

# The Jeffrey Rubinoff Sculpture Park

## 2017 Company of Ideas Forum

### ART AND KNOWLEDGE IN THE 20TH CENTURY

At this year's forum, we will debate how artists in the 20th century interacted with other fields of inquiry. The idea that art is autonomous - accountable only to itself - was core to various conceptions of what truly modern art should be, dominating accounts as varied as those of Theodor Adorno and Clement Greenberg. Nevertheless, artists often drew inspiration from other disciplines to make their work: be it by considering mathematical theories to create geometric abstraction or by drawing on philosophy and sociology to make conceptual work. Considering art movements from both before and after the Second World War, our speakers discuss how this openness to new ideas influenced artistic ingenuity, as well as where it leaves art today.

#### **Convenors**

**Vid Simoniti** (Churchill College, Cambridge) and **James Fox** (Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge)

#### **Contacts**

For program-related enquiries, email Vid Simoniti on **vs418@cam.ac.uk**

For logistics-related enquiries, email Karun Koernig on

**karun@rubinoffsculpturepark.org**

Vid can be reached on + 44 7800 63 47 42 (text, call, WhatsApp)

Karun can be reached on + 1 604 725 6963 (text, call, WhatsApp)

#### **A note on the readings**

The speakers have suggested readings, which form the background to their talks and will facilitate the discussion.

Especially the student delegates of the Forum may find it useful to read these in advance, as they will be invited to give the first comments or questions.

The readings can be downloaded from this link **<https://goo.gl/VjwZLS>**

## 2017 FORUM PROGRAM

### Sun June 25

Speakers: arrival into Vancouver (some arrive on June 24<sup>th</sup>)

Speakers: optional dinner plans for those interested (contact Vid)

### Mon June 26

**9.30-10.15am** Flight to Hornby Island from Vancouver (Speakers)

**10.45am** Tour of the Sculpture Park for the Speakers given by the Curator (Karun Koernig)

**13.00** Lunch at the Sculpture Park

**After 15.00** Everyone can check into the Sea Breeze Lodge

**15.00** Tour of the Sculpture Park for UVic Students and Faculty given by the Curator (Karun Koernig)

**18.45** Welcome dinner at the Sea Breeze Lodge

### Tue June 27

**8.30 am** Breakfast at the Sculpture Park

#### ***COMPANY OF IDEAS***

**9.30-9.45** Introduction to the Forum and the Jeffrey Rubinoff Company of Ideas (**Karun Koernig, James Fox, Vid Simoniti**)

**9.45-10.45** **Brandon Taylor** "Truth and Deformity in Modernism"

15 minutes coffee break

**11.00-12.00** **Allan Antliff** "Break/Continuum: Formalism, Egoism, Anarchy"

**12.00-13.00** Lunch break

**13.00-14.00** **Catherine Spencer** "Allan Kaprow and Performance Art's Sociological Imagination"

Afternoon off to rest or explore the Island

Sculpture Park closed in the afternoon

Remembering Jeffrey for those who knew him (by invitation)

Optional activity – Studio Tour

**18.45** **Dinner at Sea Breeze Lodge**

**21.45** Star gazing (large telescope) & drinks

[http://www.nemy.com/Island\\_Stars/Stargazing.html](http://www.nemy.com/Island_Stars/Stargazing.html)

**Wed June 28**

**08.30 am** Breakfast at the Sculpture Park

***COMPANY OF IDEAS***

**09.30-10.30 Sam Rose** "From modernism to postmodernism and back again"

15 minutes coffee break

**10.45-11.45 Meredith Hoy** "The Fate of the Archive in the Age of Digital Memory"

**12.00-13.00** Lunch break

**13.00-14.00 Jonas Tinius** "After Autonomy: Art and Anthropology in Dialogue"

Meeting of the Educational Programme Advisory Board (closed meeting)

Sculpture Park Open for viewing

Optional activity – Helliwell Walk

**18.45** Dinner at the Sea Breeze Lodge

**Evening** Jazz piano (Marlowe Rainey)

**Thu June 29**

**Early start:** Those speakers flying onward that day via Nanaimo will catch the **7:30 am ferry**. We will be travelling in two cars (James Fox, Karun Koernig to drive)

Packed breakfasts will be prepared for those who must leave early to catch flights.

