



Media Archaeology
Media Philosophy
Media Aesthetics

OPEN COLLOQUIUM

Tuesday June 4th 13-18

LUX B237. Helgonavägen 3, Lunds Universitet

Ina Blom University of Oslo and Chicago

Kristin Veel University of Copenhagen

Ulrik Schmidt Roskilde University

Morten Riis Royal Academy of Music Aarhus

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Organised by the Research Node for Aesthetic Studies and the Division of Musicology, Department of Arts and Cultural Sciences, Lund University.



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Program

In the broadest sense media (co-)determine our actions – be it when reading the news, when listening to music or even just by wearing clothes or uttering a single syllable. In a narrower sense, with an outset in technology, media determine us as such and viewed from the angle of new media, media get embedded in our lives and become so habitual that we even turn into our own machines. No matter what - we act with and/or through media. Do we create meaning alongside media, because of media or even for media?

This colloquium interrogates the nature of media to engage in a discussion of how media as a concept can be conceived, understood and defined. We urge to contemplate on the ways in which aesthetic thinking and theorization can help us create understanding for what media are by hopefully challenging established positions.

13:00 – 13:10

Welcome by

Sanne Krogh Groth and Andreas Helles Pedersen,
Division of Musicology, Lund University

13:10 – 15:00

Ina Blom: And Follow It. *Straight Lines and Infrastructural Sensibilities*

Kristin Veel: *A Tale of Two (and more) Towers*

15:00 – 15:30 - Coffee

15:30 – 16:30

Ulrik Schmidt: Medium as Environment: A Materialist Approach

Morten Riis: Loudspeaker Phenomenology, or Listening through the Ears of the Loudspeaker

Discussion

16:30 – 16:45 - Refreshments

16:45 – 18:00 - Discussion

Abstracts and biographies

Ina Blom

"... And Follow It. Straight Lines and Infrastructural Sensibilities."

In this essay, I present La Monte Young's groundbreaking 1960 composition *Draw A Straight Line And Follow It* (and the various permutations it engendered, across media and contexts) as a turning point in the longer history of straight lines in modern art and their relation to wider infrastructural conditions and changes. My argument is that Young's work introduces a new and distinct form of infrastructural sensibility that may ultimately provide some points toward an archeology of a contemporaneity oriented around sensorial synchronization or alignment.

Biography

Ina Blom is a professor at the Department of Philosophy, Classics, History of Art and Ideas at the University of Oslo and Wigeland Visiting Professor in the Department of Art History, University of Chicago. Her field of specialty is modernism/avant-garde studies and contemporary art with a particular focus on the relationship between art, technology and media. Recent books include *The Autobiography of Video. The Life and Times of a Memory Technology* (New York: Sternberg Press, 2016), *On the Style Site. Art, Sociality and Media Culture* (New York: Sternberg Press, 2007/2009) as well as the edited volumes *Memory in Motion. Archives, Technology and the Social* (Amsterdam University Press, 2016) and *Raoul Hausmann et les avant-gardes* (Paris: Les presses du réel, 2014).

Kristin Veel

"A Tale of Two (and More) Towers"

The gigantic is everywhere. It is not just in the physical imprint of the grand feats of Western industrial culture. It is also visible in current research and cultural discourse concerning Western society's multiplying economic, climate, security and political crises, which increasingly involve the entire planet. This paper gives an introduction to my forthcoming book, co-written with Henriette Steiner and titled, *A Tale of Two Towers: Gigantism in Architectural and Digital Culture*. In this book we focus on two significant markers of gigantism today that raise sustainability concerns in relation to a range of material, resource-related and cultural issues: architectural gigantism (high-rise towers in cities) and digital gigantism (the all-pervasive digital infrastructures with which we are constantly connected). These two markers come together in the figure of the skyscraper with a transmitting antenna on its roof. We analyse famous towers in Paris and New York City: the Eiffel Tower (1889), the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center (1970/1), and the One World Trade Center (2014). We take a critical approach to equally iconic (Western, male) thinkers, including Walter Benjamin, Jean Baudrillard, Michel de Certeau, Martin Heidegger and Bruno Latour, and the ways they have analysed the forms of gigantism that cling to these iconic towers. In doing so we describe how the gigantisms that haunt our present cultural moment are caught between a strong symbolic language born of the late nineteenth century and a digitally enhanced present that configures modern categories of space and time, as well as relationships among humans, architecture and technology, in new ways.

