

Speculative Aesthetics and Philosophy

Book Presentation with Armen Avanesian, Tom Lamberty (Merve), Robin Mackay (Collapse), Rita Vitorelli (Spike Art Journal)

5.3.2013, 20:00

Ort: Pro qm, Almstadtstr. 48-50, 10119 Berlin

There is good reason to assume that the new century, our present time, is in need of some new theories. Cracks have long begun to show in the framework of last century's traditionally dominant philosophies. That applies even to the likes of the Frankfurt School, Marxism, Structuralism and Deconstruction, which have also shaped the politically ambitious art theories of recent decades.

Over the last couple of years, a new philosophical movement has been gaining increasing traction under the label of Speculative Realism. Taking a distinctly rational approach that does not shy away from metaphysical issues, with an explicit tendency towards realism and materialism in relation to ontologies, the hallmark of these new philosophers is their open embrace of the speculative. One general question then is whether new and different connections can be forged between philosophical thought and artistic production. Is there a necessity of also artistically overcoming the *correlationist* idea, that "we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other" (Quentin Meillassoux)? And does calling into question the aesthetic paradigm with its focus on the perception (*aisthesis*) of objects, raise questions about the alternatives to that which Jacques Rancière famously described as the aesthetic regime of art?

Both the book-series *Spekulationen* at *Merve Verlag Berlin* as well as the series *Theories for the 21st Century* in *Spike Art Quarterly* are dedicated to Speculative Philosophy in general and its relevance for new approaches in aesthetics. On the occasion both of the launch of the first comprehensive volume with German translations of the new speculative philosophers (*Realismus Jetzt. Spekulative Philosophie und Metaphysik für das 21. Jahrhundert*, Merve 2013) as well as the launch of the new issue of *Spike* (including a contribution by Quentin Meillassoux) there will be statements by the participants followed by a discussion.

Participants: Armen Avanesian works at the SFB 626 and the Peter Szondi Institute for Comparative Literature at the Freie Universität Berlin and is founder of the research platform on Speculative Poetics. Among his recent book-publications are: 'Phänomenologie ironischen Geistes. Ethik, Poetik und Politik der Moderne' (Fink, 2010), 'Aesthetics and Contemporary Art' (Sternberg, 2011, ed. together with Luke Skrebowski), 'Präsens. Poetik eines Tempus' (Diaphanes, 2012, together with Anke Hennig).

Robin Mackay is a philosopher and editor of the journal *Collapse*. He is a publisher who through *Urbanomic* and its collaborations with *Sequence Press*, was responsible for the first appearances of 'Speculative Realism'. He is editor of Nick Land's *Fanged Noumena* (*Urbanomic/Sequence*, 2010) and François Laruelle's *From Decision to Heresy* (*Urbanomic/Sequence*, 2013). He also translated Alain Badiou's *Number and Numbers* (*Polity*, 2008), Laruelle's *The Concept of Non-Photography* (*Urbanomic/Sequence Press*, 2011) and *Anti-Badiou* (*Continuum*, 2013), and Quentin Meillassoux's *The Number and the Siren* (*Urbanomic/Sequence Press*, 2011).

Rita Vitorelli is an artist, co-editor and editor of *Spike*

Vortrag von Amanda Beech (CalArts): *Final Machine*

6.3.2013, 19:00

Ort: Haus der Kulturen der Welt, John-Foster-Dulles-Allee 10, 10557 Berlin

Amanda will speak to her recent video work, *Final Machine*, 2013; a three channel video installation (45mins). The work continues Beech's examination into the nexus of art, politics and morality and interrogates the realist status of the image and the contract this holds with systems of power. Beech uses Louis Althusser's lecture series 'The Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists' (1968), to predicate a politics that is recalcitrant to ideological systems. The work questions how it is possible to engage art as a site of realism, free from our unswerving faith in modes of critique that have now become our bad habit. The question is how our 'science' can instead be understood with the image, that is, without transcendence, idealism, or vitalism; and without the predilection to condemn the image as a representationalist problem guides this talk. Such questions demand a re-thinking of both aesthetics and philosophy, of the thought that thinks both, and the implications of concept as connected to the operations of image-force.to be announced.