All other delegates are asked to cater for their own breakfast.

**10:45-11:05am** Flight to Vancouver from Nanaimo

## THE TALKS

### **Brandon Taylor “Truth and Deformity in Modernism”**

We are familiar with accusations of ‘deformity’ levelled against modern artists – as if their accounts of the world were wrong, perhaps insane. The paintings of Picasso and Dalí in the years c1927-32 prompted those reactions with a vengeance – such that today, so I argue, we are still attempting to gauge whether those claims are essentially correct. What role do concepts of ambiguity, paranoia, and otherness continue to play in our comprehension of why those works were made and what they show? The critics around the journal *Documents* in those years played a part in the same controversy by launching an attack on the project of measurement, number and typicality – ‘normality’ – much beloved of Enlightenment science. At stake in the arguments was the concept of truth itself. We examine the wherefores and the whys.

Recommended reading:

Immanuel Kant, ‘The ideal of beauty’, *The Critique of Judgement* (1790), trans. J. Meredith, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, pp 62-6 (Paragraph 17).

Salvador Dalí, ‘The Rotting Donkey’ (L’Ane pourri), *Le Surréalisme au service de la Révolution*, July 1930, pp 9-12; in translation in H. Finkelstein (ed.), *The Collected Writings of Salvador Dalí*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp 223-6.

### **Allan Antliff “Break/Continuum: Formalism, Egoism, Anarchy”**

My talk explores the politics of formalism during World War One through the work of Man Ray. I discuss how anarchism informed his development of a style grounded in a variation of anarchist individualism associated with the English Vorticist movement. Formalist values were central to this trans-Atlantic aesthetic, as was resistance to the power of the State and the assertion of a creative freedom founded on the egoist anarchism of philosopher Max Stirner. I track Man Ray’s development leading up to his encounter with Marcel Duchamp, whose own engagement with Stirner had inspired him to break with Cubism in favour of a ‘non-aesthetic,’ conceptual approach to creative activity. Man Ray’s response – to invert the formalist values that had hitherto shaped his painting by way of parody – produced work we now associate with the Dada movement. In tandem with Duchamp, his departure from formalism unfolded along an anarchist continuum.

Recommended reading:

Allan Antliff, “Anarchy, Power and Post-Structuralism,” *Substance* 36:2 (2007): 56-66.

### **Catherine Spencer “Allan Kaprow and Performance Art’s Sociological Imagination”**

From the late 1960s, Allan Kaprow began to approach his performance practice as a mode of radical sociology. This was informed by an alternative pedagogic initiative that he pursued between 1968-9 with the progressive educator Herbert Kohl in Berkeley. While the notion of ‘child’splay’ has been frequently invoked to conceptualize Kaprow’s work, by the late 1960s he had become too acutely aware of the inequalities affecting the US education system to continue framing his practice in this way. This inspired Kaprow’s reconceptualization of performance as ‘social art’, fuelled by his wide reading in

contemporary sociology, psychology and radical pedagogy, but also by an engagement with the counterculture and West Coast feminism.

Recommended reading:

Allan Kaprow, "Success and Failure: When Art Changes" in Suzanne Lacy (ed), *Mapping the terrain: New genre public art*, Seattle: Bay Press, 1995, pp. 152-158.

### **Sam Rose: "From modernism to postmodernism and back again"**

This is one way to link modern art and knowledge: modern artists often drew on other disciplines, in particular the sciences, in making their work. In this paper I take a different line. Looking to the *post-1960s* critiques of autonomy and modernist painting, I examine the way that shifting conceptions of art retrospectively led to highly complex redescriptions of the meanings of *pre-1960s* modernist painting. Modern art's autonomy might then have been undone by post-1960s approaches, with much of its alleged cognitive power activated and visible only after that point.

