



LATVIAN CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART

ABSTRACTS AND LECTURERS BIOGRAPHIES

Ilva Skulte

Migration and its Representation between Journalism and Art

In the time of post-truth and fake news, big data, cross-media stories, immediacy and global mass-self-communication, journalistic practices of selecting news and reflecting processes are often not as prominent or as ordered as before, and there is a lack of time needed for investigation and thinking. The diversity of views around migration today, facts mixed with feelings, modern and pre-modern myths and hidden fears create an area where journalism often fails to establish a rational ground for argumentation and discussion, where an objective overview can be promoted. Visuals help to create a (false) spectrum and anchor it in human subjectivity. Emotion is a new currency which has been quickly raised up by capitalist media owners. This is where self-reflective artistic activity including social and political activism is filling the gap.

In my lecture I would like to pick up and work with Alfredo Cramerotti's concept of aesthetic journalism. Cramerotti famously wrote: "What I call aesthetic journalism involves artistic practices in the form of investigation of social, cultural or political circumstances. Its research outcomes take shape in the art context, rather than through media channels. Press and broadcast news are realms in which our concept of truth takes form. Visual art, on the other hand, is increasingly present in the communication of urgencies; hence, the hypotheses about the idea of truth shifting from the sphere of news media to the territory of art, moving out from the private realm (of the object, the person who produces or consumes it, the meaning carried through the object) to enter the public sphere (the issue at stake, the process undertaken, the distribution of knowledge). This attitude sets a new horizon of sense, bringing the matter outside the established traditions of formalism (for art) and reporting (for journalism)." (Cramerotti. *A. Aesthetic Journalism: How to Inform Without Informing*. Bristol and Chicago: Intellect and Chicago University Press, 2009.)

Ilva Skulte, Dr. Philol., Assoc. Prof. has a doctoral degree in the history of language from the University of Latvia. Since 2001, she has been working at the Department of Communication at Riga Stradins University, Latvia, and for the last 10 years as a Director of the Masters Programme for Communication and Media Studies. Having taught and written about history of media and reflecting the changes in culture caused by new media she discovered the importance of media literacies (including visual literacies) and arts. She has also worked as a cultural journalist since 2000.

Inga Erdmane

The Poetics of Relation

In the 90s, curator Nicolas Bourriaud suggested the idea of the ‘artist as international traveller’. Visual artists and photographers are finding new ways of recording the current epoch and making new in-between space narratives. According to neuroscientists, our brains construct our ‘world view’, which is formed by pictures and fragments of information, and people tend to treat the views of others as if they were their own; be it in politics, social life, fashion or art, we follow the trends. Time and memory, both personal and historical, are the substance of photography, and with the still and moving images, artists and amateurs were introduced to a new way of visualising time. Photography clearly involves space, but less clear has been the time dimension, while now we are able to manipulate time itself. French philosopher Henri-Louis Bergson argued that the ‘élan vital’ (impulse of life) of duration cannot be apprehended by the rational intellect or conceptual understanding, but instead through intuition. All existence is a flux of becoming, moving and growing, a succession of states which never rest where they are. Only in intuition can one enter into this passing of time and thus experience at the concrete level the flux of becoming as the ultimate reality.

Reading:

Edouard Glissant, “Errantry, Exile” from *Poetics of Relation* (1997)

Inga Erdmane has graduated from the Photography Department of the Royal Academy of Art, The Hague, and has studied psychology in Riga. She held the personal exhibitions *I Agree I have Blundered. Criminal Case No. 15890013311* at the LCCA (2013), *The Pleasure Of Ignorance* at the Latvian Museum of Photography (2018), a duo exhibition *Wildly Inaccurate Disbelief* at the Époque Antwerp gallery (2014), Belgium, and has also participated in group exhibitions in Latvia, France, Belgium, Ireland, Lithuania, Finland and elsewhere. Her publications include the Latvian Photography Yearbook 2015, and GUEST-ROOM by Erik Kessels, Der Greif, Germany. The Press House Photobook (with Ilze Vanaga) was shortlisted for Amsterdam's Unseen Dummy Award in 2014.

Eléonore de Montesquiou

Why and How is One Defined as a Foreigner?

How to act where rules have not been established to welcome the other? How to give a voice to those whom we rarely hear, and who struggle in the nets of the law and with the social system in place? With my protagonists, I try to understand their place on the territory (and mine also, an Estonian citizen since 1992).

