

Research colloquium Aesthetics: Windows and Doors

Dec 6–7 2018, Lund University

Venues

Dec 6, 13–18:15

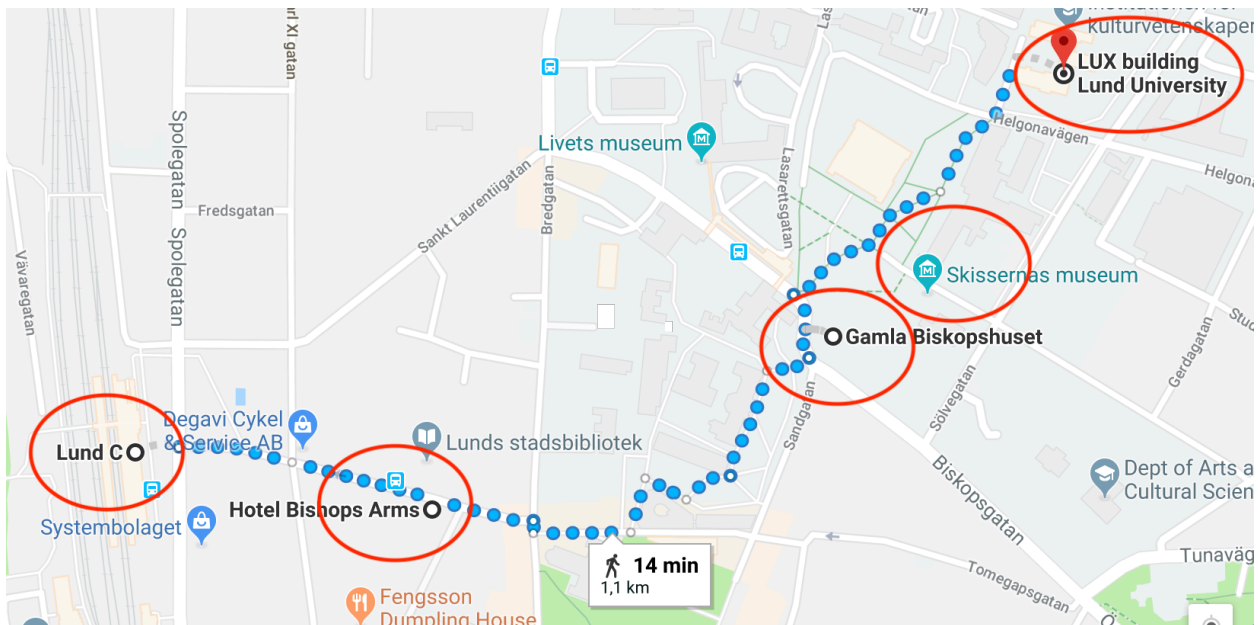
LUX Building, Lund University, Helgonavägen 3, Lund
Dinner at Skissernas museum (19:15)

Dec 7, 9–13

Gamla Biskopshuset (The Old Bishop's House), Lund University, Biskopsgatan 1, Lund

Hotel

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PROGRAM

DEC 6, LUX BUILDING

- **13:00–14:00 LUNCH** Café LUX, located in the lobby just inside the entrance
- **14:00–16:00 FIRST SESSION** (room LUX:B352)
 - 14:00–14:15 Welcome, Introduction
 - 14:15–14:30 Self-presentations
 - 14:30–14:45 Paper 1: Bente Larsen, "Why Aesthetics?"
 - 14:45–15:00 Paper 2: Dorthe Jørgensen, "Experience and Thought"
 - 15:00–16:00 Discussion
- **16:00–16:30 COFFEE**
- **16:30–19:00 SECOND SESSION** (room LUX:B352)
 - 16:30–16:45 Paper 3: Bodil Marie Stavning Thomsen, "Affect explored in relation to events as eye- and door opener"
 - 16:45–17:00 Paper 4: Gry Worre Hallberg, "Sensuous Learning"
 - 17:00–17:15 Paper 5: Kristine Samson, "Relational and affective aesthetics – leaving the house"
 - 17:15–18:15 Discussion
- **18:15–19:15 REST or VISIT TO SKISSERNAS MUSEUM**
- **19:15 DINNER at SKISSERNAS MUSEUM**