Recommended reading:

Sam Rose, "Close Looking and Conviction". *Art History*, 40 (2017), pp. 156–177.

### **Meredith Hoy "The Fate of the Archive in the Age of Digital Memory"**

This paper will address metamorphoses in notion of the "archive" resulting from new developments in digital technology. The archive, once a static and monolithic repository of canonized artifacts, became a mutable platform for the storage of digital data. The reformulation of the archive into a dynamic system of information ecology, in which bits of data function as mutually dependent "organisms," builds new conduits between knowledge systems and their artifactual traces. This paper will consider the ways in which the digitization of stored memory produces not only new epistemological formations, but also new affective experiences of time and memory.

Recommended reading:

Jussi Parikka, *What is Media Archaeology?*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012, Chapter 1.

### **Jonas Tinius "After Autonomy: Art and Anthropology in Dialogue"**

In this presentation, I will be discussing various ways in which art and anthropology have been in dialogue, especially in contemporary art since the 1990s. But to understand what has more recently called an "ethnographic turn" in contemporary art scholarship and practice, we have to look at earlier engagements of anthropologists with art and artists with anthropology. This will help understand artistic dialogues with 'other' (both in the weak sense of *other* disciplines as well as the strong ontological and cultural sense of *Other* epistemologies) forms of inquiry *after* the romantic idea of artistic creativity giving birth to itself.

Recommended Reading:

Blanes, Ruy, Alex Flynn, Maite Maskens, Jonas Tinius, 'Micro-utopias: anthropological perspectives on art, creativity, and relationality' (introduction to special issue). *Journal of Art and Anthropology/Cadernos de Arte e Antropologia*. 5:1 (2016), pp. 5-20.

## THE SPEAKERS

**Allan Antliff** holds the Canada Research Chair in Art History at the University of Victoria. His research interests include Dada, contemporary art, and political theory, and he has written extensively on anarchism and art in North America. His books include *Joseph Beuys* (Phaidon, 2014) and *Anarchy and Art: From the Paris Commune to the Fall of the Berlin Wall* (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2007).

**Meredith Hoy** is Assistant Professor of Art History and Theory in the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts at Arizona State University. Her research focusses on contemporary art and architecture, especially on the impact of technology on art. She has written widely on these topics and recently published *From Point to Pixel: A Genealogy of Digital Aesthetics* (Dartmouth, 2017).

**Sam Rose** is a Lecturer in Art History at the University of St Andrews. His research interests include formalism, theories of modernist painting, and contemporary interactions between art history and aesthetics. He is currently working on a set of essays examining description and contingency in and after modern art.

**Catherine Spencer** is a Lecturer in Modern and Contemporary Art at the University of St Andrews. She specializes in performance art from the 1960s to present; dematerialized, participatory and collaborative practices and overlaps between art, sociology and anthropology. She has recently published on the work of Lea Lublin, Allan Kaprow and Marta Minujín.

**Brandon Taylor** is Professor Emeritus in History of Art at Southampton University and currently Tutor in History and Theory of Art at the Ruskin School of Art, Oxford. His research interests are in modern and contemporary art, east European art, and the history of art institutions. His recent books include *Collage: The Making of Modern Art* (Thames and Hudson, London 2004), *Sculpture and Psychoanalysis* (Ashgate and the Henry Moore Institute, Leeds 2006), *After Constructivism* (Yale University Press 2014) and *St Ives and British Modernism* (Pallant House Gallery, Chichester 2015).  
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**Jonas Tinius** is a post-doctoral research fellow at the Centre for Anthropological Research on Museums and Heritage (CARMAH), based in the Institute of European Ethnology at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Germany. He completed his PhD at the University of Cambridge, entitled *State of the Arts: German Theatre and Political Self-Cultivation*. His current research explores how artists, curators, and contemporary art spaces negotiate ideas of otherness in relation to the vast museum redevelopments underway in Berlin. He has published on anthropology, theatre and the political potential of performance.