UWE BRISTOL SCHOOL OF ART AND DESIGN

UNDERGRADUATE

RESEARCH
SYMPOSIUM
2020

WEDNESDAY 11 MARCH
ROOM 2B1
BOWER ASHTON
2-5PM

VCRG
VISUAL CULTURE RESEARCH GROUP

Introduction

Visual Culture Research Group presents the UWE Bristol School of Art and Design Undergraduate Research Symposium. The aim of the symposium is to provide a platform for undergraduate students to present their research conducted as part of either their Visual Culture or studio practice modules in the professional setting of an academic symposium. Speakers will present their research and then take part in a Q&A discussion.

There is a further aim to the symposium in the 'Independent Research Project: What to Expect' Q&A in which undergraduate students will get the opportunity to ask the speakers about their experience undergoing the IRP research process and what to expect during their final year of their Visual Culture studies.

About the Visual Culture Research Group (VCRG)

The Visual Culture Research Group (VCRG) is a group of cross-disciplinary art and design practitioners, historians and theorists interested in visuality and visual culture. Its purpose is to generate new knowledge and innovative methodologies by putting practitioners into conversation with writers. Much of their work critically explores the relationship between 'making' and 'thinking', practice and theory and there is an overarching concern with challenging cultural representations of under-represented groups.

vcrg.co.uk

Schedule

2.00 Welcome and Introductions

Panel 1: Materiality and Meanings

2.15 Rachel Craggs Alferoff

2.30 Tori Guilfoyle

2.45 Josie Argyle

3.00 Helena Mrvovà-Vine

3.15 Panel 1 Q&A

3.30 - 3.45 Break

Panel 2: Conflict, Ideology and Protest

3.45 Levi Zerf Bainbridge

4.00 Daisy Hills

4.15 Milly Francis

4.30 Panel 2 Q&A

4.45 Independent Research Project: 'What to Expect'

5.00 Finish

Materiality and Meanings

Rachel Craggs Alferoff
BA (Hons) Illustration

'Making a meal of monstrosity in Delicious in Dungeon'

Abstract:

The 'dungeon' is a well-established part of Japanese (and Western) pop culture, which makes the fact that it features in many anime and manga unsurprising. The concept originates in Dungeons and Dragons, and depicts colonialist fantasies of total control over the Other through a process that Svelch calls 'encyclopedic containment'. The monsters in such media exist mostly as stat-blocks with pictures attached: to kill or be killed only, not to live. In Delicious in Dungeon, a manga clearly heavily inspired by the 'dungeon genre' in general, and D&D specifically, the stat-blocks are unimportant, and the meat of the matter is the meat: the flesh, whether to be eaten or to be described in terms of diet, habitat, and lifecycle.

Delicious in Dungeon deconstructs the 'Dungeon Fantasy' genre, portraying not a hostile closed space filled with enemies and loot (or at least, only nominally) but instead a vibrant ecosystem which can be understood and lived in harmony with. The manga plays with the food disgust reaction, in the characters and in the audience. The transgressive nature of the cannibalistic act is played for comedy rather than horror, defanging the matter almost entirely. As Levi-Strauss wrote, 'We are all cannibals'. There is nothing unsettling about the meals that the main characters eat, and when there is, the tension is released into the characters' reactions and is thus not dwelt upon by the reader. The text takes the idea of Kristeva's abject, central in the idea of eating-what-you-shouldn't, and instead focuses on the communal nature of a meal, and the positive emotions central to eating delicious food. The 'self-other' boundary is problematised through the abject, approached playfully, which nonetheless by its very nature is destructive to borders. Characters becoming chimerical mixtures, becoming monstrous, demonstrating the fragility of the self which can become meat and be subsumed into another's identity.

