

William Kentridge: Time, Technology, Self Symposium

Saturday 3 December 2016, 2pm - 6pm

Drawing on selected works in William Kentridge's exhibition *Thick Time*, this symposium brings together artists, academics, film theorists and curators to address concepts of history and temporality, embodiment and subjectivity, technology and tactility, self, sexuality and the sensory. Focussing on Kentridge's animations, installations and moving image work, it explores their relationship to early cinema, to drawing practices, to abstraction and historical enactment.

Convened by Tamar Garb and Briony Fer. In association with UCL's Centre for the Study of Contemporary Art.

Programme

- 14.00 Welcome by **Sofia Victorino**, Daskalopoulos Head of Education and Public Programmes, Whitechapel Gallery
- 14.05 Introduction by **Tamar Garb**, Durning Lawrence Professor in the History of Art, University College London
- 14.15 *The Machine Stops: Kentridge and the Time of Technology*, **Richard Taws**, Reader in the History of Art, University College London
- 14.35 *Kentridge and Early Cinema*, **Ian Christie**, Professor of Film and Media History, Birkbeck, University of London
- 14.55 *Second-Hand Reading*, **Ed Krzma**, Lecturer in Art History, University of East Anglia.
- 15.15 Panel discussion chaired by **Tamar Garb**. Followed by Q&A.
- 16.00 Break
- 16.15 *Fortune and Fatality in the Temporalities of Drawing*, **Michael Newman**, Professor of Art Writing at Goldsmiths.
- 16.35 *Refusal of Time*, **Margaret Iversen**, Professor of Art History and Theory at the University of Essex
- 16.55 Panel discussion chaired by **Briony Fer**, Professor of Art History, University College London. Followed by Q&A.
- 17.20 *Lulu: Sexual Politics*, **Griselda Pollock**, Director of Research and Professor of the Social & Critical Histories of Art. Followed by response and discussion with **Tamar Garb**.
- 18.00 End

Abstracts

Richard Taws, *The Machine Stops: Kentrige and the Time of Technology*

William Kentrige's *Refusal of Time* is one of a number of works by the artist that reference previous histories of technology, and technological devices. Many of these date from the nineteenth century, and in some cases, even earlier, and several had explicitly revolutionary associations. As such, these works make particular claims about the appearance in our contemporary moment of obsolete time-calibrating apparatuses and the lost protocols that accompanied them. Examining some of these motifs—from optical telegraphy to silhouette theatre—this paper will read Kentrige's work against his nineteenth-century sources to consider how his references to a wide-ranging technological imaginary mobilise to radical effect the temporally and politically rich associations these devices held in their day.

Ian Christie, *Kentrige and Early Cinema*

The appeal of William Kentrige's moving image work for a film historian is that it seems to go back to the beginnings of 'animated photography' in technique, and also to extend the 'hand-made' vigour of New American Cinema in the 1960s. Yet there is no element of pastiche: rather Kentrige has recovered the freedom of these two key periods, to create work that allows viewers to participate in 'completing the picture'.

Ed Krcma, *Second-Hand Reading*

This paper focuses upon William Kentrige's recent 'flipbook film,' *Second-Hand Reading* (2013), to explore a series of relationships that are developed within the artist's practice more broadly. The work comprises a 7-minute HD video showing a rapid succession of drawings made onto single pages of the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, accompanied by a musical soundtrack. The accelerated flurry of images, each inscribed onto the kind of near-obsolescent reference volume associated with classification and clarification, prompts consideration of a series of oppositions: between legible and visible, thinking and making, abstraction and representation, digital and analogue, and between the conditions of contemporary art and the life of forms associated with the historical avant-gardes.

Michael Newman, *Fortune and Fatality in the Temporalities of Drawing*

This talk will look at some ways in which William Kentrige's drawing practices have opened up ways of thinking about the existential dimensions of drawing in relation to tragedy and fortuna, fate and chance. The support for drawing, such book pages and ledgers as well as sheets of paper, rather than being simply a basis for inscription becomes a part of the performance. In Kentrige's staging of the opera *Lulu*, how does the play of drawing contribute to a thinking of sex, desire and value in relation to historical change, and what does it mean to return to the temporalities of the modernism of the 1920s and 30s amid the tribulations of the present?

Margaret Iversen, *Refusal of Time*

The Refusal of Time is a collaboration between a historian of science, Peter Galison, and the artist William Kentrige. Themes such as time and the body, the temporality of the machine age, standardization, the politics of time, relativity, entropy and death, emerged from their conversations. Yet what also emerged were striking images, phrases and scenarios that compressed constellations of ideas. The paper explores some of these over-determined images including the breathing machine, metronomes, the phrases 'Here I am' and 'Give us back our sun', longitude and black holes. The density and opacity of these images serve to encourage the imagination of the viewer and maintain the provisionality of thought.

