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An AHRC Doctoral Training Partnership

TECHNE Postgraduate Student-Led Symposium

**Contemporary Art, Philosophy and Politics**  
*after **The Postconceptual Condition***



Centre for Performance Philosophy

Friday, 9 November 2018

Cover Image:

Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, *Not Everyone will be taken into the Future*

Installation View, MAK Vienna, 2001

Courtesy Ilya and Emilia Kabakov

TECHNE Postgraduate Student-Led Symposium

**Contemporary Art, Philosophy and Politics**

***After The Postconceptual Condition***

PROGRAMME AND ABSTRACTS

**University of Surrey**

**Stag Hill Campus**

**Centre for Performance Philosophy**

**Teaching Block Rooms TB01/TB02**

**Friday, 9 November 2018**

## **Organizing Committee**

Sylvia Solakidi – University of Surrey

Louis Hartnoll – Kingston University London

Alessandra Ferrini – University of Arts London

Julia Peetz – University of Surrey

Jessica Tupova Feely – Kingston University London

## **Sponsoring Member of Academic Staff**

Dr Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca

Director of the Centre for Performance Philosophy, University of Surrey

We are pleased to welcome you to our one-day Symposium that will critically examine notions of the contemporary and contemporaneity in art, philosophy, and politics.

When the contemporary is understood as the merely concomitant, comprising artworks produced at the present moment but not engaging with the actuality of that moment, it is reduced to a successive historicist category of periodization, lacking any art critical content. Peter Osborne engages with the contemporary as a coherent category of historical time by reflecting on the condition of art in the wake of 1950s-70s conceptualism in order to discuss the changing structure of historical experience. This symposium takes its cues from Osborne's book *The Postconceptual Condition* (Verso, 2017), which argues that in historical contemporaneity diverse temporalities come together resulting in a disjunctive, fragmentary experience.

We are looking forward to your participation in the discussion sections of the keynote lecture and panels, as well as in the round table discussion, which will conclude the day.

We would like to thank the TECHNE AHRC Doctoral Training Partnership for funding the Symposium, the University of Surrey for offering the venue and equipment for presentation, Dr Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca for supporting our application to TECHNE, Professor Peter Osborne for his keynote lecture, Dr Adam Alston for chairing the keynote lecture, Dr Shantel Ehrenberg for participating in the round table discussion, our colleagues who responded to our Call for Papers and submitted interesting proposals, and finally, the presenters in the three panels.

The Organizing Committee

## PROGRAMME

**University of Surrey, Stag Hill Campus**

**Friday, 9 November 2018**

09:30-10:00 Registration

**Teaching Block – Room TB01**

10:00-10:15 Welcome

10:15-11:30 Keynote lecture

**Prof. Peter Osborne**, *Kingston University London*

*The Postconceptual Condition Revisited*

Chair: Dr Adam Alston, *University of Surrey*

11:30-11:45 Tea/Coffee Break

11:45-13:15 Panel 1: Aspects of the Postconceptual Condition

Chair: Jessica Tupova Feely, *Kingston University London*

**Dr Sophie Knezic**, *Victorian College of the Arts, The University of Melbourne*

Contrived Instantaneity, or Contemporaneity as Compression of the Unfolding Event

**Dr Iain Campbell**, *Independent researcher*

Sonic Obstacles and Conceptual Nostalgia: On Music as Contemporary Art

**Dr Manuel Ángel Macía**, *Independent Researcher*

Cocaintensity: From Postconceptual to Pharmacolonial Conditions

**PATS Foyer**

13:15-14:15 Lunch Break

## Teaching Block – Room TB02

14:15-15:45 Panel 2: Activism and Politics

Chair: Julia Peetz, *University of Surrey*

**Dr Tom Snow**, *Independent researcher*

Activism and the Work of Art after the Postconceptual Condition

**Aaron Su**, *Columbia University, NY* (via skype)

Foreclosed Worlds: Aesthetic Legibility and the State-Subject Relation

**Felice Moramarco**, *Art Department, Goldsmiths, University of London*

Towards a new Autonomy of Art

15:45-16:00 Refreshments

16:00-17:00 Panel 3: Contemporary Art and Exhibition

Chair: Louis Hartnoll, *Kingston University London*

**Camma Juel Jepsen**, *The Contemporary Condition Research Project, Aarhus University, Denmark*

World Picturing: Biennials as ‘World’ Exhibitions of a ‘Critical Globality’