DEC 7, BISKOPSHUSET

- **09:00–12:00 SESSION 3**
 - 09:00–09:15 Coffee
 - 09:15–09:30 Paper 6: Kim Skjoldager-Nielsen, "Expanding the Scope: Experiential Approaches to Analysing Art Events – As Seen by a Theatre Scholar"
 - 09:30–09:45 Paper 7: Anna Kraus, "Flesh Matters: Post-Anthropocentric Conceptualizations of the Body in Young Latin American Literature"
 - 09:45–10:00 Paper 8: Bernadette Banaszekiewicz, "Aesthesis and sense data"
 - 10:00–11:00 Discussion
- **11:00–12:00 Summing up**
- **12:00–13:00 LUNCH**

ABSTRACTS (in order of appearance)

Bente Larsen, "Why Aesthetics?"

The overall question that will be approached in my presentation will be: "Why aesthetics?", and talking as an art historian, another related question will be: "What is the relation between art and aesthetics". My presentation will be based on my ongoing research connected to the relation between the eye and the artwork with focus on the relation as a relation that opens up the doors to sense and sensibilities as attraction, eroticism and loss.

Dorthe Jørgensen, "Experience and Thought"

What is experience, how does it occur, and what does it mean to us? Can personal experience be treated academically without loss, and what characterizes currently the status of experience in aesthetic studies? Questions of this sort are crucial to the aesthetically, phenomenologically, and hermeneutically inspired philosophy of experience I have developed, see publications as diverse as *Den skønne tænkning (Beautiful Thinking, 2014)* and *Verdenspoesi (World Poetry, 2011)*. The aforementioned questions are also related to my current work, which includes the development of the philosophical basis for a book with phenomenological photos by visual artist Peter Brandes and poetic-philosophical texts by me. In our photos and texts, Brandes and I investigate the phenomenon of space experience in general and the experience of the sacral nature of some spaces in particular. For this purpose, I recently conducted phenomenological studies of personal space experiences acquired through visits to both religious and worldly spaces in Rome. The processing of my experiences implies studies of notions of spatiality and sacrality worded by a wide range of contemporary philosophers. Furthermore, it implicitly challenges a widespread lack of philosophical (not theoretical) thought in contemporary humanities, including aesthetic studies. Systematic distinction between theorizing and thinking is necessary if we wish to treat personal experiences in ways that do not make us proponents of what is just private or just general. How can we approach the experience in such a way that we find and articulate what is both personal and common? What characterizes the "method" of academic study that develops and expresses what is shared by humans, not despite but because it is personal (not private)?

Bodil Marie Stavning Thomsen, "Affect explored in relation to events as eye- and door opener"

1) Even though we can understand the term 'media' as a much broader term than we used to, not many of us are prepared to subscribe to Whitehead's idea of 'The World as Media' (Andrew Murphie), meaning that everything is in a constant process of mediation. In a digitized, global world of interface encounters connecting big data in real-time, this however makes sense, when dealing with affective processes of sensation involved in sense-making. Today, aesthesis is felt in interfaces, while access to discursive meaning and aesthetic judgement is often lacking due to new numeric forms of measurement and evaluation. In relation to this, my question would be: How to change the notion of aesthetics with notions of affect and aesthesis, and thus allow for the many sense-perceptions at play when dealing with events? Could the relations 'affective events' or 'eventing affect' be studied as modulations or refrains, colors, sensations or synaesthetic affective experiences when exploring events (understood philosophically). In other words: we need an understanding of 'immediation' so that we can understand how events have affective impact on our bodily being sensing perceiving knowing relation to the world.