Key words:

Abjection, Cannibalism, Monsters, Dungeons, RPGs, Posthumanism

Materiality and Meanings

Tori Guilfoyle
BA (Hons) Drawing and Print

'Antoni Tàpies use of specific waste materials and consideration of natural resources concerning wasteful consumption'

Abstract:

Antoni Tàpies was a bold artist, he was confident in his use of materials, often choosing materials this obstruct social pattern. His artworks are riddled with deep philosophical thought and hidden meaning. This study aims to shine a new light on his work and to demonstrate why his work is relevant now, by analysing three key pieces, Score, Rinzen and Ochre. Research into Antoni Tàpies starts in his hometown of Barcelona, The Fundació Antoni Tàpies and the Contemporary Art Museum of Barcelona. Research leads to an understanding of key ideas around Jean-Paul Sartre, a major figure in Tàpies' philosophy. Important movements that emerged around the world at the time Tapies was making work include Arte povera and the Mono Ha Movement these have been key to understanding the work now. This essay uncovers what effects materiality in the art can have on rising issues and debates. Currently, counter-culture extinction rebellion is dominating the news, and the fashion industry is the second most polluting industry in the world (UN, News, 2019). By engaging with political ideas based around consumerism through a Marxist theory are key to uncovering the effects that materials in the art can have on ever-rising issues and debates around sustainability. What this essay shows is how materiality can provoke a deeper meaning of embodiment and can, in turn, take a political stance on these current societal issues.

Keywords:

Antoni Tàpies, Materiality, Consumerism, Àrte Povera, Sustainability

Josie Argyle
BA (Hons) Fine Art

'Memory, Forgetting and Photography: Mnemonic Function in Gerhard Richter's Atlas Project'

Abstract:

Gerhad Richter's Atlas (1962-2015) is used to discuss the effect of photography on the construction of memory. The mnemonic function of a photograph is analysed, establishing photography as both a tool for memory and for forgetting. Although these functions seem contradictory, it is established how both can arise within different contexts, complicating but not excluding each other. Through the study of Halwachs (1925, 1950) memory is established as a process of communication through social interactions and objects of memory; thus opening up memory to mediation and reconstruction. Assmann's (2008) notion of the collective memory as either communicative or cultural memory is considered. It will be argued that the collective process of remembering is interfered with by photography as an increasingly pervasive medium,mediating both memory and communication. It is observed that photography has the effect of weakening local collective memory structures by homogenising experience, thus leading to the homogenisation of culture. Thus it is concluded that photography has restructured the formation of memory. Kracauer's (1999) observations regarding the rise of mass image culture and Benjamin's (1931, 1935) writing on mechanical reproduction are pertinent to this argument. The rise of collective anomie is observed through the repetition of images and motifs throughout Atlas. However, this anomic functioning of the photograph is mitigated by the powerful reappearance of Holocaust imagery. Through its puncturing appearance, these photographs establish both the mnemonic function of a photograph and their potential as a tool for reappraisal, serving to reconstruct dominant narratives within the collective memory.

Keywords:

Photographic memory, Collective memory, Anomie, Time, Remembering.

Materiality and Meanings

Helena Mrvovà-Vine

BA (Hons) Art and Visual Culture

'Reframing Silence: a study of silence in Ann Hamilton's Myein (1999) and Anne Carson's translation of Fragments of Sappho: If Not, Winter (2003)'

Abstract:

Silence, as a phenomenon, appears to be predominantly associated with lack, muteness and absence - at least in most theoretical writings - despite its essential role as the facilitator of expression, be it visual, aural or linguistic. In this thesis, I try to look at ways in which silence empowers, using Ann Hamilton's installation Myein and Anne Carson's translation of Fragments of Poetry by Sappho: If Not, Winter; where silence is what is being communicated or plays the part of the host which either enables communication with language zipped-up in codes or done away with altogether. Depending on the cultural context, silence's role gets shape-shifted from veneration to disinclination to name something deemed unnameable. Language has inbuilt contradictions and corruptibility, and while silence may appear to be neutral in contrast to language, it can not be, because it is not singular or absolute and therefore is also subject to interpretation. In her essay The Aesthetics of Silence, Susan Sontag looks at the concept of the absolute in this context, as well as at art's spiritual dimension and its relationship to consciousness. Hélène Cixous looks at silence as a strategy in language and writing, and in Différance, Jacques Derrida points to the meaning being endlessly deferred. Where the power of silence can be interpreted as "the most extreme form of presence, representing at once zero and ultimate degree of reality. Heidegger could write that we truly experience language precisely when words fail us" (Agamben, 2012, p.95) - and thus challenging our preoccupations with meaning and narrative. Rendering language silent and reasoning what appears un-reasonable have become tools to frame this contemplation on silence.

