Susan Potter:
Queer Character: The Emergent Hollywood Classical Style and Sexual Legibility in A Florida Enchantment (1914)

Often recuperated as an example of the representation of sexual inversion and lesbian desire in early cinema, the feature-length sex-change comedy A Florida Enchantment (dir. Sydney Drew, Vitagraph, 1914) offers an ideal case study of early cinema's modern sexual effects. The paper argues that it is the development of a specific narrative film style—recognized in retrospect as the Hollywood classical style—and the concomitant industry drive to ensure the clarity of longer-form film stories for audiences, that arguably marks a small but significant turn in the disciplinary effects and representational possibilities of early cinema and its spectatorship. While the intelligibility of on-screen character might draw on new extra-filmic sexual knowledges, such as the “characterological” discourses of sexology, the medium-specific modes by which psychological character is made intelligible to viewers establishes the conditions in which new forms of sexual personification become possible.

Dr Susan Potter is a Lecturer in Film Studies in the Department of Art History. She is currently working on a book project on the emergence of lesbian representation in early cinema, from the proto-cinematic to early sound film. Her essays have been published in Camera Obscura, Screen and Framework.
Department of Art History
Seminar Series Semester 1, 2016

Schaeffer Seminar room 210

Thursday March 17

PAPER ONE:
Mark De Vitis
Dressing to Distress: Costume as Critique in Louis XIV’s France

Dress was a vital tool of communication at the courts of early modern Europe. The scarcity of surviving material evidence from the period has meant that scholars interested in dress often rely on written accounts rather than actual garments. While this raises many challenges, it also necessitates a reading of dress that moves beyond the costume object. Letters and memoirs recounting details of dress and dressing often treat it as an embodied practice, performed in the social space of court. My paper will consider how and why dress functioned as a viable tool of socio-political critique, able to challenge the limits of political discourse in Louis XIV’s France.

Dr Mark De Vitis is a lecturer in the Department of Art History, having joined the faculty at the University of Sydney in 2015. He specialises in seventeenth-century European visual culture.
English writings from the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries often describe the stiffened undergarments of the time – bodies, busks, farthingales and bum-rolls – as restricting bodily movement, taking up too much space or even concealing pregnancy. Interpreting these statements is often difficult as few historical sources contain female voices describing what it felt like to wear these items, and dress from this period, if it has survived, is incredibly fragile. This is where the practise of historical reconstruction can help. Reconstruction has until recently not been considered a concern of the serious academic, yet it has been used by archaeologists, curators and conservators for many years, allowing scholars to interpret how often fragile or now-absent objects affected people’s day to day life. This presentation will discuss the practice of reconstruction in dress history: how and why it is used and most importantly, how it is slowly starting to be accepted as a helpful resource for academic study. To do this I will not only give an overview of examples in current scholarly work, but also discuss my own journey into historical reconstruction and the ways in which it has enriched my research, in relation to my understanding of how these items were produced as well as the effect that they had on the early modern female body.

Sarah Bendall is a PhD candidate in the Department of History at the University of Sydney. Her current research examines the production, consumption and discourses generated around stiffened female undergarments in order to analyse the ways that women and their bodies were understood, regulated and experienced in England, 1560-1680.
Department of Art History
Seminar Series Semester 1, 2016

Schaeffer Seminar room 210

Thursday March 31

Katherine Biber:
The Cultural Afterlife of Criminal Evidence

This presentation examines the cultural afterlife of criminal evidence. It explores what happens to the evidence tendered in criminal proceedings after the conclusion of the trial, or during the trial but outside the courtroom. Formally regarded as part of the court record, and subject to the rules of evidence within the trial, beyond the trial this material has aroused the interest of artists, publishers, historians, curators and journalists who wish to access and use this material for a wide range of purposes, some of which might be transgressive, dangerous or insensitive.