2) For many years, I have worked with the philosophy of Deleuze in relation to Bergson, to Nietzsche, to Kierkegaard and to painting, literature and film. In my exploration of the total film oeuvre of Lars von Trier I have focused on the haptic image (in Alois Riegl's sense) and the signaleptic material of film (in Deleuze's sense). I discovered that the signaleptic material that Deleuze uses to describe film, video and new media was often omitted in new media research. In my work the signaleptic material and the haptic image makes visible and audible the basic affective quality of interfaces – and gives access to an understanding of the globalized media situation today, where affective refrains are surely becoming an exchange and news value.

3) To my account, aesthetic studies are still to a large extent concerned with the art- and media-world of the 20th Century. The book, the painting, the news paper and the conditions for censorship, copyright, production, reproduction, distribution and reception. Our critical tradition has for a long time struggled with discussions about high and low culture in relation to 'meaning' or classical ideas of argumentation, discourse of semiosis in relation to ideology, nationality, culture etc. To my account,

it is not enough to expand aesthetic valuation and critical discourse to also cover the new condition of a rapidly changing world. Climate crisis as well as crisis of 'meaning' call for a new approach: we need to understand the immediation of the world, that is happening at all scales and without 'media' understood traditionally. The body as media (or as Body-without-Organs or as 'divid' instead of 'individ') that has often been omitted in traditional western thinking in relation to the study of things, artefacts and meaning has to become part of any analysis – not the body of self or identity, but the body of affect, namely our interfacial encounter with the world. Things are beginning to move in that direction: seeing the intestines as the third network besides the networks of the blood and the brain has already given access to new forms of understanding of psychic conditions for example. Thinking in ecological and sustaining forms are necessary – and therefore we need research in affects studied in relation to events.

Gry Worre Hallberg, "Sensuous Learning"

Sensuous Learning is a conceptual frame to explore the lived learning experiences that have been explored and recorded in my performance practice for almost a decade specifically in the large-scale durational project Nordic project Sisters Academy. In my presentation I will attempt to unpack this conceptual frame. My practice operates from the intention articulated in the Sensuous Society manifesto, which I wrote as a response to the financial and ecological crisis in 2008. Sensuous Society is a potential future world governed by aesthetic principles instead of the current economic. Since then I have investigated the role of the sensuous in a sustainable future and currently operate from the overall research questions, which I would also like to have dialogue about at the colloquium: What is sensuous transformation? And how does it contribute to a sustainable future through sensuous learning processes?

Kristine Samson, "Relational and affective aesthetics – leaving the house"

In Rimini Protokoll's recent *Remote X*, participants were immersed in the urban environments and guided by a synthetic voice ordering the pack to perform various practices. In this piece of post-dramatic theatre, aesthetics had no structural nor physical boundaries but emerges as affective relations and situations among the participants, the soundscape and the durational experience of the surrounding urban environment. Whereas Rimini Protokoll clearly work with cross-over aesthetics between sound art, performance art and art in public, this art work phenomenon points to the current status of aesthetics in a broader sense – where aesthetics is no longer confined by an art object but is an immersive, relational and affective experience taking place in a broader environment.

The presentation seeks to explore affective and relational aesthetics in and beyond the work of art. Drawing briefly on notions of affect, relationality (Massumi, Manning, Deleuze) and the social and situational turn in contemporary art criticism (Jackson, Bishop, Doherty), the propositions will address questions such as:

How can we understand aesthetics without a place, without an object?

Can immersive aesthetics in recent performance and contemporary art open up towards a better understanding of everyday aesthetics of, for instance, urban environments, event culture and our sense of the commons?

And if we are immersed in every day relational and affective environments, how does it affect our understanding of design objects, architecture and the art object?

Kim Skjoldager-Nielsen, "Expanding the Scope: Experiential Approaches to Analysing Art Events – As Seen by a Theatre Scholar"

In contemporary research within the arts, one may argue that there is a tendency to focus on structural and stylistic features of art works, i.e. the object. Even when analysis reaches beyond the object to include the subject encountering the work in an event, it may easily get stuck in discourse analyses informed by sociology, cultural studies, gender studies, etc., and thereby overlook the deeper existential experiences that art can give rise to.¹ This tendency is perhaps especially apparent in