**Dr Clarissa Ricci**, *IUAV, University of Venice, Italy*

*The legitimation knot: Shaping contemporaneity through exhibition platforms.*

17:00-17:15 Comfort Break

17:15-18:30 Round Table Discussion

Keynote speaker, Panel Presenters, Dr Shantel Ehrenberg, *University of Surrey*

Chair: Sylvia Solakidi, *University of Surrey*



## ABSTRACTS AND BIOGRAPHIES

Keynote lecture

**Prof. Peter Osborne**, is Professor of Modern European Philosophy and Director of the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy (CRMEP), Kingston University London. He is a long-serving member of the editorial collective of *Radical Philosophy*. His books include *The Politics of Time*, *Philosophy in Cultural Theory*, *Conceptual Art and Marx*.

**Dr Adam Alston** is Lecturer in Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of Surrey, UK. His research explores immersive theatre, theatre in the dark, and a range of themes in contemporary theatre including secrecy, labour and error. He is a contributing editor to *Contemporary Theatre Review's Interventions* and a Creative Associate with Curious Directive.

Panel 1: Aspects of the Postconceptual Condition

**Contrived Instantaneity, or Contemporaneity as Compression of the Unfolding Event.**

Dr Sophie Knezic, *Victorian College of the Arts, The University of Melbourne*

This paper concurs with Peter Osborne's assertion that a conceptual intimacy exists between modern and contemporary art and the problematic of historical time (Osborne, 2017) and similarly posits art as the ground for a re-conception of the ontology of the temporal. The paper proposes that contemporaneity is indicative of a particular temporal modality that I am naming 'contrived instantaneity'. This concept views contemporaneity as modality of time in torsion: not simply anachronism understood as belonging to another era, but derived from its Greek etymology as *anakhronismos* – a mistake in chronology. This notion of chronological error permits multiple temporal points to cohere.

This view of contemporaneity takes its conceptual point of departure from philosophical propositions advanced by Jacques Derrida (1994), Giorgio Agamben (2009) and Gilles Deleuze (1992), pertaining to de-synchronisation, disjunction and the fold as a differentiating threshold. Two contemporary artworks, by Belgian artist David Claerbout and Australian artist Marco Fusinato, embody further modalities of temporality and are upheld as exemplars of contrived instantaneity.

**Dr Sophie Knezić** is a Melbourne-based writer, academic and visual artist who works between practice and theory. Sophie's critical writing has been published in journals and magazines including *Frieze*, *Broadsheet Journal*, *Evental Aesthetics: An Independent Journal of Philosophy*, *Invisible Culture: An Electronic Journal for Visual Culture*, *Art Monthly Australasia*, *Artlink* and *Australian Book Review*. Her work has been widely exhibited in artist-run spaces, commercial galleries and public venues across Melbourne. Her PhD (*Transparency, Translucence and the Crystallisation of Time*) was conferred in 2015. Sophie currently lectures in Critical and Theoretical Studies at the Victorian College of the Arts, The University of Melbourne and in History + Theory + Cultures at the School of Art, RMIT University.

**Sonic Obstacles and Conceptual Nostalgia: On Music as Contemporary Art.** Dr  
Iain Campbell, *Independent researcher*

In 'The Terminology is in Crisis: Postconceptual Art and New Music', Peter Osborne argues that the institutional self-understanding of New Music has precluded critical discourse on contemporary art being brought to bear on the field of music. Despite the central role of music in the founding moments of the artistic shifts of the 1950s and '60s that ultimately produced a notion of 'generic art', music, and not only New Music, has often remained stubbornly resistant to being considered through the lens of contemporary art, and difficulties persist even when efforts are made to bridge this gap.