Amanda Beech makes artworks, writes and collaborates on curatorial projects. Her research looks to the possibilities of a realist critique in the context of neo-liberal democracy by examining the tenability of a politics in the context of contingency. Her work is a research of art's material and forceful claims both in the architecture of exhibition making and in discrete works, constructing narratives that take in particular biographies, social mythologies, philosophical inquiry and political argument. Operating as a space of seductive power, will and force the work looks to a world that emphasises decisiveness as its guiding principle and that deals with our share in it. She is a member of the steering committee for The Political Currency of Art Research Group and is Dean of Critical Studies at CalArts, California.

Her work in video, drawing, print and sculpture has been exhibited internationally, including solos exhibits: *Final Machine*, Lanchester Gallery Projects, Coventry, UK and Ha Gamle Prestagard, Stavanger, Norway, 2013, *The Church*, *The Bank*, *The Art Gallery*, *Banner Repeater*, London, 2012, *Sanity Assassin*, *The Armoury Show*, Los Angeles, 2011, and *Spike Island* Bristol, 2010. Group exhibits include: *Urbicide*, Venice, Italy, 2012, *The Real Thing*, Tate Britain, 2010, *Predators and Pests*, (with Diann Bauer) 2011, *LoBe Gallery*, Berlin and *Greetings Comrades*, the *Image has Now Changed its Status*, *Ocular Lab*, Melbourne, Australia, 2010. Recent writing includes: *Realism, Materialism, Art*, Sternberg Press, 2013; "An Exercise in Fatality" (an essay on image-power-knowledge in the TV series *Columbo*), *Burnt Wood Stories*, Anthony Gross, ed., *The Agency Gallery*, London, 2011, *Transmission: Host* (Artwords 2010), "The Friend" (Artwords, 2010) and "Body Count" *Parallax Journal*, April, 2010 co-authored with Robin Mackay. Recent publishing includes: *Final Machine*, 2013 *Urbanomic Press*; *Episode*, *Pleasure and Persuasion in Lens-based Media*, Artwords, 2008 and *Sanity Assassin*, 2010 *Urbanomic Press*. She regularly speaks at conferences and symposia including a keynote at *Exhibiting Video*, Westminster University, London 2012, *Object Oriented Thinking*, The Royal Geological Society, London 2012, and the CAA and AHH conferences.

Vortrag von Peter Osborne (London): *The Postconceptual Condition. A Report on Art*

14.4.2013, 19:00

Ort: Haus der Kulturen der Welt, John-Foster-Dulles-Allee 10, 10557 Berlin

Historically, one of the functions of art history has been to provide models of periodization. Classical, romantic, modern, postmodern and contemporary all have their origins as art-historical concepts, which became generalized to theorize wider cultural processes and thus being transformed, and reflected back upon its art-historical meaning, changing it in turn. Wherein lies the contemporaneity of contemporary art? And what does it have to tell us about our cultural condition more broadly? Peter Osborne addresses these questions against the background of the global dynamics of 'the contemporary' and the postconceptual condition of contemporary art.

Peter Osborne is Professor of Modern European Philosophy and Director of the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy (CRMEP), Kingston University London, and a long-standing member of the editorial collective of the British journal *Radical Philosophy*. His books include *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde* (1995; 2011), *Philosophy in Cultural Theory* (2000), *Conceptual Art* (2002), *Marx* (2005) and *El arte más allá de la estética: Ensayos filosóficos sobre el arte contemporáneo* (CENDEAC, Murcia, 2010). His catalogue essays include contributions to *Manifesta 5*, Tate Modern, 2006 Biennale of Sydney, Walker Art Center Minneapolis, Office of Contemporary Art Norway, National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design Oslo, CGAC in Santiago de Compostela, and Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León. Recent publications include: two essays in *Gerhard Richter: Fotografie und Malerei – Malerei als Fotografie: Acht Texte zu Gerhard Richters Medienstrategie: Schriften des Gerhard Richter Archive Dresden, Band 8*, Walther König, Cologne, 2011; *The State of Things* (co-ed. with Marta Kuzma and Pablo Lafuentes), Walter Koenig/OCA, Cologne/Oslo, 2012 – lectures from the Norwegian representation at the Venice Biennale 2011, of which he was a co-curator – and *Spheres of Action: Art and Politics* (co-ed. with Éric Alliez), Tate Publishing, London, 2013.

His new book, *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art* will be published by Verso in April 2013. He is currently directing the Arts and Humanities Research Council project 'Transdisciplinarity and the Humanities' (2011–13).