Biography

Kristin Veel is Associate Professor at the Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen and Research Fellow at the Surveillance Studies Centre at Queen's University. Her research focuses on the impact of information and communication technology on the contemporary cultural imagination, with a particular interest in issues of information overload and surveillance, and the way in which these are negotiated in film, art and literature. She is PI of the collaborative project *Uncertain Archives Adapting Cultural Theories of the Archive to Understand the Risks and Potentials of Big Data*, and her forthcoming book *A Tale of Two Towers: Gigantism in Architectural and Digital Culture*, co-written with Henriette Steiner, will be out with MIT Press in spring 2020.

Ulrik Schmidt

“Medium as Environment: A Materialist Approach”

This presentation will take the starting point in the simple observation that media has one of its etymological origins in Aristotle's concept of *perièchon*, roughly meaning 'that which surrounds, encompasses' (Spitzer 1942). This indicates a basic *environmental* understanding of media that is still present – albeit often more implicitly – in many key thinkers of modern media theory, from Walter Benjamin and Marshall McLuhan to new (German) media philosophy (Kittler, Ernst, Berressem, Herzogenrath etc.) and media ecology (Fuller, Hansen, Terranova, Chun, Parrika, Bryant).

In my presentation, I will, from a materialist and post-phenomenological perspective, discuss the aesthetic implications of this understanding of media as environments by exploring some of the ways media can function as affective, environmental framings of perception.

Biography

Ulrik Schmidt is associate professor in Performance Design and Visual Culture at Roskilde University, Denmark, working in the intersection between media philosophy, contemporary art, sound studies, architecture and audiovisual aesthetics. Schmidt's overall research interests are centered around exploring the material mechanisms that guide perception and the production of subjectivity in modern culture.

Schmidt has published widely in English and Danish on various topics including sonic atmosphere; synthetic materiality; format aesthetics; topology and architecture; Phil Spector; ubiquitous computing; abstract film; Buster Keaton; surrealist documentary film; and environmental performance. He is the author of two books – *The Aesthetics of Minimalism* (2007, in Danish) and *The Ambient: Sensation, Mediatization, Environment* (2013, in Danish) – and he is currently co-editing a book on *Media Aesthetics* (forthcoming, 2020)

Morten Riis

“Loudspeaker phenomenology, or listening through the ears of the loudspeaker”

Loudspeakers mediates our current sounding reality to an all-encompassing extend that creates an ubiquitous auditory reality in which real and imaginary stories are experienced in

constant fluctuating states. Stories that are often told from and addressed to the perspective of human perception. This performative paper presentation will examine through writing, speaking and playing how the loudspeaker senses the world, go deep into the emotional states of the loudspeaker, and carve out its inner most secret dreams and hopes. This investigation will continue my work into the ears of the machine (Riis 2015) and Alien Listening (Riis & Højlund 2015), and thus form new perspectives on mediated listening through Media Archaeological and Object Oriented Ontological theoretical frameworks.

Biography

Morten Riis (born 1980) holds a PhD degree from Aarhus University and is educated in electronic music composition from the Royal Academy of Music, Aarhus. In 2018 he was appointed associate professor in Electronic Music at The Royal Academy of Music, Aarhus. Besides his academic work he is a very active sound artist having received numerous grants and commissions, released several albums, played numerous concerts and exhibited sound installations in Denmark, Sweden, England, France, Poland, Finland, Germany and China. He is the co-founder and leader (together with Marie Højlund) of The Overheard project presenting large scale sound installations in Denmark and abroad. In his research Morten Riis is drawing on micro-temporal media archaeology paired with object-oriented ontology in an attempt to uncover and give new perspectives on the sounding object through and with technology. This happens through a conceptualization revolving around a practiced based philosophy developed from the writings of Ian Bogost and Timothy Morton, in which carpentry becomes the practice of constructing and engaging with artifacts that do philosophical work - thus not only presenting a theory in practice, but moreover practice as theory.