

## The politics of the social in contemporary art

Level 1 Starr Auditorium, Tate Modern  
Friday 15 February 2013 10.30 – 19.00

Can art intervene in social relations? What are the implications of involving art and its audiences in an ethical problem? How do such practices relate to art's social institutions? This symposium examines the turn towards participatory, interactive and collaborative art practices and the ethical questions such art raises.

*Initiated by Adventures of Seeing and the Visual and Material Culture Research Centre, Kingston University.  
With support from Adventures of Seeing*

- 10:30 Welcome by **Olga Smith**
- 10:35 Introduction by **Gavin Grindon**
- 10:45 Keynote: **Shannon Jackson**, 'Social Turns: In Theory and Across the Arts'
- 11:30 Panel 'Intervention'  
Can art effect direct change? This session will examine art as an intervention into social relations and institutions.  
Presentations from **Etcetera...** and **Ztohoven**
- 12:20 Roundtable discussion chaired by **Anja Kanngieser**
- 13:00 Break
- 14:00 Panel 'Discomfort'  
Collaborative work often involves the creation of moments of tension, discomfort and even antagonism. This session will explore the affects of conflict and the repercussions of involving participants in an ethical problem.  
Presentations from **Renzo Martens** and **Wafaa Bilal**
- 14:45 Roundtable discussion chaired by **Luke Skrebowski**
- 15:25 Tea break
- 16:00 Panel 'Institution'  
What is the relation of such practices to art institutions? Do they even need each other? How have, or could, they be documented and historicised?  
Presentations from **Not an Alternative** and **WochenKlausur**
- 16:40 Roundtable discussion chaired by **Emma Dowling**
- 17:20 Closing remarks by **Fran Lloyd**
- 18:00- **Film Screening Programme**  
19:00 **Wafaa Bilal**, *A Call*, 12'  
**Etcetera**, *Actions, Errors, Etcetera...*, 12'  
**Tim Edkins**, *Outward Facing*, 10'  
**Gluklya Pershina and Susan Morland**, *Wires*, 10'  
**Ztohoven**, *Ztohoven = Out of (sh)it*, 11'

# Adventures of seeing

## Visual & Material Culture Research Centre Kingston University London

### Speakers

**Wafaa Bilal** is assistant professor at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. His online interactive works are informed by the experience of fleeing his homeland and existing simultaneously in two worlds – the “comfort zone” of the U.S. and the “conflict zone” of Iraq. For *the 3rdi* (2010-2011) Bilal had a camera surgically implanted on the back of his head to transmit images to the web 24 hours a day as a statement on surveillance. In *Domestic Tension* (2007) Bilal addressed the Iraq war by spending a month in a Chicago gallery equipped with a paintball gun that people could shoot at him over the internet.

**Emma Dowling** is Lecturer in Sociology at Middlesex University, London. She is the editor of ‘Mobilisations, Interventions and Cultural Policy’, a research thread of the journal *Lateral* and she has co-edited a special issue of the journal *Ephemera* on ‘Immaterial and Affective Labour’ (2007). She is the author of *The Waitress - on Affect, Method and (Re)Presentation in Cultural Studies - Critical Methodologies* (2012) and is a contributor to a forthcoming special issue of the journal *Social Justice* on ‘Conflicts within the Crisis’. She is also a co-founder of the NGO Clinic.

**Etcetera...** was formed in 1997 in Buenos Aires and is composed of visual artists, poets, puppeteers and actors. The group has worked closely with the human rights group H.I.J.O.S. (Sons and Daughter for Identity and Justice Against Forgetting and Silence) in developing and popularizing ‘escraches,’ acts of public denunciation that seek a form of social justice not beholden to the state’s legal and judicial institutions. In their practice, *Etcetera...* rely on humor, poetic discovery and deconstruction to forge a new kind of committed art. In 2005 they co-founded the International Errorist movement, an international organization that claims error as a philosophy of life.

**Gavin Grindon** is Visiting Research Fellow at the V&A and Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Visual and Material Culture Research Centre, Kingston University. He is currently preparing a monograph on histories of art and activism. He has published in *The Oxford Art Journal*, *Third Text*, *Radical Philosophy*, *The Journal of Aesthetics* and *Protest*; co-authored *A User's Guide to Demanding the Impossible* (Minor Compositions, 2011) and edited the forthcoming collection *Art, Production and Social Movement* (Autonomedia, 2013).

