



ATROCITIES AND IMAGINATION. EXTREME IMAGERY

- opening seminar for Visual Culture 2008-2009 16-17 SEPTEMBER 2008 IN MULTISALEN. KUA: BUILDING 21/ROOM 21.0.54

Organization: The Rio-Copenhagen Visual Culture Network in cooperation with the Copenhagen Doctoral School in Cultural Studies. Organizers: Laura Erber, PUC-RJ, Karl Erik Schøllhammer, PUC-RJ, Anders Michelsen, UniCph.

Keywords: atrocities, the lost, pervert, evil, abject, impossible, 'the ugly spirit', 'the accursed share', 'crashing', filth, pollution, taboo, abject, anxiety, angst, condemnedness, extremist, nocturnal, Homo Sacer, unsocial sociability Names: Durand, Agamben, Kristeva, Bataille, Luca, Ballard, Burroughs, Castoriadis, Leslie, Douglas, Dulumeau, Arendt, Heller, Daumal, Wunenburger, Jay, Langer, Freud, Lyotard, Kant, Kierkegaard, Levinas. **The seminar treats the difficult issue of imagination and representation of the atrocious. That is, the atrocious as a form of creative endeavor. Inspired by Cornelius Castoriadis's provocative statement that 'Auschwitz is as creative as Notre Dame de Paris', and his repeated argument, that violence, atrocity - evil - was for him an impulse to delve into the imaginary, the seminar will present inroads into this inescapably human but difficult and tabooed field. - In recent years effects and effectuations of such imagery have been put in focus by impossible footage such as the videotaped execution by decapitation of hostages held in Iraq or the digital images from the prison of Abu Ghraib. Despite some possible approaches, from Bataille's 'tears of eros' to Lyotard's debates on the enthusiasm in Kantian philosophy, cultural studies such as found in Ballard and Burroughs, further moral issues in Arendt, Heller and Levinas, most recently Agamben, the area is still a backwoods one, in need of a basic description of options, objects, relations, methods, and not least, impossibilities and moral implications. **The seminar deals on this background with approaches to what is known in such differents form as the lost, pervert, evil, abject, impossible, 'the ugly spirit', 'the accursed share', 'crashing', filth, pollution, abject, anxiety, angst, condemnedness, abhorrence, extremist, negenthusiasm, stuttering, disablement, nocturnal, Homo Sacer, unsocial sociability, taboo** etc. - as inherent aspect of human imagination in a double sense of imagery: creative imago-formation and image representation.**

Programme

Tuesday 16 September 2008: 14:15-17.00. Venue: Multisalen 14.15-15.00 Anders Michelsen: Atrocities and Imagination:

extreme imagery - preliminary considerations. Abstract: The presentation attempts an inroad to the field of atrocious imagination by developing Cornelius Castoriadis's brief but provocative statement that 'Auschwitz is as creative as Notre Dame de Paris'. Collecting from various positions, remarks and comments on keywords such as the lost, pervert, evil, abject, impossible, 'the ugly spirit', 'the accursed share', 'crashing', filth, pollution, taboo, abject, anxiety, angst, condemnedness, extremist, nocturnal, Homo Sacer, unsocial sociability, etc. it will venture a more structured approach by taking up Bataille's idea of 'tears of eros' and Kristeva's notion of 'power of horror'. From these two 'actants' - better imaginary 'basins' (Durand), it will probe extreme imagery. In closing it briefly relates the conjecture to Agnes Heller's general ethics in order to argue that a pragmatic - in Castoriadis elucidatory, or reflective, ethical stance is needed in order to break with the impetus of destruction in atrocious imagination. Short biography: Anders Michelsen is Associate Professor, PhD, Director of Studies at the Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen. Since 2002 he has coordinated the first master program in Visual Culture Studies in Denmark. His research-topics and interests lie within the interdisciplinary field emerging from contemporary art and culture, design and technology, history and globalization, especially as related to visual culture, design, computer media, and creative imaginaries. He is co-director of the platform PeaceWare which focuses on new creative innovation formats for ITC (Information and communication technology) for development, in particular forms of social software related to conflict resolution and post-conflict development in areas like Somalia (Puntland), Sri Lanka, and

