

Atelier “Gesture and Affect”

Thursday 10 & Friday 11 April 2025
Institut d'études avancées de Nantes, France

Atelier convenors: Patricia Hayes & Florence Ninitte (Fellows 2023-2024)

Valeria Guzmán Verri, School of Architecture, University of Costa Rica

Title: Sidelong glances

Abstract. SIDELONG GLANCES deals with the question of the gesture as a means to approach the relationship between architectural knowledge [savoir] and architectural image, in particular, the digital visualization of building projects. Mark Cousins' reading of the gesture as a sustained and deliberate attempt to suspend the limitations of the norms organising ideas of for example, visual perception, will guide our reading of a set of architectural renderings made by students of architecture in the university I teach.

Bio. Valeria Guzmán Verri is an architect, researcher and teacher working on interrelations between architecture, graphic and visual culture in regard to knowledge and power relations, with interests in questions of infrastructural space and debt. Professor at the School of Architecture at the University of Costa Rica, she also teaches on the Masters of Arts Programme and the Society and Culture Ph. D Programme with Visiting Researcher positions at Southeast University, Nanjing (2018, 2019), and Université Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris 3 (2022). She is 2023-24 Fellow at the Institute of Advanced Studies-Nantes. She holds a Masters and Ph.D. in Histories and Theories of Architecture from the Architectural Association School of Architecture, London and a Diploma of Architecture from the University of Costa Rica. website: <https://valeriaguzman.com>

Tanja Petrovic, Institute of Culture and Memory Studies, ZRC SAZU, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Title: Repetition as a Gesture: Yugoslav Partisan Doctors and their Memoirs and Memories

The partisan medical service was an important and impressively organized aspect of the People liberation struggle in Yugoslavia during World War II. Throughout Yugoslavia, more than 3,000 doctors worked for the medical service, 319 of whom were women. Many of these female doctors ran entire hospitals and held important positions in the medical institutions of post-war socialist Yugoslavia while juggling their careers, family lives, and political and social activities.

Working with a diverse archive of photographs, drawings, memoirs, ego documents, and interviews with partisan doctors, I am interested in the nature of their war experience and how it shaped their subjectivity, as well as in the (im)possibilities of transposing the affective fabric of this experience (and the experience of the anti-fascist and socialist revolution in general) to different points in time through the work of memory. I observe this work as repetitions that are inevitably partial, pointing to loss and impossibility, but at the same time anachronistic, maintaining the connection to what was lost and possessing the capacity to unsettle the present and keep the past alive. I argue for the need to consider these repetitions not as the production of ideology or (self-)mythologizing, but as gestures - oriented toward others, through time, located in the realm of ethics and politics, and engaging not only with what is remembered, reproduced, memorialized, monumentalized, but also with what remains inexplicable, illegible, and untransmittable through time.

Bio. Tanja Petrović is a Principal Research Associate at the Institute of Culture and Memory Studies, Research Centre of Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Ljubljana. She is interested in Yugoslav socialism and its afterlives, as well as in understandings of time and history and regimes of historization in the aftermath of Yugoslavia. Her latest book is *Utopia of the Uniform: Affective Afterlives of the Yugoslav People's Army* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2024).

Rinaldo Walcott, Department of Africana and American Studies, University at Buffalo, USA

The Art of Black Affect and Black Gesture in the Time of Reparations

Abstract. In this paper I think about how we might read Black art making in the time of reparations. I specially turn to artworks that might be understood as reparative and simultaneously I speak to the limits of reparations as offered by art institutions. In both cases affect and gesture as evident in artworks and affect and gesture as evident in institutional practices and policies work to contradict, cross-reference and complicate the terrain for a meaningful post-slavery reparative project. I suggest that the affect and gesture of reparative claims has been long foretold in black artmaking even before this current moment of the reparations debate.

Bio. Rinaldo Walcott is Professor and Chair of Africana and American Studies at the University at Buffalo. He holds the Carl V. Granger Chair in Africana and American Studies. He is a writer and critic. His research is in the area of Black Diaspora Cultural Studies, gender and sexuality with interests in nations, nationalisms, multiculturalism, policy and education broadly defined. As an interdisciplinary Black Studies scholar, Walcott has published in a wide range of venues on everything from literature to film, to theatre to music to policy. His articles have appeared in scholarly journals and books, as well as popular venues like newspapers and magazines and media online sources. He often comments on black cultural life for radio and TV. Walcott has edited or co-edited multiple works including *Rude: Contemporary Black Canadian Cultural Criticism* (Insomniac, 2000). He is the author of *Black Like Who: Writing Black Canada* (Insomniac Press, 1997 with a second revised edition in 2003). He is also the author of *Queer Returns: Essays on Multiculturalism, Diaspora and Black Studies* (Insomniac Press, 2016) and co-author of *Black Life: Post-BLM and the Struggle for Freedom* (Arbeiter Ring, 2019). In 2021, Walcott published *The Long Emancipation: Moving Towards Freedom* (Duke University Press) and *On Property: Policing, Prisons, and the Call for Abolition* (Biblioasis) which was nominated for the Heritage Toronto Book Award, longlisted for the Toronto Book Awards, a *Globe and Mail* Book of the Year, and listed in CBC Books Best Canadian Nonfiction of 2021.