In this paper I will outline some of the obstacles preventing the respective critical discourses on music and contemporary art from being drawn together, and begin to outline paths around these obstacles. I will primarily address three related concerns. First is a musical conceptualism that, through notions like 'New Conceptualism' and 'Music in the Expanded Field', has integrated only some of the critical insights of conceptual art, navigating still through the problems of postconceptual art's formative stages now several decades gone. Second is a continued investment, in the theorisation of sound and music, in what Jonathan Sterne has named the 'audiovisual litany', a theoretical distinction between sound and vision that views them as essentially different aesthetic modalities. Third is a too-hasty integration of the 'sonic arts' into the 'visual arts', a move that fails to account for the distinct modes by which musical practices have developed in relation to their own 'postconceptual condition'. Against these tendencies, I will turn to the notion of improvisation. I will suggest that recent theorisations of

improvisation beginning in music but now taking on a transdisciplinary character, such as those of George E. Lewis in his discussions of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, offer a valuable approach towards considering music as a part of contemporary art.

**Dr Iain Campbell** is an Edinburgh-based independent scholar and educator, and is currently a visiting researcher at Reid School of Music, University of Edinburgh. He has written on topics across philosophy, music, sound studies, and art theory for publications including *parallax*, *Sound Studies*, and *Deleuze Studies*. He received a PhD from the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy, Kingston University London, in 2016, with a thesis exploring experimental practices of music and philosophy in the work of John Cage and Gilles Deleuze. He has lectured in Philosophy, Politics, and Art at the University of Brighton, and is a member of the editorial board of *Evental Aesthetics*.

**Cocaintensity: From Postconceptual to Pharmacolonial Conditions.** Dr Manuel Ángel Macía, *Independent Researcher*

This talk reassesses Hélio Oiticica's cocaine works in order to problematise the epistemocentric conditions of postconceptuality. It does so by foregrounding the sensorium as the crux of contemporary governmentality. My argument is that, instead of pointing to a postconceptual regime of historical unfolding, Oiticica's *Block-Experiences in Cosmococa* (1971–1978) point to a broader regime of sensory articulation.

My talk is premised on Puerto Rican Acoustemologist Julio Ramos' notion of a *pharmacolonial condition* of modernity, which denotes the erratic process of an 'inverse colonisation' of sense, whereby the distributed agencies of colonial commodities—coca(ine), tobacco, sugar, etc.—stimulate the emergence of European rationality and modern temporality (Ramos 2010). Pharmacolonial substances define and 'stimulate' the emergence of modern temporality, intervening to accelerate European life from its slow rhythm in the middle ages. Oiticica's use of cocaine opens up an understanding that brings about a broader sensory regime—a vast sensory infrastructure where postcolonial modes of botanical extraction and chemical synthesis disrupt and syncopate new patterns of contemporary life.

Latin American postcolonial theory articulates modernity and coloniality into a unitary and indivisible concept (modernity/coloniality)—they are mutually co-constitutive of each other.

Inevitably, temporality emerges here as an overarching component of coloniality. Such a characterisation problematises a condition of contemporaneity that is often unaccounted for in US-Eurocentric narratives: that the attempt to synchronise the temporal regime of European modernity across the globe is a salient characteristic of the modern/colonial world-system.

The proposition of a postconceptual condition has been devised to address the changing structure of (contemporary) historical experience. However, the instrumental expansion of the temporal regime of modernity must inevitably be understood through the framework of coloniality. From this perspective, the postconceptual appears as inevitably tied to modernity's overarching temporal regime and the violently expansive but restricted temporal regime of European experience.