This presentation outlines my current project, which is motivated by the timely intersection of two contemporary phenomena: ‘open justice’ and ‘open secrets’. ‘Open justice’ demands transparency about court procedures and access to court information; the term ‘open secrets’ acknowledges that public records sometimes need tact or sensitivity about the secrets they contain. The project also explores the undiminished fervour, within the humanities and creative arts, for treating official records as ‘open secrets’. These archives, including a very significant amount of legal evidence used in criminal trials, provide a rich basis for creative and scholarly enterprises, and this work has, to date, flourished without any consistent decision-making about access to, or restrictions upon, court information.
Thursday March 31

Katherine Biber:
The Cultural Afterlife of Criminal Evidence

These extra-legal deployments of evidence create a conflict between transparency and secrecy, between the ideals of ‘open justice’ and ‘sensitivity’. This project explores the consequences of using criminal evidence in the cultural field, and aims to investigate whether an appropriate regulatory or ethical framework can be developed in response to challenging or controversial re-deployments of this material. This is particularly important because the rules of evidence cannot guard against the risk that it may be mis-used outside of criminal proceedings, and where users are motivated by entirely different sensibilities and sensitivities. This explores what is at stake in opening this criminal archive, and what might be at stake if we try to regulate it.

Katherine Biber is a legal scholar, criminologist and historian. She is Professor of Law at the University of Technology Sydney, where she teaches and researches in the areas of criminal procedure and law of evidence. Katherine’s research examines the interactions of crime, photography, documentation and visual culture. She is author of Captive Images: Race, Crime, Photography (Routledge, 2007) and co-editor of The Lindy Chamberlain Case: Nation, Law, Memory (Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2009). Her forthcoming book is titled In Crime’s Archive: The Cultural Afterlife of Evidence (Routledge, 2016). This paper is derived from research supported by an Australian Research Council Discovery grant, DP130102224.
Department of Art History
Seminar Series Semester 1, 2016

Schaeffer Seminar room 210

Thursday April 14

Roger Benjamin
Exhibiting Biskra: Photography, Art and Tourism in an Algerian Oasis

Roger Benjamin will present his curatorial work on the exhibition “Biskra, Queen of the Oases”, with a specific focus on negotiating conflicting stakes in the history and culture of the town: from pied noir historians and Jewish authors caught in colonial nostalgia, to Biskran intellectuals and civic leaders scarred by the memory of French colonialism, yet mindful of the architectural and cultural legacy of that era.

Roger Benjamin, Professor of Art History at the University of Sydney, has spent the last three years as an ARC DORA Fellow researching cross-cultural visuality in the great port cities of the Western Mediterranean basin, from Tunis to Marseille. His book Kandinsky and Klee in Tunisia was published by the University of California Press in 2015. He is guest curator of the exhibition “Biskra, Queen of the Oases (1844-2014)”, to be held at the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris between September 2016 and January 2017.
In 1961, two events affected a strange dichotomy that would dramatically change the cultural landscape of Germany. Firstly, an agreement was signed between Germany and Turkey enabling the mass guest-worker program that contributed to West Germany's labour shortage, changing German culture in ways that are still being felt across the nation. Secondly, the German Democratic Republic erected the Berlin Wall on the 13th August stemming the flow of citizens across the border. Drawing on these two events, this paper considers the ways in which the traumatic memory of place and its loss is conveyed in photography in terms of the psychological and physical connections of belonging and not belonging.

Dr Donna West Brett is a lecturer in the Art History department at the University of Sydney. Areas of expertise include the history and theory of photography, modernism, international contemporary art, cold war visual culture, curatorial and museological practice & theory. She is author of Photography and Place: Seeing and Not Seeing Germany After 1945 (Routledge 2016), co-editor & reviews editor for the Australian & NZ Journal of Art and research leader of the Photographic Cultures Research Group.
PAPER TWO:

Natali Pearson
Shipwrecked? Treasure, Ethics and Underwater Cultural Heritage in Indonesia

In November 2015, the Tang Shipwreck Collection went on display at its new, permanent home at the Asian Civilisations Museum in Singapore. The exhibition features the excavated cargo of a 9th century dhow, first discovered by a trepang diver off the Indonesian island of Belitung in 1998 and believed to be the earliest evidence of maritime trade between the Tang dynasty and the Abbasid caliphate. Since its discovery in 1998, the Belitung wreck has come to embody some of the most contested areas in the study of underwater cultural heritage in Southeast Asia today. The now-complete transformation from submerged cargo to permanent museum exhibit provides a timely opportunity to reflect on the ongoing tensions between ethical and commercial approaches to the protection and preservation of underwater cultural heritage, and to consider how such tensions have impacted upon the heritage landscape in Indonesia. In particular, it prompts questions about whether for-profit involvement in the excavation of underwater cultural heritage permanently taints the archaeological material, and how we can navigate this ethical dilemma. These questions are especially relevant when the archaeological material is of both historical and financial value. The paper outlines the political and regulatory context within which the Belitung was excavated, and considers the extent to which international developments such as the 2001 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, as well as more recent changes to domestic legislation, have addressed the opposing imperatives of economic exploitation and heritage management in Indonesia.