Kass Banning, Cinema Studies Institute, University of Toronto, Canada

Stillness in Motion: Temporality and the Enactment of Gesture

Abstract. This paper begins with the provocation of one gesture: the mediality of extended hands. Expanding from this open bodily expression –“slowing time in one elegant gesture” (Dionne Brand, *The Blue Clerk*) – upturned hands of figures in tableau implanted across John Akomfrah’s video installation *Auto da Fé* (2016) prompt engagement with Giorgio Agamben and Walter Benjamin to Harvey Young and Kevin Quashie, and beyond. Pursuing the implications of Toni Morrison’s entreaty that all our futures, are “in our hands” (*The Nobel Lecture in Literature*, 1993) the paper proposes that the sovereignty of Black still/movement re-routes time.

Bio. Kass Banning’s research focuses on aesthetics and screen alterity, to include minor cinemas and new media, ranging from diasporic to Indigenous to queer. Complementing her research on cultural translation and local / global intersections, her work revisits national, transnational and planetary analytics, from theoretical and philosophical perspectives that privilege mobility and affect. A specialist in Canadian cinema since the 1990s, she has published in the areas of minor Canadian and Black British cinemas, migratory aesthetics, and hybrid documentary media, has co-edited an anthology on Canadian women’s cinema (University of Toronto Press), and co-founded and co-edited two path-breaking Canadian quarterlies *CineAction* and *Borderlines* for over a decade. Banning’s current research interests include moving image installation and migratory aesthetics, British artist/filmmaker John Akomfrah; CBC director / producer Mario Prizek; and she has longstanding, ongoing engagements with Inuit media and the work of artist Isaac Julien. She was co-lead of the Image/Movement/Sound quadrant of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation funded project *Aesthetic Education: A South-North Dialogue* (Canada/South Africa). She currently serves on the executive of the Film Studies Association of Canada.

**Emma Minkley, Postdoctoral Fellow with the National Research Foundation
SARCHI Chair in Visual History & Theory, University of the Western Cape, South
Africa**

The Thinking Hand – Hands at Play and Work

Abstract. My inquiry explores the ways that hands ‘think,’ through practice, gesture and touch, specifically focusing on the interplay between movement and stillness, work and play. Examples of the thinking hand in its multiple forms will be explored through the puppetry of the South African Handspring Puppet Company and the photographic work of August Sander.

This will attempt to look at what is an unconscious or unanticipated/unplanned gesture – perhaps what is seen as an embodied or naturalised gesture, as something we just ‘do’ without too much thought or effort, as if taking a breath – and, conversely, the gesture that is posed or performed, rehearsed, stylised. What more might we understand about gesture and intention from these two categories?

Bio. Emma Minkley is an artist and postdoctoral research associate in Visual History at the Centre for Humanities Research, University of the Western Cape. She earned a PhD at the same centre with a focus on the archive of the Handspring Puppet Company, particularly in relation to the hand. Her current work explores shadows, human/nonhuman relations, and the sea.

Patricia Hayes, DSI-NRF SARCHI Chair in Visual History & Theory, University of the Western Cape

Gesture and the unfinished in southern African history

Abstract. In this paper I wish to consider gesture and gestation in relation to southern African history, under conditions that Uday Kumar has described as ‘non-sovereignty.’ Impotentiality and a preoccupation with forms of non-sovereignty mark the times in which people find themselves, rather than any turn to recognizable action. This is not only about an affective tenor but potentiality in time, where gesture is putting something in place to be taken up (or not) at later moments, across space and medium, elliptically, perhaps inconclusively.

Bio. Patricia Hayes is National Research Foundation SARCHI Chair in Visual History & Theory at the Centre for Humanities Research, University of the Western Cape, South Africa. In 2023-24 she held a FIAS (French Institutes for Advanced Study) fellowship at IEA-Nantes with a project on colonial photographic archives. She is co-editor of several recent volumes, including *Ambivalent. Photography and Visibility in African History* (2019), a special issue of the journal *Kronos* 46 (2020) on ‘Other Lives of the Image,’ and also *Love and Revolution in the Twentieth-Century Colonial and Postcolonial World: Perspectives from South Asia and Southern Africa* (2021).

