself apart from Freud-inspired psychoanalyses and various Marxisms. The same concept provides an entry point to understanding the dynamics within the therapeutic communities at Kingsley Hall and Archway (1965-1972) and the progressive conception of education and learning practiced within the London Anti-University.

In 2016 Vlad Morariu and Jaakko Karhunen conducted research in the R.D. Laing archive at the University of Glasgow. They approached Laing with an interest in the correlation between the capitalist precarization of life and the increasing incidence of mental health disorders; Morariu's research looking at institutional formations and the possibilities of institutional critique, while Karhunen working on contemporary art's appropriation of Félix Guattari's concept of subjectivity. Their presentation does not aim to celebrate uncritically R.D. Laing's thought: particular attention will be paid to Guattari's critique of the Mary Barnes case and Laing's friend, mathematician Gordon Spencer Brown's eye-witness account of what went wrong in the Kingsley Hall experiment. The presentation restages Laing's thought within a contemporary context, which includes reformulating the problem of experience: what is there to say, five decades later, about how and what we experience in the family, in the psychotherapist's office, in the university and in the museum?

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Syncopolitics

Dr Fred Dalmasso

School of the Arts, English and Drama,
Loughborough University



Wednesday 15 February 2017
2.00-3.00pm



RADAR Artspace, Edward Barnsley Building



aed.research@lboro.ac.uk



Mircea Cantor, *The Landscape is Changing*, performance video, 2003, 22'7s loop, colour film with sound.

Dr Fred Dalmasso is Lecturer in Drama in the School of Arts, English and Drama at Loughborough University. He has published on practice-based theatre-translation and on the interaction between performance, philosophy and politics in particular through the lens of French philosopher Alain Badiou's theory of theatre and philosophy. Among his most recent publications is a chapter on the militant image in Fisher and Katsouraki's *Performing Antagonism: Theatre, Performance & Radical Democracy* (Palgrave Macmillan, January 2017).

Fred will talk about *syncopolitics*, a notion he has coined in response to Catherine Clément's seminal book, *Syncope - The philosophy of Rapture*, where she stresses that "syncope is spectacle, it shows off, exposes itself, smashes, breaks, interrupts the daily course of other people's lives, people at whom the raptus is aimed." (1994: 251) Fred will look in particular at how the image of syncope and the syncope of the image might radically displace or dissolve the self and thus offer strategies of resistance against norms through renouncement or disappearance; a recess of the image that he considers as a *sine qua non* condition for thinking politics as what can only happen within a horlieu (an out-place or non-place) of representation: a *syncopolitics* that resonates with what Badiou calls *inexist[a]nce*.

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Guest speaker series 2016-17



Crazy like machines

Chiara Dellerba



Wednesday 22 March 2017

1.00-2.00pm



RADAR Artspace, Edward Barnsley Building



aed.research@lboro.ac.uk



Chiara Dellerba is a visual artist whose work experiments with the potential energy of the human body. Her pieces are often site-specific with an interest in the dichotomy between energy/movement, and time of reaction/determined space. Dellerba's practice is an organic open work structure of experimentation using a system of signs and methodologies. She investigates the unconscious necessity for human beings to regenerate their lives, their environment, their relationships, and their way of perceiving a reality in order to be actively part of it. Since the 2009 she has been exhibited in many museums and art galleries and her artworks are present in several private art collections in Italy and Usa: Marilena Bonomo gallery (Bari), Museum of Contemporary Art (Rome), Alessandra Bonomo gallery (Rome), Valentina Bonomo gallery (Rome), Sara Zanin gallery (Rome), Onetwentyeight gallery (New York), Kiyomiyamagishi (Nagano, Japan), New Art Exchange (Nottingham), Surface gallery (Nottingham), Midlands Art Centre (Birmingham).

Crazy like machines is a dance and visual art project with a social and political backdrop which aims to build an accessible and informal educational methodology to develop an innovative model of collaborative research and participatory performances. Pushing the boundaries between verbal and non-verbal communication to explore the role of immediacy and mediation in drawings and dance to create cohesion in the group, the audience is encouraged to be actively part of an ongoing creative process in the form of performative workshops in order to build a 'personal and non-linear visual narrative manifesto'.

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Curating national narratives

Sofia Mali and Marina Maximova

Loughborough University



Wednesday 10 May 2017

12.00-2.00pm



RADAR Artspace, Edward Barnsley Building



aed.research@lboro.ac.uk



This joint talk will explore the different ways that national narratives are reproduced and communicated through exhibitions. It will examine the curatorial processes taking place in different settings: European national museums and the Venice Biennale.

Sofia will explain that curating in national museums is a process of meaning making, by looking at exhibitionary meaning as necessarily situated in and mediated by culture. She will analyse and explain that the products of curatorial work, are complex political and cultural constructions, which result in the presentation of dominant cultural values, and 'mythological' constructs of national identity, despite the efforts of contemporary museums to 'democratise' their offerings. She will offer her explanation by articulating the notion of 'curatorial bricolage'.

Marina will focus on the role of the Venice Biennale in constructing national narratives. Drawing on the example of Russian participation, she will discuss the relevance of the 'world's fair' model of the Biennale and the changing attitude towards how artists and curators deal with their nationality, and whether they even see it as significant.

Sofia Mali has a PhD in Visual Culture from Loughborough University. She has research interests in exhibition, design, curation and communication. Since 2015, she is a Sessional Lecturer at Loughborough University School of the Arts, English and Drama. She is also an Associate Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. In the past, she has worked as a curator in Greece.

Marina Maximova is a postgraduate researcher in University of Loughborough, PHIR department. Her PhD thesis provisionally titled "Moscow Curatorial School: 1974-1993" explores preconditions, emergence and development of curatorial practices in Moscow.

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