**Dr Manuel Ángel-Macía** is an interdisciplinary researcher. His PhD was awarded by the Art Department, Goldsmiths, University of London. His practice includes curatorial platforms for knowledge exchange, lecture-performance, publications, and installation. These projects have taken place in the UK, Europe, and Latin America. As a member and co-founder of the Goldsmiths Latin American Hub, he co-organised an international conference on *Connected Histories of Neoliberalisation* in 2016. His current research programme explores the notion of *pharmacoloniality*.

## Panel 2: Activism and Politics

**Activism and the Work of Art after the Postconceptual Condition.** Dr Tom Snow,  
*Independent researcher*

This paper intends to discuss the problem of post-conceptual art practice and global contemporary art by foregrounding the terms of debate in activism. Prominent discussions concerning contemporary art's critical crisis during neoliberal globalisation point to its subordinate relationship to the political economies of art institutions. Yet few have seriously considered the consternate nature of practices – occurring both inside out outside of institutional space – to the paradigms of contemporary globalism itself. I am particularly concerned with scenarios in which artists and activists have critically engaged in, boycotted, or turned their back on institutions (especially biennials) in the post-2008 twilight of the neoliberal economy. My approach, however, is not simply that the 'postconceptual' of contemporary art can be best discussed as a hangover/hegemony of the North-American neo-

avant-garde that places the institution as the central object of critique. It is, rather, to take stock of discursive *equivalences* and *conflicts* occurring between formal and informal art practices as they have emerged in contention with institutionalised discourses of globalisation. Artists' participation in the recent rush of social movements, from the anti-austerity campaigns in southern Europe, uprisings across the Arab-speaking world, the Occupy movements, to anti-authoritarian campaigns in Turkey, and after, has simultaneously signalled an exodus from institutional ascendancy of what constitutes contemporary art; regardless of what bombastic curatorial parlance might claim, or what market-driven patronage aims to maintain. This paper will propose that aesthetic and artistic strategies 'in the streets' have more thoroughly impacted on perception of the contemporary global condition. Drawing on crises in classification of the art object, as much as class divisions that activism's new visual culture might represent, I will further ask whether 'postconceptual' method helps to foreground heterogeneity rather than heteronomy in rethinking the now inherently fragmented image of globalisation; simultaneously offering a reproach to writing global art history in the present.

**Dr Tom Snow** was recently awarded a PhD in the History of Art by University College London. His research examines the intersection of critical art practice, activism, and the politics of globalisation.

**Foreclosed Worlds: Aesthetic Legibility and the State-Subject Relation.** Aaron Su, *Columbia University, NY*

Insofar as the shift to postconceptualism discloses new opportunities for a relational aesthetics, the question of legibility becomes urgent. If one of the premises of Osborne's *The Postconceptual Condition* is the extant operation of a contemporaneity composed of diverse and discrete temporalities, then what to make of the languages that subtend these moments and their incompatibilities? How does the shifting referent of postconceptual art intervene in and translate values across global art production? These are the pressing questions opened up by the dispersal of historical temporalities and the disjuncture of language on which the entire discipline of translation studies rests. The emergence of new forms of state propaganda throughout the People's Republic of China and their recent social effects index the political consequence of particular nonrepresentational art forms, and thus provide a methodology for adequating the category of postconceptualism

with material transformations in the era of globalization. These art-products at hand lack imagery or adornment, and are usually comprised of ten to twenty phrases linked to abstract state aspirations, such as “freedom,” “progress,” “unity,” and “equality.” As such, these words circulate without referent, and inspire disparate political imaginations across the nation-state, eliding any legible relationship with the contemporary. I argue that these artworks negotiate and attune citizens of diverse investments to their own historical presents, as well as imagine different forms of state-subject relations that render other experiences illegible. The paradoxical

attachment of both dominant and minoritarian communities to the values espoused by the state demonstrate this particular efficacy. If this always-already political art functions here as a lever for state control, then what are the resistive possibilities of a postconceptualism in light of the question of legibility? To this end, I meditate on new formulations of postconceptualism that offer up new opportunities for dramatic social transformation.