Natali Pearson is a PhD candidate whose research is focused on the illicit trade in cultural heritage in Indonesia. She is jointly supervised by the Museum and Heritage Studies and Asian Studies programs at The University of Sydney. Natali is Postgraduate Coordinator at the Sydney Southeast Asia Centre. She holds a Master of Museum Studies (2013, USyd); a Master of Arts in Strategy and Policy (2006, UNSW); and a Bachelor of Arts (Asian Studies) with Honours Class 1 in History and Indonesian Studies (2002, UNSW). Natali participated in the Australian Consortium for In-Country Indonesian Studies in 2001, and was a Fellow of the Asialink Leaders Program in 2009. She has worked at the Asia Society’s galleries in New York and Hong Kong. Prior to this, she worked in Asia-centric defence and anti-money laundering roles in the Australian Federal Government.
Department of Art History Seminar Series
Semester 1, 2016
Schaeffer Seminar room 210
Thursday May 12

Annamarie Jagose
Housework/ Sex Work: Feminist Ambivalence and Chantal Akerman’s Jeanne Dielman, 23, Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles

Widely acclaimed for its thematic and formal originality, the novelty of Chantal Akerman’s Jeanne Dielman, 23, Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles was nevertheless immediately recognizable to a new generation of feminist film scholars, who were, in that same mid-1970s moment, taking up psychoanalytic models to theorize relations between femininity and its cinematic representation. Much of this work took Jeanne Dielman as a key text, reading its sustained attentiveness to the grindingly real time of quotidian female domestic routine as a more general critique of the social marginalization of Western women. Yet the initial feminist reception of Akerman’s film hinged ambivalently on Jeanne Dielman’s representation of the temporalities of a female everyday. The feminist film critics who wrote about Jeanne Dielman often emphasized the interventionist force of Akerman’s lengthily held shots of culturally insignificant housework activities, as if subscribing to a folk-Bazinian faith in the aesthetic value of the deep-focus long take. As I will argue with reference to key scenes as well as material aspects of the film’s production, however, this feminist championing of Akerman’s film style enabled a covert subscription to a different order of temporality, endorsing a sense of lived time animated by the generational divide between second-wave feminism and the women it succeeded.

Professor Annamarie Jagose is internationally known as a scholar in feminist studies, lesbian/gay studies and queer theory. She is the author of four monographs, most recently Orgasmology, which takes orgasm as its scholarly object in order to think queerly about questions of politics and pleasure; practice and subjectivity; agency and ethics. She is also an award-winning novelist and short story writer.
PAPER ONE:
Shayne Bowden
Adachi Masao and the Landscape Cinema of Ryakushô Renzoku Shasatum

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the Japanese cinematic landscape theory that is associated with the Japanese filmmaker Adachi Masao known as fukeiron. I will provide an overview of Adachi’s life and work and the social-political context from which fukeiron emerged. I will also analyse various films that are often associated with fukei cinema such as Adachi’s 1969 documentary Ryakushô Renzoku Shasatsuma (AKA Serial Killer) and Oshima Nagisa’s Tōkyō Sensō Sengo Hiwa (The Man Who Left His Will on Film) and discuss what unique cinematic perspectives of space these works enable. I will refer to primary Japanese source materials in order to approach a direct understanding of this cinematic concept and its history as well as discussing fukei cinema’s relation to the Pink Eiga genre and radical Japanese cinema of the 1960s. I will argue that aspects of the Fukei usage and representation of space is evident in other more contemporary cinematic examples.

