

Dr. Daniel Rubinstein

CORE:Unit 1 What is Practice (In Photography)?

MA Photography

Prelude

We inhabit an age in which “Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold” – in the words of William Butler Yeats – but then the same ‘things’ also come back together to form new, previously unimagined configurations that are both the stuff of fantasy and of nightmares. It is an age in which dizzying advances in artificial intelligence and computer technology are intertwined with cultural and economic poverty, rise of fascism, homophobia, misogyny and fear of ‘the other’, and all of the above is never far away from the complex and challenging landscape of contemporary photography in all its aspects: post-internet, digital, networked, mediated, visual, performative, public, political. Indeed, photography – in all its hybridised forms – is often found at the core of our understanding of ‘who we are’ in this challenging and mutable world: what we are made of, what is our relationship to other human and non-human entities, how we fight, play, find pleasure, take sides, make things ‘change’, make things ‘work’, make things heal or bleed, take on colour, find the beat.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

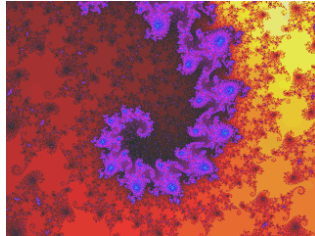
The main aim of this course is to provide you, the postgraduate student, with the tools necessary to exercise your *curiosity* and *imagination* about visual imaging. These tools will guide you in the task of finding your voice and your signature style in order to get to grips with the strange, sensuous and wonderful world of art, new media and technology, or in a word: photography.

Disclaimer

For all of you new to doing ‘proper’ philosophy or theory: no previous knowledge of philosophy is required. This is a seminar that will help you learn **how to think** (as distinct from ‘what’ to think). Eventually it will make some kind of sense in relation to the project you are working on (whatever it is).

The Small Print:

The course will take you on a specific journey that will dovetail with a wide palette of issues, from the construction of contemporary knowing and consciousness linked to digital cybercultures, augmented reality,

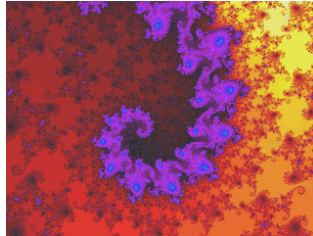


bio-art and artificial intelligence(s) and to the understanding of the visual image as multiply dimensional, and expressing a 'logic of techne' or, as Heidegger would say, as expressing 'the poetic.' In so doing, this core course will enable you to shed the all too common misconception (or at best 'narrow' view) which equates photography with representation, semiotics, ideology, structuralism and document. Shedding this straightjacket will give us the tools to do something much more free flowing, risky, experimental and potentially creative: to allow photography to assume its right place as a central element in the contemporary art world.

To this end, we will contextualize the study and practice of photography as an art form (re-)born through the networked, instant, mobile and multiple environments of our own experience and timeframe – the 21st century. This will mean (and don't get nervous) a guided tour through the work of the seminal 20th and 21st century wild scientists, artists and thinkers including Einstein (theory of relativity), Heidegger (techne/poetics), Deleuze and Guattari (rhizome), Mandelbrot (fractals) and Lyotard (the sexual/erotic libidinal economy).

Reference will be made the works of a number of seminal artists / visionaries / provocateurs: Jean-Michel Basquait, Georges Bataille, De Sade, Marcel Duchamp, Formant Brothers, John Cage, Douglas Gordon, Marlene Dumas, Sarah Lucas, Dr. Seuss, among others.

The course will be taught over the first semester in a weekly 3 hour lecture/seminar. Usually there will be a 1.5 h.-2h lecture followed by student presentations, class discussion and the practical linking of the lecture topic to your own creative practice in order to inhabit directly the delicate interlacing of photography, sense, sensuality, science, art.



Week 2 14 Oct 2015 Introductory lecture / Induction:

What does it mean to be a 'Master' of the Universe.

What does it mean to write a proposal for something that is non-representational?

Thrift, N., 2008, *Non-representational theory: space, politics, affect*, Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon. Read: Introduction and first chapter.