Laetitia Saintes, Université catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium

Être et se dire femme et polémiste, de l'écritoire à l'espace public. Du geste polémique au féminin de la Révolution française à la Deuxième République (1789-1850)

Abstract. Si l'on n'attend pas les femmes sur le terrain de la littérature, on les attend encore moins sur celui de la polémique, déjà délicat à emprunter pour leurs homologues masculins ; or ceux-ci, à la différence de leurs consœurs, n'ont pas à défendre avant toute chose la légitimité de leur volonté d'écrire, censée aller d'elle-même. La polémique étant depuis l'Antiquité suspecte d'immoralité, taxée de violence verbale et de diffamation, les femmes qui s'y risquent doivent dès lors justifier ce qui est perçu comme une transgression et une intrusion à deux titres – en littérature, d'une part, en terre polémique de l'autre. Certaines choisissent de publier de façon anonyme, d'autres de le faire sous un pseudonyme (comme Olympe de Gouges), souvent masculin (ainsi de George Sand ou de Daniel Stern), d'autres enfin de n'être qu'une voix parmi d'autres au sein d'un collectif féminin (ainsi des saint-simoniennes et des féministes de 1848), esquissant les contours d'une auctorialité plurielle derrière laquelle s'efface le « je » singulier. Celles qui signent de leur nom – de jeune fille ou de femme mariée, ce qui représente un autre enjeu de taille – déploient une série de stratégies rhétoriques destinées à asseoir la légitimité de leur geste polémique et plus largement à justifier leur intervention dans la sphère publique. Il s'agit tantôt d'affirmer prendre la plume par compassion envers les vaincus et les victimes des multiples épisodes insurrectionnels et révolutionnaires que connaît le long XIX^e siècle ; tantôt de revendiquer une parole mise au service de la morale, ou d'une cause (celle des femmes, du socialisme) derrière laquelle le « je » féminin s'efface ; de ne revendiquer aucune expertise dans les sujets abordés, en prétendant les aborder avec l'ingénuité ou la candeur convenant à une femme (par définition exclue de la politique et de ses institutions) – et de revendiquer, par conséquent, une approche oblique, apolitique, en apparence du moins, de la chose publique.

C'est à explorer ces stratégies rhétoriques telles qu'elles se déploient d'Olympe de Gouges à George Sand, en passant par les saint-simoniennes et les féministes de 1848, à saisir les modalités de ce geste polémique conjugué au féminin singulier ou au féminin pluriel, que cette intervention entend se consacrer.

Bio. Laetitia Saintes a étudié la littérature pamphlétaire de la première moitié du XIX^e siècle dans le cadre d'une thèse dirigée par Damien Zanone à l'Université catholique de Louvain et soutenue en août 2019. Après un mandat postdoctoral à l'Université du Luxembourg (2021-2024), elle poursuit ses recherches sur l'auctorialité polémique, telle qu'elle s'incarne notamment chez les autrices, du XIX^e siècle à aujourd'hui. Elle a dirigé le numéro 70 des *Cahiers staëliens* (2020), consacré aux rapports du groupe de Coppet avec l'écriture polémique. *Paroles pamphlétaires dans le premier XIX^e siècle (1814-1848)*, l'essai issu de sa thèse de doctorat, a paru en 2022 aux éditions Honoré Champion.

Florence Ninitte, Università degli Studi di Verona, Verona, Italy

Figurer l'autorité par les mots et les gestes. A propos de quelques manuscrits de la version française du Devisement du monde de Marco Polo

Abstract. La branche française du *Devisement du monde* de Marco Polo (dite *Fr*) est la seule à présenter, dans la majorité des manuscrits qui la conserve, différents cycles iconographiques remarquablement riches. Cette tradition offre ainsi un précieux fonds pour étudier les multiples manières dont les enlumineurs ont conçu les illustrations d'un texte dont le contenu leur était fondamentalement nouveau. Nous souhaitons, dans le cadre de cette présentation, nous concentrer sur les différents récits du *Devisement* qui mettent en scène des figures d'autorité – et, plus particulièrement, des figures de gouvernants comme le calife de Baghdad ou le grand Khan –, ainsi que sur les enluminures qui leur sont associées. Nous étudierons alors les modalités utilisées par le textuel et le visuel pour rendre compte de cette autorité – et de l'affect qu'elle pouvait générer autant auprès des protagonistes des récits que du voyageur. A partir de là, nous pourrions nous pencher sur le rapport texte-image qui les unit, de manière à pouvoir isoler les choix et innovations des enlumineurs.