Roundtable-discussion with Armen Avanessian, Bram Ieven, Reza Negarestani, Bertrand Prévost, Henk Oosterling, Charlotte De Mille

3.5.2013, 16:00

Ort: Center for Art and Philosophy of Erasmus University, 3000 Rotterdam

[Speculative Art Histories] A three-day international research symposium at the Center for Art and Philosophy of Erasmus University Rotterdam and Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art on Thursday 2, Friday 3, and Saturday 4 May, 2013.

Vortrag von Steven Shaviro (Detroit): *Dark Origins*

26.5.2013, 19:00

Ort: Haus der Kulturen der Welt, John-Foster-Dulles-Allee 10, 10557 Berlin

Chris Beckett's science fiction novel *Dark Eden* can be described as an exercise in speculative anthropology. On a dark planet, warmed only by geothermal energy, the descendants of a pair of stranded human astronauts must reinvent civilization from scratch, guided only by garbled memories of Earth passed down for generations from the original pair of settlers. The novel recounts a "fall" from a seeming state of nature into a more historical sort of social arrangement, through a series of traumatic incidents including the "invention" of rape and murder, the transition from egalitarian matriarchy to hierarchical patriarchy, a growing tension and discordance between generations, as well as between men and women, and an energetic burst of exploration and technological invention. In recounting these events, the novel echoes a number of foundational Western texts about the origins of human society and civilization, including the Book of Genesis, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, Bachofen's *Das Mutterrecht*, Nietzsche's *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, and Engels' *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. Steven Shaviro will discuss how Beckett "rewrites" these texts, by placing them in a new, fictional context, where everything has to be reinvented.

Steven Shaviro is the DeRoy Professor of English at Wayne State University. He is the author of *The Cinematic Body* (1993), *Doom Patrols: A Theoretical Fiction About Postmodernism* (1997), *Connected, Or, What It Means To Live in the Network Society* (2003), *Without Criteria: Kant, Whitehead, Deleuze, and Aesthetics* (2009), and *Post-Cinematic Affect* (2010). His work in progress involves studies of speculative realism, of post-continuity styles in contemporary cinema, of music videos, and of recent science fiction and horror fiction. He blogs at *The Pinocchio Theory* (<http://www.shaviro.com/Blog>).

Vortrag von Steven Shaviro (Detroit): *Science Fiction and Speculative Philosophy*

27.5.2013, 14:00-18:00

Ort: Haus der Kulturen der Welt, John-Foster-Dulles-Allee 10, 10557 Berlin

Steven Shaviro is the DeRoy Professor of English at Wayne State University. He is the author of *The Cinematic Body* (1993), *Doom Patrols: A Theoretical Fiction About Postmodernism* (1997), *Connected, Or, What It Means To Live in the Network Society* (2003), *Without Criteria: Kant, Whitehead, Deleuze, and Aesthetics* (2009), and *Post-Cinematic Affect* (2010). His work in progress involves studies of speculative realism, of post-continuity styles in contemporary cinema, of music videos, and of recent science fiction and horror fiction. He blogs at The Pinocchio Theory (<http://www.shaviro.com/Blog>).

Paul North (New Haven): *Kafka's Being and Time* (Colloquium)

21.6.2013, 18:00

Ort: Peter Szondi-Institut, Raum JK 28/208, Freie Universität Berlin, Habelschwerdter Allee 45, 14195 Berlin

In 1917-18 Kafka wrote a set of 300 or more very short texts in which being and time were central concerns, and intimately related to one another. Being was shown to be a function of time—but he did not stop there. Being was possession, possession depended on a concept of time, time was a function of faith, and faith had to be blurred by means of art. Kafka's big book of philosophy would not have been titled "Being and Time," but "blurring and yielding." Some of these operations and critiques will be discussed in this talk.

Paul North is Assistant Professor of German at Yale University. His research addresses diverse points in European philosophy, political theory, and literature. His first book, *The Problem of Distraction* (Stanford 2012), critiques the emphasis on mind in these traditions. He has published articles and reviews on Johann Nestroy, Franz Kafka, Soma Morgenstern, Hannah Arendt, Martin Heidegger, and Walter Benjamin among others, and has recently co-edited a volume entitled *Messianic Thought outside Theology* (Fordham 2013). His present book, *The Yield: Kafka's Atheological Reformation*, reconstructs Kafka's esoteric theological-political treatise from 1917.