Flusser, V., 2000, *Towards a philosophy of photography*, Translated by M. Chalmers. Reaktion Books, London

Week 3. 21 Oct 2015 Pecha Kucha: Learning to hear what/how/when an object speaks. (closed session: year 1 only)

Task: choose an object that has some odd or weird or compelling link to your own being; bring it to the class and explain in 5 minutes precisely what it means to you (later to be developed into your 'style').

Week 4. 28 Oct 2015 What is representation?

J-F Lyotard, Representation, Presentation, Unpresentable. In Lyotard, J.-F., 1991, *The inhuman : reflections on time*, Translated by R. Bowlby & G. Bennington. Cambridge : Polity Press,

Week 5 04 Nov 2015 What is a or the 'thing'

Heidegger, M., 2012, "The Point of Reference" and "The Thing" in: *Bremen and Freiburg lectures: insight into that which is and basic principles of thinking*, Translated by A.J. Mitchell. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 5-23.

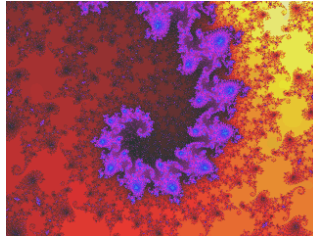
Questions to Consider:

1. What does it mean to say that 'The distance of that which is remains outstanding'?
2. What is a or the 'Thing'?

Week 6 11 Nov 2015 What is technology?

Heidegger, M., 1978, "The Question Concerning Technology" in: *Basic writings: from Being and time to The task of thinking*, Krell ed. Taylor & Francis, Wiltshire, 311-341.

1. What is the difference between technology and techne?
2. And why would Heidegger argue that technology is not anything technological or a means to an end?



Week 7 18 Nov 2015 Introduction to the non-fascist life. [de-territorialisation and desiring machines].

Readings:

Foucault, M., 'Preface: Introduction to the Non-Fascist Life' in: Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. 1996, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, The Athlone Press, London, xi-xiv.

Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F., 1996, "Desiring-Production" in: *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Translated by R. Hurley, M. Seem & H.R. Lane. The Athlone Press, London, 1-9.

Questions to consider:

1. What does it mean to lead a non-fascist life, and how it is related to being an artist?
- 2.

Week 8 25 Nov 2015 Heterotopias – echo-state [goya/velasquez] and other works of art.

Foucault, M., 2000, "Different Spaces" in: *The essential works of Michel Foucault, 1954-1984. Vol. 2, Aesthetics*, Rabinow, R.P. ed. Translated by Hurley & others. Penguin, London, 175-187.

Foucault, M., 1989 "Las Meninas", in, *The order of things : an archaeology of the human sciences*, Translated by R. Tavistock. Routledge, London, 3-18.

Questions to consider:

1. What is a heterotopia?
2. What is representation and how can it be pictured or figured?

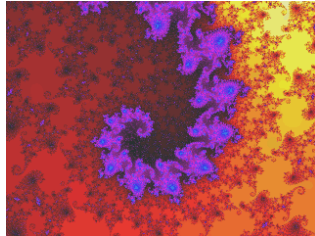
Week 9 02 Dec 2015 Rhizomes, networks and other multiplicities.

Massumi, B., "Translator's Foreword" in: Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. 2003, , in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Continuum, London, ix-xvi.

Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F., 2003, "Introduction: Rhizome" in: *A Thousand Plateaus*, Translated by B. Massumi. Continuum, London, 3-26.

Questions to consider:

1. What is 'state philosophy'?
2. In what sense is photography a rhizome?



Week 10 Dec 09 2015 Difference and the art of making a difference

Deleuze, G., 2004, "Difference in Itself" in: *Difference and repetition*,
Translated by P. Patton. Continuum, London, 36-90.

Irigaray, L., 2005, *An ethics of sexual difference*, Translated by C. Burke &
Gill. Continuum International Publishing Group, London

Questions to consider:

1. What does it mean to 'picture' difference?
2. Is there such thing as the politics of difference?