**Aaron Su** studies cultural anthropology at Columbia University, with a geopolitical emphasis on ordinary urban life in the United States and China. He takes as his primary interests political economy and aesthetics, particularly in relation to new media and its concomitant social transformations. In addition to visual culture, he attends keenly to the question of language, its poetics, and its worldings. Most recently, his essay “On the Chimeric Subject” appears in this year’s volume of *Journal of Art Criticism*, distributed at MIT Press, MoMA Library, Guggenheim Library, and Printed Matter, among other locations.

**Towards a new Autonomy of Art.** Felice Moramarco, *Art Department, Goldsmiths, University of London*

Drawing from the ontology of the work of art elaborated by Peter Osborne in *Anywhere or Not at All* and *Postconceptual Condition*, this paper aims to expand on it by analysing a phenomenon that is presently challenging the autonomy of art.

The shift from deductive logic towards an inductive bottom-up logic in the field of computation and algorithmic automation has caused a dramatic change of the role played by the aesthetic in culture. Instead of being dismissed as anomalies and confined to the field of art, contingent events and indeterminate qualities have become central to this newly developed form of logic.

The aesthetic has therefore become central to these technologies, as well as to governance, finance, commercial and military logistics that employ them. As a result, art can no longer claim the autonomy that has been fundamental to its development through the modern age.

In order to outline a new concept of autonomy, I will refer to the concept of *mimesis* of Adorno and Benjamin. In *Aesthetic Theory*, Adorno identifies what he calls the “aesthetic comportment”, rather than the production of images and artefacts, at the origin of art. In this conception resonates Benjamin’s concept of “mimetic faculty”, a faculty present in every living being, which can be defined as the “compulsion to become similar and to behave mimetically”.

Revising the most archaic substrata of art and overcoming the traditional concept of autonomy, conceived as independence from other human activities, I intend to demonstrate how art could successfully tackle various issues of the contemporary from an aesthetic perspective without the need to trace the boundaries of its activity. Examples of this form of artistic practice can be found in the work of the artist duo Metahaven and the research group Forensic Architecture.

Referring to the concept of autonomy in the thought of Spinoza, my aim here is to show how, operating in this way, art could enhance its agency and contribute to the constitution of what Guattari calls a “new aesthetic paradigm”, needed to eventually overcome the long decline of Western modernity.

**Felice Moramarco** is a writer and curator based in London. He is currently Junior Fellow of the Art Department at Goldsmiths, University of London, where he recently completed his Masters in Curating. Moramarco also received a Master’s degree in Philosophy from the University of Bologna with a thesis on Adorno’s aesthetics. His practice and research focuses on the agency of art in contemporary society and its relation with other human activities such as politics, technology, and philosophy.

### Panel 3: Contemporary Art and Exhibition

**World Picturing: Biennials as ‘World’ Exhibitions of a ‘Critical Globality’.** Camma Juel Jepsen, *The Contemporary Condition Research Project, Aarhus University, Denmark*

Addressing the topic of international exhibitions as platforms for shaping the historical present, this paper asks: How does the biennial format more than any other exhibitionary platform institutionalises modes of internal world picturing among curators (cf. Smith 2017: 6)? Based



on Peter Osborne's argument that the international biennial as an exhibitionary form has "created a novel kind of cultural space [...] dedicated to the exploration through art of similarities and differences between geopolitical diverse forms of social experience that have only recently begun to be represented within the parameters of a common world" (Osborne 2013: 27), I will argue that the notion of world picturing can provide new insights into the dilemmas of the biennial form.

Taking my point of departure in the Norwegian representation "The State of Things" at the Venice Biennial in 2011, co-curated by Peter Osborne, I will examine the biennial format as an 'epicentre' or exemplary space for studying the arts' 'worlding' of the historical present as a certain "will to globality" (Enwezor). In doing this, I will address the questions: To what extent and for what reasons has the notion of world picturing become a predominant figure in relation to contemporary biennials? And what implications does it have for their articulation of contemporaneity as a constitutive fiction, cf. Osborne?