I make films and publish books with Russian speakers in North-East Estonia, first in *SILLAMÄE*, since 2007 in Narva (film *Naine*) and lately in Tallinn (research for the film *ARMASTUS*). For the past two years, I have been filming French-speaking migrants in Estonia. They had crossed the border illegally, seeking asylum but ending up in prison. I have tried to attract the attention of the public. The film *FEU (FIRE, 2017)* was online in the Estonian media in summer 2017. When the films *COMMANDO SACKO*, *GENERAL*, *SANS RETOUR* and *BABYLONE* went online, they were censored by the Estonian Border Police. I continue the work with the Contemporary Art Museum of Estonia (EKKM), having

reproduced the detention center visiting room at Poppositions, Brussels in April 2018, and by preparing a publication and presentations in Estonia.

Eléonore de Montesquiou's work revolves around the articulation of private and official histories, personal and national identities. It tackles the intricacies and ambiguities of living in the margins, based on her personal experience of up-rootedness. Eléonore primarily works with video; she tapes testimonies, creating artificial memories of repressed histories. In her documentary-informed works, her camera becomes the voice of these voiceless people. Her work is based on a documentary approach, translated into films, drawings and texts; it deals mainly with issues of integration/immigration and the meaning of a nation in Estonia, giving a voice to the Russian community. A few years ago she started working with asylum seekers from French speaking countries in Estonia.

Jonatan Habib Engqvist

Where Were We? On Mapping and Landscapes

I will talk about a large exhibition in an art venue in Stockholm, an interdisciplinary collaboration on an island, and a 3-year on-going international project on the 'periphery', not dissimilar to that of Kuldīga. These three rather different projects all explore conceptions of the centre and periphery in various ways while also connecting to various ideas of mapping and map-making.

1. The exhibition *Bouchra Khalili – The Opposite of Voice Over* in Stockholm was the artist's first solo exhibition in the Nordic region. It consisted of works that at their core situate voices of members of minorities, often unheard, while also attempting to provide alternative conceptions of belonging and civic community. Among other things, the works call into question the arbitrary nature of nation-states and borders: <https://fargfabriken.se/en/right-now/item/1293-bouchra-khalili-the-opposite-of-voice-over>
2. *Fleeting Territories – Mapping Malta*, was part of the larger exhibition *Dal Bahar Mdwarha* curated by Maren Richter as part of Valletta Capital of Culture 2018. A group of artists and a curator/theorist worked together with the Malta Map Society, students, and other experts including the air force, in a project that started with enormous ambition and became something different in an attempt to speak of a place that always has been geographically remote yet geopolitically central: <https://valletta2018.org/events/dal-bahar-madwarha-fleeting-territories/>
3. *Nya Småland* (2016-2019) was initiated and driven by a curatorial group, four art institutions, three regions and a university, as an attempt to formulate long-term relationships, encourage experimentation and create conditions for critical and cultural sustainability. By moving horizontally between the regional actors and combining local knowledge with international contemporary art and critical thinking, this project attempts to investigate and re-access the political, social and aesthetic landscape of Småland: <http://www.nyasmaland.se/>

I will tie together these three different contexts in a way that is productive for the Summer School as fruitful examples, provocations, or material for further discussion.

Reading:

James Corner, "The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention" (1999)

Jonatan Habib Engqvist & Greta Muscat Azzopardi, "Specula Melitensis" (2018)

Bouchra Khalili in conversation with Jonatan Habib Engqvist, "Map of Utopia". *The Opposite of Voice-Over Bouchra Khalili*. 2.4.–19.6. 2016.

Jonatan Habib Engqvist is a curator and theorist with a background in philosophy and aesthetic theory. He has worked previously as a project manager for visual art at Iaspis (2009–2014), as a curator at Moderna Museet (2008–09) and at the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm (2005–07). He also manages the Curatorial Residency in Stockholm and is editor-in-chief of the online journal tsnoK.se. He has curated a number of international exhibitions including *Survival Kit 9* in Riga, Latvia, *Sinopale 6*, Sinop, Turkey (2017), *Tunnel Vision*, the 8th Momentum biennale in Moss, Norway 2015 and *(I)ndependent People*, the visual art focus of Reykjavík Arts Festival 2012. His most recent curatorial projects are *The Children of the Children of the Revolution* and *New Småland*. His books include: *Big Dig — Om passivitet och samtidskonst*, CLP Works, 2018; *Studio Talks: Thinking Through Painting*, Arvinus+Orfeus Publishing, 2014; *In Dependence – Collaboration and Artists' initiatives*, Torpedo Press, 2013, *Work, Work, Work – A Reader on Art and Labour*, Steinberg Press, 2012.

Tanel Rander

A Mole, Larger in Size than Ever Seen Before. The Muted Voice of Provincality

The first part of this title originates from Franz Kafka's short story "The Village Schoolmaster". Reading this text is necessary for taking part in the the discussion on the main content of this workshop – provincality.