Afghanistan. **15.10-15.55 Kathleen Wilson: Suspending Subjectivity: The Impossible Return in Butoh dance** Abstract: What are the limits of the possible? How can we surpass limits that are socially and historically constructed contingencies? By what means can we create what is not, based on what is? By way of a concrete research object, namely, Japanese Butoh dance/theater, this paper aims to explore the suspension of subjectivity as possible *techné* to uncover the infinite resources of *magma*, this flux of being, from which political imaginaries and human subjectivities sediment into structural determinations. Although we may not have access to the pre-subjective and pre-rational state, a performative praxis that strives to access this limit, we suggest, challenges closed, systemic thought. Journey to the brink of the radical imaginary, Butoh is a performative praxis of autonomy, for the limit it sets to transgress is the impossible return to the origin. Short biography: Kathleen Wilson is a PhD student at Karls Ruprecht University Heidelberg (2008), in the field of ethnology. Her research focuses on the problem of transgression in a society that has become immune to its initial role of shattering frames. Through the study of Butoh dance/theater, a Japanese performance art emerging in the late 1950s, her work aims to engage this practice into a theoretical framework of performativity, possible loci for transcendence and the creation of new meanings. Mixing her sociological background to the fields of theater, dance, anthropology and culture studies her work takes on an inter-disciplinary approach. Moreover, her research on Butoh dance/theater is inspired by her own artistic practice with the collective "Parabolik Guerilla", with whom she has participated in a number of performances, namely "A

Ship to Namuh" (2004) and "Symbolocaust" (2007). **16.00-17.00 Anders Elberling: Fast Forward ... take no fucking prisoners!!** Abstract: Copyright is dead - Mashup your media - spam your art... We bomb and boil your eyes with viral terror cells, we alternate your mind - it's a hostile take over. Streams of images with exponential intervals and frequencies flow out of the screen - forget the narrative seduction - from this digital trash noise your only way out is your ability for pattern recognition ... Short biography: Anders Elberling (1965), New Media videocomposer and digital artist. Elberling's project is to bring works and arts forms into current art, which emancipate pictorial 'tales' form narration. His artistic praxis has developed in the field in between "Performance Cinema" and interactive installation. The forms have focused on digital art and poetic montage and images-/image mosaics since 1988. Elberling has typically worked in projects with artists, composers, sound artists, electronic art and video artists, with whom he has generated substantial commons and communities for treatment and composition of digital material. His work has been presented on exhibitions and performances, concerts and theater productions and in webcasts, internet publications and web installations. More info: fovoc.org

Wednesday 17 September 2008: 14:15-17.00. Venue: Multisalen 14.15-15.00 Max Liljefors: Industrial Genocide Imagery -

Notes on the Photos from the Camps Abstract: This presentation aims to map the effects of the documentary photographs from the Nazi concentration camps that were disseminated in mass media following the liberation of the camps in the spring of 1945. Not only did those images trigger the first massive public reaction to the Nazi genocide, they also aroused strong emotional reactions of indignation, shock and repulsion, mixed with a feeling of moral obligation to witness the atrocities portrayed. They immediately became object to contestations about how to understand them, whether to publish or censor them, and how to contain them within existing conventions of pictorial meaning. Through an elaboration of Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection, this paper examines how the image of the abjectal corpse has been negotiated in art and visual culture in the postwar, post-holocaust, postmodern era. Short biography: Max Liljefors is Senior Lecturer, PhD, at the Division of Art History and Visual Studies, Department of Art History and Musicology, Lund University. His research topics are interdisciplinary visual studies, performance and video art, performativity, representation of history, and psychoanalysis. He is a member of the Nordic network The Bodily Turn: Gesture, Gender and Sensation of the Art, and of the HEX group - Humanistic Experimental Group - at Lund university. He is also the initiator of the interdisciplinary Image Group at Lund University, joining scholars of visuality from such diverse fields as Art History, Film Studies, Radiology, the Earth Sciences, and Philosophy. **15.10-15.50 Karl Erik Schøllhammer:**

Violence and Culture in contemporary Brazil Abstract: Since the national independency and the foundation of the Republic, violence has been a founding reality in the symbolic constitution of Brazilian culture and national identity. Through a presentation of different representations of violence in arts and media we will discuss the social constitution of a pathological public sphere of traumatic empathy with the victims of crime and violence. Short biography: Prof. Karl Erik Schøllhammer holds an M.A. in Nordic Literature and a Ph.D. in Semiotics and Latin American Literature from the Aarhus University (Denmark). He has taught at the Aarhus University, at the Federal University of Brasilia and since 1991 he is associate professor at the Pontificie Universidade Católica in Rio de Janeiro at the Department of Language and Literature, where he teaches comparative literature, Brazilian literature and literary theory. He is researcher at the Conselho Nacional de Pesquisa since 1992, and has published extensively on contemporary Brazilian literature and culture. He is co-editor and co-author of *Linguagens da Violência* (2000), *Novas Epistemologias* (2000), *Literatura e Mídia* (2002), *Literatura e Cultura* (2003), *Literatura e Imagem* (2005), *Literatura e Memória* (2006) and author of *Além do visível - a imagem da literature* (2007). **16.00-17.00 Panel: Elberling, Liljefors,**

Schøllhammer, Wilson, Michelsen

Wednesday 17 September 2008. Venue: Multisalen 17.00 - ? ART LOUNGE PARTY - VJ - DJ - BEER