¹ Cf. Dorthe Jørgensen, *Den skønne tænkning. Veje til erfaringsmetafysik. Religionsfilosofisk udmøntet*, Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2014, pp. 24-25.

performance analysis within the discipline of Theatre Studies, in which semiotics and hermeneutics have been and still are predominant in understanding staged events. Although the importance of including experiences of the audience has been acknowledged since the inception of the discipline and is supported by audience research, most performance analysis theory and methodology do still not sufficiently accommodate both the experiential, phenomenological dimension of the staged event and its variety of responses. At the same time, on the discursive level Theatre Studies has—for mainly ideological reasons—largely shied away from engaging with the religious and spiritual in theatre and performance, and only related to these relations as part of theatre history; any real efforts to explore them as persistent formative forces has taken place at the margins of the discipline.² Also this situation seems to be about to change, as approaches that acknowledge audience performativity and affects/feelings in theatrical/performative phenomena as intertwined with religion and spirituality are gaining ground.

Believing that the way forward is the development of phenomenological approaches, I would like to ask the following broad question to the colloquium: How may aesthetic theories and methodologies within art studies be expanded upon to include the experiential first person perspective without being entrapped by subjectivism and universalism?

This question is related to my own PhD research, which I have recently presented in my thesis *Over the Threshold, Into the World: Experiences of Transcendence in the Context of Staged Events* (Stockholm: STUTS, 2018). In the thesis, I develop a theoretical and methodological apparatus, which combines a materialist approach to the staging of theatrical and performative events, primarily based on Erika Fischer-Lichte's *aesthetics of the performative*, and the hermeneutic phenomenological approach of philosopher Dorte Jørgensen's *metaphysics of experience*. The result is an analytical model that observes how the process of reception (the point of view being that of the audience member/congregant) may produce notions of immanent transcendence that could lend themselves to contextual interpretations. Relying on experiential capacities of the participant such notions may ultimately condense into metaphysical, religious, or spiritual-but-not-religious experiences. As a point of

² Cf. Lance Gharavi, "Introduction", Lance Gharavi (ed.), *Religion, Theatre, and Performance: Acts of Faith*, New York, NY: Routledge, 2011.

departure, I make the claim that experiences of transcendence are the potential of theatre, ritual, and other forms of staged events *per se*, whilst emphasising the *potentiality* of these kinds of experiences: not everyone may realise them. Yet, to fully access and explore this potentiality the performance analyst must engage with the event on an individual level that involves reactivity (sensitive cognition, attunement), imagination, aesthetic and cultural competences, personal background, and belief/faith.

Anna Kraus, "Flesh Matters: Post-Anthropocentric Conceptualizations of the Body in Young Latin American Literature"

My research project explores post-anthropocentric conceptualizations of the body in the works of 78 internationally-recognized young Latin American authors. I anchor my analysis in the unique conceptualizations of the body that arise in post-anthropocentric discourses—where the body is conceived of as a “significant material entity with agency” that is not merely organic and not only, nor uniquely, human. I will undertake to articulate how these sophisticated and novel conceptualizations of the body can further ethical modes of taking-part-in-the-world. My work is based on a dialectical critical method, working ‘from bottom-up,’ i.e. rather than seeking confirmation in the texts of a pre-established schema, I explore how they inscribe flesh/bodies, and what body of literature they enact. The main line of inquiry here is aesthetic: what may be the fertile connection between philosophical speculation and literary text? Or: how does the literary form evolve in order to be able to host radically new ways of imagining the body? In the light of new materialist philosophy that does not separate matter from meaning/discourse – how does contemporary literature imagine and use its own flesh (words, sentences, visual layout, the materiality of text)?

Further questions for the discussion:

How can literature produce a speculative space between the text and the reader that is at once affective (embodied) and conceptual? How can literature embody larger tensions between text and world? What is the connection between the aesthetics of a literature that speculates with and within post-anthropocentric discourses (i.e. becomes an apparatus for expanding our conceptual and affective contours) and the ethical dimension of art?