I am currently concluding a two-year collective research project that has taken place in Valga/Valka, the town that has officially given up the logic of growth and follows the concept of shrinking. In fact it is no longer a town – due to administrative reform it ceased to exist as town in 2017.

This year I opened a new (temporary) art space there – Brīvības Galerija. In mid-August an exhibition/symposium titled as "A Mole, Larger in Size than Ever Seen Before" will be opened in order to conclude the two-year project. Thereby, I will introduce two works of art by local authors and ask participants to create input for this project.

Reading:

Franz Kafka, "The Village Schoolmaster" ("The Giant Mole") (1914)

Tanel Rander is an artist, curator, and writer, whose creative work includes experimental practices based on language and psychology, and critical study of Eastern-European

discourse and decoloniality. The focus of Rander's work is the tension between subjectivity and the modifying pressure it experiences between interior and exterior. From late 2016 he has conducted collective research in Valga/Valka, where he is also running the Brīvības Galerija art space.

Dīana Tamane

From my Family Album

It is zooming in and out. It feels like when you can't focus your camera in the darkness. Trying to approach from different angles, not knowing how close to be or how distant.

Starting with tiny movements and awkward gestures I am following long roads from the East to the West of Europe and my family members are often the main characters in my work. Sometimes it is my grandmother, who became a smuggler by trying to cross the Latvian/Russian border with two small pots of flowers. Or it is my father, who since the mid 90's travels frequently to the West to buy cars, electronics and other items to resell in Latvia. Or my mother, who became a truck driver after her enterprise went bankrupt several years ago.

Often I am using vernacular photography taken by my family members, exposing the kitsch aesthetics of the working class, whose tastes are generally considered insignificant and worthless by the cultural elite. Through their stories I want to show different social processes and movements of today, creating a portrait of the post-Soviet society.

During the talk I will share my work and the process, focussing on movement.

Diana Tamane is an artist born in Riga, Latvia, who works mainly with photography, video and text, using autobiographical elements – memory, everyday routines and personal events. She has graduated from the Tartu Art College (BA) and Sint-Lukas School of Arts Brussels (MA). In 2015–2016 she attended the HISK post-academic program in Ghent, Belgium. Her recent exhibitions include: *Everything Was Forever Until It Was No More*, Riga International Biennial of Contemporary Art (2018), *Videoarte Agora Videoarte*, A Gentil Carioca gallery, Rio de Janeiro (2018), *Seeking the Latest in Photography*, Riga Photography Biennial (2018), *Sensitive Traces*, Sint-lukas gallery, Brussels, (2017), *The Opposing Shore*, CCI Fabrika, Moscow (2017), *Extension.lv*, Triumph gallery, Moscow (2017), *The City: My Studio/The City: My Life*, Kathmandu Triennial (2017), *The Flower Smuggler*, Surplus Space, Wuhan (2017), *Message: 147 of 494*, Kim? Contemporary Art Centre, Riga (2017). Currently, she lives and works in Tartu, Estonia.

Kamila Metwaly

On SAVVY Contemporary, Listening Sessions and Halim El-Dabh

In my presentation I will introduce SAVVY Contemporary, an art space, discursive platform, space for conviviality and for critical thinking. SAVVY Contemporary situates itself at the threshold of notions and constructs of the West and non-West, primarily to understand and negotiate between, and obviously to deconstruct the ideologies and connotations eminent

to such constructs.

The project I'm curating in SAVVY Contemporary, is the *Listening Sessions* – exercises to decipher sound beyond its contextual affiliation with geography, genre and valences of identity. It is an attempt to press I I [pause] to the daily storm of sonic vibrations, and voice a call to examine and explore the auditory beyond hearing and start to L I S T E N. Under its broader ideology of deconstructing the predominant conceptions of sound and music, the *Listening Sessions* suggest an alternative way of perceiving music and sound.

Further, in my presentation I will introduce my research on Halim El-Dabh, an Egyptian American composer, who composed hundreds of pieces, including symphonies, concertos, chamber music and vocal works, and who was also known for compositions that combined Western instruments with Eastern Eastern ones. He was also in the vanguard of electronic composition, creating pieces in that medium as early as the 1940s. I will delve into some parts of the archives raising critical thinking around the history of sound studies and sonic arts through which I would like to tackle some parts related to the mapping of electroacoustic music, colour notation and various experimentations with graphic scores.

Reading:

1. Bonaventure Ndikung, "Exploring the Sonic Cosmologies of Halim El-Dabh". Conceptual framework of the exhibition in Dak'Art, 2018.
2. Fari Bradley, "An Alternative Genealogy of Musique Concrete", 2015.
3. Halim El Dabh, "Music Enriched by Traditions from the Depths of Time", 1964.
5. Halim El Dabh, "The Science of Sound". *Kent State Magazine*, 2007.
6. Listening Sessions. Concept Note.