**Shannon Jackson** is the Goldman Professor of Rhetoric and of Performance Studies at UC Berkeley, where she is also Director of the Arts Research Center. Her most recent book, *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* explores the relation between visual art, performance, and social engagement. Past work has explored the relation between performance and higher education, in *Professing Performance* (2004), and the relation between performance and social reform movements, in *Lines of Activity* (2000). She is currently collaborating on a book about intermedia performance for MIT Press and on an edited collection of keywords in interdisciplinary art.

**Anja Kanngieser** is a writer, radio producer and researcher in Communication Geographies. With a background in performance, political geography and communication studies, her research interests revolve around the issues of labour, voice, technology, collaboration and social movements. Her research has been featured in a range of academic and popular journals, and her first monograph, entitled *Experimental Politics and the Making of Worlds*, will be released by Ashgate in Summer 2013.

**Fran Lloyd** is Professor of Art History and Director of the Visual and Material Culture Research Centre in the Faculty of Art, Design & Architecture at Kingston University. She has published widely on contemporary and modern visual culture, and has over fifteen years experience of collaborating on a variety of international interdisciplinary creative arts projects. A Japan Foundation Fellow, as part of The Art of Intervention project, she co-curated with Professor Jennison *Now: London-Kyoto* (Fleur Gallery Kyoto, 2010), *Dialogues with Place*, a live art event premiering 'Lost Runway Kyoto' by Áine Phillips (Kyoto Arts Center, 2010), and *Art, Performance & Activism in Contemporary Japan* (Pump House Gallery, London, 2012).

**Renzo Martens** is an artist living in Brussels. His work *Episode 3* was exhibited at the 6th Berlin Biennale, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, La Vireinna, Barcelona, Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven, and screened at Tate Modern, London and Centre Pompidou, Paris. It was also distributed through television, DVD and on documentary festivals. Currently he works on the Institute for Human Activities and its five-year Gentrification Program in the Congo. The Institute held its opening seminar in the Congolese rainforest, as part of the 7th Berlin Biennial, and has upcoming presentations at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam and Wiels, Brussels.

**Not an Alternative** is a hybrid arts collective and non-profit organization with a mission to affect popular understandings of events, symbols, and history. The group curates and produces interventions on immaterial and material space, questioning and leveraging the tools of architecture, exhibit design, branding, and public relations. Programs are hosted at a variety of venues, including the group's Brooklyn-based gallery No-Space. Not An Alternative's works have been featured within art institutions such as Guggenheim, New York, Tate Modern, and Museo Del Arte Moderno, Mexico City, as well as in the public sphere, where they collaborate with community organizations and activist mobilizations.

**Luke Skrebowski** is University Lecturer in History of Art at the University of Cambridge. He is co-editor of *Aesthetics and Contemporary Art* (Sternberg Press, 2011) and is currently at work on a book project entitled *The Politics of Anti-Aesthetics: Conceptual Art After 1968*. His work has appeared in the journals *Art History*, *Grey Room*, *Manifesta Journal*, *Tate Papers* and *Third Text*. He also co-organised the exhibition *Counter-Production* at the Generali Foundation, Vienna (2012).

**Olga Smith** is Curator of Adult Programmes, Tate Gallery.

**WochenKlausur** formed in 1993. Upon the invitation of art institutions, the group develops proposals to make small but specific improvements to socio-political situations to make direct interventions into society. Past projects include making medical care available to homeless people in Vienna, organising pension for drug-addicts in Zurich, supplemented traditional instruction in schools in Japan. In Kivalina, USA, WochenKlausur created a network of residents and experts to find and implement solutions for specific problems of this community living in Alaska. A total of thirty-seven interventions have been conducted by this point.

**Ztohoven** - the name of the group means 'out of shit' and is a play of words that means an obscenity but also an urgent appeal to the society to act. The double meaning informs every event organised by the group. An illusionary nuke explosion, inserted into the Panorama program on Czech state TV channel, was an attack on media itself, and the way it presents facts. In another intervention, Ztohoven infiltrated the system of Czech national ID cards, swapping the identities between the members of the group to suggest that ID cards have become more important than the citizens themselves. In the latest event, spoof mobile text messages demanding an urgent call for moral reform have been exchanged by all members of the Czech parliament, to show that governments are a reflection of a society without civil responsibilities.