Keywords:

Silence, Language, Meaning, Gap, Translation

Conflict, Ideology and Protest

Levi Zerf Bainbridge
BA (Hons) Fine Art

'From fascism to veganism: Locating the Christchurch shooter in the contemporary ideological landscape.'

Abstract:

Through an extensive investigation into global capitalist ideology this article aims to situate the rise of terroristic violence in contemporary Western culture. The New Zealand Christchurch shooter's manifesto will act as a case study from which wider observations will be drawn. This article will firstly tackle the question of the definition of ideology; from this axiom a discussion of the symbolic function of the far-right will ensue. This article will identify core components of contemporary global-capitalist ideology and investigate the reproduction of ideology within culture. It will explore the emotional narratives within the Christchurch shooter's manifesto and investigate which current ideological conditions lay the groundwork for the construction of these narratives. The article will produce a comparison between the new far-right and the new-wave of veganism in relation to the rhetorical efficiency of memes. Drawing from contemporary theorists such as Slavoj Zizek and Mark Fisher this article will argue that the Christchurch shooter (and the broader cultural trend he represents within this text) is not an ideological outlier, but a symptom of the dominant ideology.

Keywords:

Ideology, Global-capitalism, Hegemony, Fascism, Terrorism, Christchurch shooter

Conflict, Ideology and Protest

Daisy Hills
BA (Hons) Fine Art

'Wall is Over: The Impact of Lennon Walls on Protests Through History'

Abstract:

Communal art spaces have long been a uniting factor in activism, providing a space to create, communicate, and protest. The Lennon Wall originated in the 1980s in Prague is an anti-establishment graffiti space for punks and has been born again in Hong Kong in the form of thousands of sticky notes demanding democracy. The temporal notions of Lennon Walls, frequently subjected to destruction via censorship only to be born again in a new shape, define the motions and desires of the social movements they support. Through the lens of art as activism and social participatory art discourse, these walls help to bond the protesters by creating public spaces where opinions and information can both be shared, creating a unified image in the face of the public as well as interaction amongst those who share controversial opinions. Creating solidarity within the movement is essential and the walls provide a space where a connection is forged in an aesthetically pleasing way, helping to sway public opinion in favor of minorities who are frequently demonized by the establishment. Censorship runs rife at these locations, as the ideals and information shared directly opposes the government and social norms, often resulting in violence and discord despite the peaceful nature of the walls themselves. Yet the Lennon Walls persist, continually born again, reflecting the determination and dreams of the people contributing to them.

Keywords:

Censorship, Revolution, Community, Participatory, Aesthetic

Conflict, Ideology and Protest

Milly Francis
BA (Hons) Fine Art

'Cultural destruction in the Middle East: Antiquities trafficking, symbolic violence and post-conflict healing'

Abstract:

The cultural destruction in conflict zones in the Middle East has had a severe impact on the cultural heritage and museum collections of the region. The relationship between museums, heritage and cultural identity is complex with each influencing the other. The importance of cultural heritage means it is a vulnerable target in times of conflict as aggressors aim to undermine the cultural identity of the opposing side. One form of cultural destruction is the illicit trafficking of antiquities - leading to the removal of cultural property from its country. An example of this is the 2003 looting of the National Museum of Iraq, which had a significantly damaging effect on the cultural heritage of the region. Antiquities trafficking is often due to the exploitation of poverty in times of conflict, although recently militant groups such as ISIS have started to use it as a way of funding their terrorist activities. Cultural destruction also encompasses the physical destruction of monuments and buildings. Although this is often seen as collateral damage in times of war, this article analyses how attacks on cultural property by ISIS have been used as symbolic displays of their power and a way of undermining cultural identity. Finally, the article considers the future of cultural heritage in the Middle East and the ways in which rebuilding cultural identity can be a form of post-conflict healing.

Keywords:

Antiquities trafficking, Cultural heritage, Identity, Middle East, Conflict