Kamila Metwaly is a music journalist, electronic musician and a curator based between Berlin and Cairo. Metwaly co-founded an independent arts and culture publication: *The Art Review*, which specializes in music, arts and cultural writings from 2004 onwards. Since 2014, Metwaly has specialized in music journalism for various independent Egyptian and Arab publications and has also worked in radio and independent film production for many years. In 2017, she joined SAVVY Contemporary and has been curating *Untraining the Ear Listening Sessions* among other sonic programs in the space. She is also currently engaged in a long-term research project around the late pioneer of electric music, avant-garde composer and creative ethnomusicologist Halim El-Dabh, and with Bonaventure Ndikung has co-curated the first chapter of that research project conceived in a retrospective exhibition *Exploring the Sonic Cosmologies of Halim El-Dabh* in Dak'Art Biennale in Senegal (2018).

Didem Pekün

United Nothing: The 'Inarticulacy' of Images in Representing Atrocities

This presentation takes its title from a graffito in Srebrenica, where one of the darkest hours of humanity took place in the presence of United Nations. *Araf* is my most recent work in telling a version of this story; it is a road film drawing a psychogeography of a post-war

country, Bosnia and Herzegovina, from the point of view of an exile.

This talk traces two pathways that overlap and constantly battle with each other: on the one hand I will talk about political violence as explored in the moving image in its myriad layers (specifically about *Araf* and Naeem Mohaiemen's *Tripoli Cancelled*), and on the other hand I will talk about the shortfall of image making of such an injustice, which remains always un/der/mis/represented, and about uncertainty and hesitation, because of being aware of how much we don't and can't know/understand; it is a sense of 'inarticulacy'. I argue that this sense of 'inarticulacy' is what gives the artist her compass in choosing the formal tools she opts for in sound, words, frames in generating their collision, whilst continuing to tackle such delicate matters in our practices in the current urgency of 'united nothing'.

Watching:

Harun Farocki, *Inextinguishable Fire* (1969)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJXJRNB-5kk>

Please see at least the first 3.20 minutes, but of course, feel free to watch the whole film!

Reading:

Didem Pekün, Naeem Mohaiemen, "Never liked goodbyes anyway". E-flux Conversations.

<https://conversations.e-flux.com/t/never-liked-goodbyes-anyway-naeem-mohaiemen-didem-pekun-in-conversation/6587>

Didem Pekün's work explores both artistic research and practice; conceptually it deals with the production of subjectivities within violent geographies, displacement, and the different forms they take on-screen. Her studio practice includes documentaries and video installations, have screened internationally and have received awards. She has attended numerous artist residencies including Delfina Foundation, Greenhouse and ZK/U Berlin. Didem is a founding member of *Beyond Istanbul: Center for Spatial Justice*. She has a BA (Hons) in Music at SOAS, an MA on Documentary at Goldsmiths College, and a practice-based PhD from the Department of Visual Cultures, Goldsmiths. After being a full-time faculty member at the Media and Visual Arts Department at Koç University, she is currently a Research Fellow at the Department of Visual Cultures, Goldsmiths College, and a joint fellow at the Visual Studies Platform and Institute for Advanced Studies at CEU, Budapest.

Mindaugas Gapševičius

Mycorrhizal networks or how I hack plant conversations

The talk and the workshop will question the need of translation between different kinds of matter. While thinking of the phenomenon of allelopathy we will discuss interactions between plants through the mycorrhizal networks, which may transport various nutrients or chemicals. In the first part of the workshop, I will introduce cultivation of the mycorrhizal networks, and, during the second part, I will invite the summer school participants to bridge electrical components between plants and the computer in order to track the biochemical activity of the plants. Active participants are invited to bring their laptops.

Reading:

Mindaugas Gapševičius, "Mycorrhizal networks or how I hack plant conversations" (2017)
<http://triple-double-u.com/introduction-to-posthuman-aesthetics/mycorrhizal-networks-v3.pdf>

Mindaugas Gapševičius is an artist based in Berlin, and Vilnius. Gapševičius earned his MA at the Vilnius Academy of Arts in 1999 and his MPhil at Goldsmiths College, University of London in 2016. Since 2016, he has been continuing his research at the PhD level at Bauhaus University, Weimar, where he holds an artistic associate chair. In 2008 he initiated the pan-European network for emerging artists, the Migrating Art Academies, and in 2017 the BioMedia network of Nordic and Baltic countries. His artworks question the creativity of machines and do not presume humans to be the only creative force at work.
<http://www.triple-double-u.com>