Bio. Florence Ninitte a obtenu un doctorat en Langues, Lettres et Traductologie (décembre 2016) à l'Université catholique de Louvain. Sa dissertation doctorale a porté sur la réception et l'intégration de textes arabes sur l'islam dans le *Speculum historiale* (vers 1244-1259) et dans sa traduction française par Jean de Vignay (début des années 1330). L'objectif principal de ce travail a été d'explorer le renouvellement de la description de l'islam et de son prophète à travers l'encyclopédisme médiéval aux XIII^e et XIV^e siècles.

Ses recherches portent principalement sur les relations islamo-chrétiennes, ainsi que sur le transfert des savoirs d'origine arabo-musulmane dans les domaines culturels et intellectuels de la France médiévale.

Depuis juillet 2024, elle travaille à l'Università degli Studi di Verona, dans le cadre du projet MarVels (« Marco Polo - from Venice to World Literatures (MarVeLs). Textual, linguistic, and sociocultural factors in the spreading of "Devisement dou monde" through space and time (13th-16th centuries) »), conduit par le prof. E. Burgio de l'Università Ca' Foscari de Venise.

Sandrine Colard, Assistant Professor of Art History/ACM Department/Rutgers University-Newark, USA. Curator-At-Large, Kanal-Centre Pompidou, Brussels, Belgium

A Collection of Gestures: Photography and Fabrics in Black Women's Hands

Abstract. Contemporary Black feminist artists have reclaimed the everyday labor and domestic motions that Black women have historically performed as artistic gestures in their own right. For example, Simone Leigh's ceramic and bronze sculptures have referenced vernacular and hand-made processes and objects—cooking utensils, washing chores, needlework, etc—from across the African diaspora. Or again, Nontsikelelo Mutiti has developed design motifs and installations inspired by what she calls the “technology of African hair braiding.” This paper examines how the intimate relationship that exists between photography and textile in Africa literally “brings to the surface” of the print a history of vernacular and technical gestures embedded in mixed media and in the iconography of the Black female experience. This will be examined across a series of contemporary practices—Jess Atieno (b.1991), Belinda Kazeem Kaminski (b.1980) and Silvia Rosi (b.1992)—that transposes archival photographs on woven tapestries or as serigraph on canvas, or again, re-enact and twist the canonical African textile backdrops of traditional studio portraiture. In each, reproduced and staged gestures—sewing, the head carrying of loads, touching, etc—allow to conceptualize a history of photography “in Black women's hands.”

Bio. Sandrine Colard (Ph. D, Columbia University, 2016) is an Assistant Professor at Rutgers University-Newark, a writer, researcher and curator of modern and contemporary African arts and photography. Dr. Colard is an international lecturer (MoMA, EHESS, McGill University, Sorbonne, Tate Modern, European Parliament, UCLA, Brooklyn Museum, etc) and the author of multiple publications (*African Arts*, *Critical Interventions*, *Cahiers du CAP*, *The Routledge Companion to Decolonizing Art History*, *Cultures et Musées*, *Hyperallergic*, etc). Her writings include contributions to exhibition catalogs such as *A World in Common: Contemporary African Photography* (Tate Publishing, 2023); *Style Congo: Heritage and Heresy* (CIVA, 2023); *African Modernism in America, 1947– 1967* (American Federation for the Arts, 2022); *Photo Book Belge 1854–2018* (Hannibal / FOMU, 2019); *Sammy Baloji: Hunting and Collecting. A Research Project* (Mu.ZEE, 2016), and *The Expanded Subject: New Perspectives in Photographic Portraiture from Africa* (Hirmer, 2016), for which she was co-curator at the Wallach Art Gallery (New York, 2016). Since 2023, Dr. Colard is Curator-At-Large at Kanal Pompidou (Brussels, Belgium). Previously, she curated *Recaptioning Congo: New perspectives on the photographic history of colonial Congo* (FOMU, Belgium, 2022-2023); *Congoville* (Middelheim Museum, Belgium, 2020); *Multiple Transmissions: Art in the Afropolitan Age* (Wiels, Belgium, 2019); *The Way She Looks: A History of Female Gazes in African Portraiture. Photographs from The Walther Collection* (The Image Center, Canada, 2019). She was also the curator

of the 6th Biennale de Lubumbashi, *Future Genealogies: Tales from the Equatorial Line* (Lubumbashi, DRC, 2019). Based on research conducted in Belgium, Kinshasa and Lubumbashi (DRC), her upcoming book, *Double Exposure(s): A History of Photography in the Colonial Congo (1885-1960)* is under contract with Duke University Press. Her research has been supported by numerous fellowships, among which that of the quai Branly Museum, the Ford Foundation, the Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art (INHA) and the ACLS/Getty.