**Camma Juel Jepsen** is a PhD student at Aarhus University, Denmark, and part of the research project The Contemporary Condition with a project on world-making and contemporary art biennials. She holds a BA in Art History and an MA in Modern Culture from the University of Copenhagen. In 2016, she was a Visiting PhD Researcher at CRMEP, Kingston University, hosted by Professor Peter Osborne. She is an editorial assistant at The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics and was previously a curator at ARKEN Museum of Modern Art and co-founder and editor of the art journal *Internationalistisk Ideale*.

***The legitimation knot: Shaping contemporaneity through exhibition platforms.*** Dr Clarissa Ricci, *IUAV, University of Venice, Italy*

The aim of the presentation is to highlight the role of large international exhibitions in the epistemic development of the terms 'contemporaneity' and 'contemporary'. I argue that considering episodes on the margins (Italy in the 1970s) allows easier detection of the need for neutral, positive, and opaque marketing labels.

The spread of the word 'contemporary' was diachronic. In Italy in the 1970s, the use of 'contemporary' was assessed both in exhibition practice and in the academy; and later, in

Anglo-Saxon societies, in line with the traditions of modernism and modernity, the use of the word was related to the political and economic changes of the 1990s (Harris, 2011).

Using the case study of the international exhibition *Contemporanea* (Rome 1973), alongside episodes of the Venice Biennale's student protest and during the rise of art fairs, I will highlight the need to market temporalities in a different way. As Gregory Battock (Domus, 1974) notes, *Contemporanea* was not 'so Contemporary' (what would Tino Sehgal say?), as the historical boundaries of the exhibition were set around the 1960s and could reach back to 1945.

Exhibition making involved marketing its value and make it extraordinary. The codification of the exceptional as a principle of innovation is a guideline in *documenta's* 'Rules and Regulations' (Grasskamp, 1987, 1996). The word 'contemporary' communicates something which is up-to-date, though not as threatening as 'experimental' or as specific as 'movement'. Since legitimisation is reached when artistic value can be proved, the notion of contemporary was introduced to market the value of a new artistic production.

**Dr Clarissa Ricci** is a Postdoc Fellow at Iuav University in Venice (Italy). She has completed the Ph.D at the School of Advanced Studies in Venice in 2014. In 2009-2010 she was a visiting scholar at Columbia University in New York (USA). She has written numerous essays the latest being *A brief history of the Venice Sales Department 1895-1972. Its origins, operational procedures and decline* (Ricerche di S/Confine, 2018) and edited a volume on the *Venice Biennale Starting from Venice. Studies on the Biennale* (et.al, 2011). She was recently part of the *Contemporary Research Intensive* (Contemporary Condition 10. Stenberg Press, 2018).

### Round Table Discussion

**Dr Shantel Ehrenberg** is Lecturer at the University of Surrey. Her research encompasses the intersection of dance and philosophy (phenomenology and visual culture), choreography, dance pedagogy, kinaesthesia, kinaesthetic empathy (dancer and pedagogical perspectives), and screen dance. Her eclectic career in dance has continually crossed practice and theory.

## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

## Location

University of Surrey, Stag Hill Campus

Teaching Block (Academic Building 21, E3, in red circle), Rooms: TB01/TB02

University Map: <https://www.surrey.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2018-10/campus-map-2018.pdf>



## Travel

By Train: Guildford Railway Station. Please take buses 17, 27 or 37 from opposite the station.

A taxi service is also available from the station.

By National Express Coach: from London Victoria to Guildford Park Barn. The campus is a 15-minute walk from the station.

Further details: <https://www.surrey.ac.uk/visit-university/how-get-here>

<https://www.surrey.ac.uk/currentstudents/campus/transport/rail/>