Griselda Pollock *Lulu: Sexual Politics*

This presentation will engage with the cinematics of G.W.Pabst's film *Pandora's Box* (1929) based on Wedekind's two plays *Earth Spirit* and *Pandora's Box*, starring the American actor Louise Brooks in the title role. The topic of much feminist film analysis, the paper will explore the sexual politics of various figurations of *Lulu* in relation to Brooks' personation and readings of the film by Elsaesser, Doane and Mulvey.

Biographies

Briony Fer is Professor of History of Art at University College London and a Fellow of the British Academy. She has written extensively on modern and contemporary art. Her research interests have consistently moved between the history of the avant-gardes and the work of contemporary artists, including Vivienne Koorland, Mary Heilmann, Gabriel Orozco, Roni Horn, David Batchelor and Tacita Dean. Her books include *On Abstract Art* (1997), *The Infinite Line* (2004) and *Eva Hesse: Studiowork* (2009). She has also organized exhibitions of Eva Hesse and Gabriel Orozco. In Spring 2014 Fer was Kirk Varnedoe Professor at the IFA in New York.

Tamar Garb is Durning Lawrence Professor in the History of Art at University College London. Garb has published extensively on feminism, the body, sexuality, and gender in cultural representations. She has also written about contemporary artists such as Christian Boltanski, Mona Hatoum and Nancy Spero. More recently, she has been publishing on the history of art and photography in post-apartheid South Africa, including curating the exhibitions *Figures and Fictions: Contemporary South African Photography* (2011), *Distance and Desire: Encounters with the African Archive* (2013) and *William Kentridge and Vivienne Koorland: Conversations in letters and lines* (2016).

Ian Christie is Professor of Film and Media History at Birkbeck, University of London. He is a film and media historian, and curator of exhibitions that bring moving and still images into dialogue (from *Spellbound*, at the Hayward in 1996, to *Unexpected Eisenstein* at GRAD in 2016). His writings feature in numerous publications and journals.

Margaret Iversen is Professor of Art History and Theory at the University of Essex. Her first book was on *Alois Riegl: Art History and Theory* (1993). Her main areas of study are psychoanalytic art theory. Other publications include *Beyond Pleasure: Freud, Lacan, Barthes* (2007), a monograph on Mary Kelly and an essay on the American painter Edward Hopper (2004 Tate Modern). Recent work includes a book called *Writing Art History* (with Stephen Melville) and two articles, 'Analogue: Zoe Leonard and Tacita Dean' and 'Index, Diagram, Graphic Trace'. She is working a book to be called *Photography, Trace and Trauma*.

Ed Krcma is Lecturer in Art History at the University of East Anglia. His research focuses upon the history and theory of drawing after 1945 and has been published in journals such as *Art History*, *Oxford Art Journal*, and *Master Drawings*. His first monograph, *Rauschenberg/Dante: Drawing a Modern Inferno*, will be published by Yale University Press in April 2017. Ed has also curated two exhibitions, *Motion Capture: Drawing and the Moving Image* (Lewis Glucksman Gallery, Cork, 2012), which included two works by Kentridge, and *Compression* (Ormston House, Limerick, 2015).

Michael Newman is Professor of Art Writing at Goldsmiths, University of London. He has published numerous essays on modern and contemporary artists, as well as thematic essays on the wound, the horizon, contingency, memory, drawing, and nonsense. He is the author of *Richard Prince Untitled (couple)* (2006), *Jeff Wall: Works and Writings* (2007), *Seth Price* (2010) and co-editor of *Rewriting Conceptual Art* (1999) and *The State of Art Criticism* (2007). He has also published extensively on drawing. He has curated *Tacita Dean* at York University, Toronto, *Revolver2* at Matt's Gallery, London, and *Drawing after Bellmer in Europe, North America and Japan* will be at The Drawing Room, London.

Griselda Pollock is Director of the Centre for Cultural Analysis, Theory & History (CentreCATH) and Professor of Social & Critical Histories of Art, School of Fine Art, History of Art & Cultural Studies, University of Leeds.

Richard Taws is Reader in the History of Art Department at University College London. He is the author of *The Politics of the Provisional: Art and Ephemera in Revolutionary France* (Penn State University Press, 2013) and co-editor of *Art and Technology in Early Modern Europe* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2016). With a group of scholars from diverse disciplines, he has recently co-authored *Interacting with Print: Elements of Reading in the Era of Print Saturation* (University of Chicago Press, forthcoming 2017). He is completing a book titled *Time Machines: Art, History, and Technology in Post-Revolutionary France*.