

The UQ node of the ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions (Europe 1100-1800) presents:

Workshop

The Critic as Artist

Date: Friday 16 February 2018

Time: 12–5pm (lunch included)

Venue: Boardroom, The University of Queensland Art Museum
University Drive, St Lucia

Registration deadline: 21 February 2018

RSVP by 14 February to uqche@uq.edu.au

In the twenty-first century, what possibilities exist for the critic as artist?

This workshop will explore connections between artistic practice, academic discourse and curating, and will highlight how experimental collaboration can be an essential feature of criticism. The title is taken from Oscar Wilde's 1891 essay, in which Wilde argued that criticism is the starting point for a new work of art, and that the critic must reach beyond the work of art in order to deepen its mystery, rather than seek to 'explain' it. A further cue is taken from two films currently screening at the UQ Art Museum that are drawn from large-scale multimedia installations: Mieke Bal's *Reasonable Doubt* (2015) and Simon Palfrey's *Demons Land: a poem come true* (2016). Creative, collaborative and highly experimental, these films take up the traditional tasks of arts criticism and scholarship – to interpret and evaluate the aesthetic and intellectual objects of the past – while also reimagining the critic as artist. The workshop invites participants to do the same, and to consider how creative collaborations have resulted in invigorated approaches to art criticism.

The workshop will consist of an introduction by Dr Andrea Bubenik (UQ) and presentations by Professor Jill Bennett (UNSW) and Professor Mieke Bal, followed by discussion.

Participants are asked to familiarise themselves with the following works ahead of time:

- Mieke Bal, 'Ecstatic Aesthetics: Metaphoring Bernini' (2000; to be provided upon registration)
- Mieke Bal, *Reasonable Doubt: Scenes from Two Lives* (2016; currently screening at the UQ Art Museum, Lower Gallery).

Image: Mieke Bal, still from *Reasonable Doubt: Scenes from Two Lives*, 2016, multiple-screen video installation. Reproduced courtesy of the artist.

PRESENTATIONS

THINKING AS ART, ART AS THINKING: HOW CREATIVITY BINDS US

Professor Mieke Bal

The life of thoughts is like that of images – visual or otherwise: both are enduring as well as constantly changing, and collectively sustained. They are subject to debate, and thus entice people to do the thinking *with, through and in*, more than *about* the world, including its visual manifestations. We do not ‘read’ the content of thought in an image but make and construct it, in interaction with it. In this lecture, I will argue, with and through my recent film and installation *Reasonable Doubt*, for the intricate connections between art-making, curating and academic analysis. The key term is ‘thinking in film’ – a concept I will explain and keep specific to the medium of film, as well as moderately generalise to other forms of art, analysis and creative ‘making’. The artistic and scholarly result of making such concepts as anachronism, affect, movement, touch, and sound bears on the three activities mentioned – art-making, curating, analysing – and is a deepening and intensifying of our understanding of how art functions in the world.

When, in my various readings I encountered the empty qualifier ‘post-Cartesian’ one time too many, without any further explanation and specification, I had my new video project cut out for me. I was less interested in Descartes’ ideas than in the way he did his thinking and, with my three elements in mind, in the question of how to audio-visualise that process. I wondered, that is, if it is possible to show thought-as-process visually, to make it accessible for everyone; to invite everyone to do just that very necessary act: thinking, in a time where the world’s fate seems to be determined by Tweets.

PRACTICAL AESTHETICS: CAN ART REALLY SAVE LIVES?

Professor Jill Bennett
University of New South Wales

Building on her theoretical concept of ‘practical aesthetics’, Jill Bennett will discuss her curatorial and multimedia projects, including ‘The Big Anxiety: festival of arts + science + people’. The presentation will explore the development of exhibition formats to address the politics of marginalised subjectivity and empathy, focusing on the experiences of neurodiversity, trauma and mental health. It will examine the role of art practice in addressing mental health and anxiety, and the ways in which practice may be mobilised as effective intervention. It will foreground the issue of how we assess the impact of aesthetic engagement without reducing art to its instrumental function.

BIOGRAPHIES

MIEKE BAL is a cultural theorist, critic, video artist and occasional curator. She works on gender, migratory culture, psychoanalysis and the critique of capitalism. Her 38 books include a trilogy on political art: *Endless Andness* (Bloomsbury, 2013), on abstraction; *Thinking in Film* (Bloomsbury, 2013) on video installation); and *Of What One Cannot Speak* (The University of Chicago Press, 2010), on sculpture. Her work comes together in *A Mieke Bal Reader* (The University of Chicago Press, 2006). Her video project *Madame B* (2014), with Michelle Williams Gamaker, has been widely exhibited, including in 2017 in Museum Aboa Vetus & Ars Nova in Turku, and combined with paintings by Munch in the Munch Museum in Oslo. Her most recent film *Reasonable Doubt* (2016), on René Descartes and Queen Kristina, has been shown in Kraków, Amsterdam and Warsaw. She is the founder of the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis and was its director for five years, and was Professor at Universiteit van Amsterdam and then the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (1991–2011).

JILL BENNETT is an Australian Research Council Laureate Fellow and Director of the National Institute for Experimental Arts (NIEA) at UNSW. She is Founding Director of ‘The Big Anxiety: festival of arts + science + people’ and has curated/produced many exhibitions relating to trauma, memory and mental health. Her practice combines the development of 3D immersive environments with participatory exhibition design and the theoretical study of arts and mental health. Her books include *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art and Practical Aesthetics* (both Stanford University Press, 2005), as well as monographs on contemporary art and curatorial practice. Her research involves a number of collaborations with neuropsychologists (on memory loss), psychosocial researchers (on public engagement), mental health researchers and those with lived experience of neurodiversity and mental health.

ANDREA BUBENIK is Senior Lecturer in the School of Communication and Arts at The University of Queensland, where her research focuses on Renaissance and Baroque art, the links between art and science in the early modern period, and the historiography of art from antiquity to the present. Her monograph *Reframing Albrecht Dürer: The Appropriation of Art, 1528–1700* was published by Routledge in 2012. She is an Associate Investigator with the ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions, and curator of ‘Five Centuries of Melancholia’ (2014) and ‘Ecstasy: Baroque and Beyond’ (2017).