Shayne Bowden is in his last year of a part-time Masters research thesis. He has worked as an educator, curator and sound artist. He began the annual Against: Fukuoka Extreme Music/Film Festival in 2008 and has curated various, performances, exhibitions and film screenings for Japanese and international artists. As a sound artist he has performed in Australia, New Zealand, Japan and the United States. He has also released music on his own deterra label. Bowden has documentary and short fiction film projects planned for 2017.
Among the many cultural responses to the global AIDS epidemic was the Australian AIDS Memorial Quilt Project, which was inaugurated in 1988. By the time it was disbanded in 2007, the project had generated over 700 quilt panels whose futures had to be decided. Many of the quilts that had links to Sydney were donated to the Powerhouse Museum where they have since been documented, conserved and featured in several exhibitions. At the same time, the custody and ongoing management of the quilts associated with Melbourne was handed over to the AIDS Memorial Candlelight Vigil & Quilt Project (Melbourne Quilt Project), which has continues to lend them out for community events and presentations. Through the example of the different custodianship of the Sydney and Melbourne AIDS quilts, this paper will trace two distinct approaches to the collection and display of LGBTIQ objects. Whereas the Melbourne Quilt Project might be considered ‘in and of’ the LGBTIQ community, the state-funded Powerhouse Museum’s remit is to the broader community. This distinction manifests in several ways including duties of care. As I will discuss, whereas the Powerhouse applies formalised knowledge and bureaucratic processes to the quilts in order to protect them for future generations, the Foundation’s notion of care is oriented towards current community coordinates. Using an ‘object biography’ approach, this paper compares the divergent pathways of the Sydney and Melbourne quilts in terms of the provision of physical and affective access. This LGBTIQ case study suggests that in the encounter between soft objects and hard museum protocols, the texture of curation must become more pliable if it is to sustain new possibilities for community inclusion.

Vu Tuan Nguyen is a PhD candidate at the University of Sydney in Museum Studies. His thesis Queer Museology seeks to develop a theoretically and practically informed approach to museum work that integrates queer histories, identities, communities and issues at its core <www.vutuannguyen.com>. 
Yiman Wang
Who is Not Afraid of Contaminated Pleasure: Anna May Wong’s Thrilling Tears

The discourse of visual pleasure is fundamentally a discourse of hermeneutics that trains the film spectator to decode film representation and performance in ways that either implicate them in the filmic fantasy (that is to enjoy the pleasure uncritically), or lead them to read/look against the grain. The latter triggers what Eve Sedgwick calls the paranoid reading (i.e., an x-ray gaze that always stays suspicious and critical of the seductive pleasure) and the reparative reading (i.e., a position that entertains love and hope, seeking to reassemble the moments conducive to rejuvenation). What happens when we shift the focus from the spectator’s visual pleasure to the actor’s performative pleasure especially in the process of reenacting sexualized and racialized stereotypes? Bearing in mind that films made within the mainstream industry inevitably disseminates mainstream ideologies and that the performer is rarely a decision-maker, how is it possible to conceptualize the performer’s pleasure that is not just coerced, guilty and complicit? Why is it important to keep alive that possibility? Where does such a possibility reside? Who is in the position to recognize it? And finally, what does this have to do with agency?

I discuss these issues through the lens of Anna May Wong (1905-1961), the most well-known early 20th-c. Chinese-American film-stage-TV performer, also the first controversial Chinese-American actress much maligned by the Chinese critics for playing Orientalist stereotypes.
Wong’s long-lasting career was heavily associated with the mainstream entertainment industry in the US and Europe, as “one considerable yellow spot that’s come to stay on the silver of the screen,” according to her 1921 interview. Her determination to stay on and contaminate the white screen (so to speak) forces us to ask what kind of pleasure she obtained from participating in the colonialist and Orientalist fantasy, other than to have the opportunity to be vociferously critical of Hollywood? If her participation suggested what Anne Cheng calls “contaminated desires, what then does her reverse contamination (spotting the white screen) accomplish? How was/is her performative pleasure (if any) conveyed to her audience? What does the performer-audience mutual recognition add to our understanding of pleasure? In addressing these questions, my study intends to be self-implicating and self-reflexive, for only in this way can we think of pleasure as situated, embodied and interactive politics.

Yiman Wang obtained her PhD degree from Duke University (the Graduate Program in Literature). She is Associate Professor of Film & Digital Media at University of California, Santa Cruz. She is the author of Remaking Chinese Cinema: Through the Prism of Shanghai, Hong Kong and Hollywood (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2013). She is currently working on two book projects: one on Anna May Wong; and the other on animality in cinema. Her articles have appeared in several leading film journals, including Quarterly Review of Film and Video, Film Quarterly, Camera Obscura, Journal of Film and Video, Literature/Film Quarterly, Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique, Journal of Chinese Cinemas, and in a number of edited collections. Yiman Wang, yw3@ucsc.edu
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