Bernadette Banasziewicz, “Ancient *aesthesis* and sense data”

Asked for the aesthetical criteria of European Antiquity, we can, when examining the early Greek epics, also give answers for the times before Plato and Aristotle, 5th c. BC. The Homeric and Hesiodic epics deal with the notions *eidos*, *techne*, *enargeia*, *beauty*, *aisthesis*, *charis* etc., we are offered a good tool to do both: to contrast and control the scholarly interpretation of the transmitted theoretical (mostly philosophical or rhetorical) treatises on the one hand and to relate directly to the Renaissance and modern concepts of aesthetics on the other.

According to *opinio communis* (A. Lesky, H. Fränkel, B. Snell, a.o.), we do not find a specific concept of art or aesthetic in the early Greek texts, as *ars* and *techne* are not clearly distinguished. Hence, the usual focus for defining art in Antiquity is put onto the relation of the poet to the divinities – the *aoidos* (the singing poet) showing the only function believed to be comparable to the artist of later periods. The famous Muse is assumed to inspire him. In this way, not the *aoidos* but the gods are the source of the poetic achievement. Moreover, it is taught that *aisthesis* as sense perception is trusted as knowledge (Carolyn Lee Kane).

Yet the idea that the ancient Greeks did not develop an autonomous concept of aesthetics goes back to the assumption of the artist being a (ecstatic) medium. And this assumption results of isolating those passages of the earliest epic texts, in which the *aoidos* performs his art due to the impact of the gods. Against this opinion, I will introduce a broader view stating that the *aoidos* is only rightly interpreted regarding his antithetic position to the king or another epical character of high authority. In connection with these assumptions, I will ask why no aesthetical qualities such as sound, rhythm, tone pitch, harmony etc. are described in the Homeric and Hesiodic epics with regard to the performance of the poet. Moreover, I also ask which pieces of art are represented in the early epics (on the basis of which aesthetical qualities). Another question will be: Is the choice of Homer and Hesiod which pieces of art they introduce linked to their opinion about beauty and *arete*?

The basic principle of my research is the simple understanding that *aisthesis*, which is sensual perception in the Presocratic period, includes always interpretation for the Homeric and Hesiodic characters. All theriomorphic or

anthropomorphic beings, though they certainly show a characteristic *eidos*, may be in fact daimonic or Olympian agents. In this way, the acoustic and optic perception displayed at the early Greek epical literature is ruled by a hermeneutical matrix that differs fundamentally from modern conceptions: Though *eidos* is already the notion for a clear and almost evident set of characteristics which might guide to the right interpretation of a perception, each and every bit within Homeric and Hesiodic epics tells the story of *eidos* misinterpretation, of manipulation of sense perception, shapeshifters, *doxa* („appearance“) and the gulf between perception and reality. Additionally, we find examples for olfactory or gustatory misinterpretation in the Homeric epos (the *pharmaka* of Helena and Kirke, the dishes of the Lotophagoi etc.). Thus, another of my questions will touch on the notion *eidos* from Homer to Plato and Aristotle, its early bodily and the later metaphysical understanding.

I want to ask and discuss the followings questions:

In what sense corresponds the ancient notion of *aesthesis* with the modern conviction that sense data construct reality or facts?

Is *eidos* or idea the same as form as appearance (line, outline, shape, composition) and separate from matter?

Does vision really dominante the ancient concepts of *aesthesis*?

In what sense can the modern discourse about affect and embodiment be grounded in Aristotle's ideas about affect, body and emotion?

SPEAKERS

Bernadette Banasziewicz, post doc and lecturer in Classical Philology, Marburg University.

Gry Worre Hallberg, artist and PhD candidate, Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen.

Dorthe Jørgensen, Professor of Philosophy and the History of Ideas, Aarhus University.

Anna Kraus, researcher, Malmö University, and teacher, Lund University.

Bente Larsen, Professor of Art History, Oslo University.

Kristine Samson, Associate Professor, Department of Communication and Arts, Roskilde University.

Kim Skjoldager-Nielsen, PhD in Theater Studies, Stockholm University.

Bodil Marie Stavning Thomsen, Professor MSO, Department of Communication and Culture, Aarhus University.