

# Gesture, Trace and Performance

## one day international conference

Thu 30 November 2017, 10:00 am – 17:30pm

Cragg Lecture Theatre, UCA Canterbury

*Gesture, Trace and Performance* is an interdisciplinary conference, bringing together key thinkers from a range of disciplines to consider ideas around movement, representation and communication in contemporary society. The one-day conference reflects on [the exhibition of the same name](#) currently accessible at the Herbert Read Gallery, UCA to unfold the topic further.

*Gesture, Trace and Performance* is organised around three thematics: disappearance, masks and becoming. 'Disappearance' focuses on the ephemerality of recorded memory via sound or image; 'masks' expresses a presence that is invisible yet substantive, thinkable through touch; and 'becoming' concerns the mediation between bodily drawings and the cohabitation in holding a certain space through limited time.

**10:00 am** Coffee/ tea

**10: 30** introduction

**10:40- 11:30** Dr. Wiebke Leister (London College of Communication, UAL) in collaboration with Masato Kakinoki

**11:30- 12:30** Leah Fusco (Kingston University)

**12:30- 13:45** Lunch break (lunch provided)

**13:45– 14:30** Dr. Robert Luzar (Bath University)

**14:30– 15:15** Helen Kirwan (University for the Creative Arts)

**15:15- 15:30** Coffee/ Tea

**15:30- 16:15** Dr Azadeh Fatehrad (University for the Creative Arts)

**16:15- 17:00** speakers panel discussion

**17:00** end

## List of Abstract

### ***Echoes and Afterlives, performed publication with soundscape***

Dr. Wiebke Leister (London College of Communication, UAL) in collaboration with Masato Kakinoki

Exploring in depth the psychological and aesthetic significance of voice and face masking through collaboration on a live improvisation with collage and soundscape. *Echoes and Afterlives* '(performed publication) will emphasis on liveness and re-mediation between sound, still image and performance by using the sounds generated from the gestures of cutting and folding the pages and improvising with these sonic environments, which in turn will give impulses to the live collage.

**Wiebke Leister** is a German artist living in London. She studied photography at Essen University and the Royal College of Art, and has exhibited and published her work internationally at Galerie Mousonturm Frankfurt, Dryphoto arte contemporanea Prato, Školská 28 Prague, Photographic Centre Nykyaika Tampere, Society for Contemporary Photography Kansas City, Fremantle Arts Centre, Australian Centre of Photography Sydney, Goethe Institut London, Institute of Contemporary Arts London, Radio Resonance 104.4FM, Centre for the Arts Hereford, Danielle Arnaud London, among others; also receiving several awards such as *Kodak Nachwuchs Förderpreis*, *TrAIN*, *College Art Association*, *LeadAward*, *Herbert Schober Preis*, *European Award for Women Photographers*, *Plat(t)form 08*, *Nourypharma*; among others. Her works challenge the limitations of photographic representation and individual likeness, often focusing on the human face as a canvas, a medium or an agent. She works with photography, collage, drawing, text and performance. She is Course Leader for MA Photography at London College of Communication, co-organizer of the Photography and the Contemporary Imaginary research hub, convener of the Theatre of Photography research network and a core member of the Photography and the Archive Research Centre at the University of the Arts London, and has also worked with different cultural institutions, organizing conferences, events and exhibitions. '*Echoes and Transformations*' looks at the boundaries between embalming and enmasking: being in a skin and under a skin, in and under a mask, looking at a mask and seeing through a mask as something that equally changes one's gait and one's voice while playing with sensations of displacement and transformation. The work treats the human face less as a façade but as an object that – even though central to our understanding of what it means to be human – is only ever in the process of approximating a subject: being filled by a subject, worn on the face of a subject. A process of becoming invested with meaning that might occur during the encounter with an image-object, possibly inverting the relationship of the person who sees and that what can be seen. The work exists in different formations, including prints, collages, live performance and publications.

**Masato Kakinoki (abirdwhale)** is a Japanese musician, artist, film music composer and audiovisual improviser. While his background is music, now he works in art, music, sound and the ambiguous points among them. His interests include the physicality of performance, and contact points and dialogues between different things. Initially, he started his career in a rock band, with which he was awarded the grand prize of the national high school band competition and performed at ROCK IN JAPAN FESTIVAL. The idea of the physicality naturally became his concern as he shifted from the band, through an acoustic singer-songwriter, to an electronic music producer. As a music producer, he won PROGRESSIVE FORM's remix competition in 2015, and released his debut album 0000 from the label in 2017. He completed a PhD in Music at Canterbury Christ Church University, where he was granted University Full-time PhD Scholarship. The audiovisual improvisation which he developed in the PhD research has been performed at various places including ArtReview, Cafe OTO (London), GENERATE!® (Tübingen, Germany), and Tallinn Music Week (Tallinn, Estonia). At Tübingen, he explored the contact points between himself and the local soundscape in his performance. As a film music composer, he wrote and produced soundtracks and an inserted song for the feature film *Fragile* (directed by Shingo Ota), which has been screened internationally, including at the Tokyo International Film Festival. His track 'Signals' and the musical piece produced for the film *Candle for Minority* have been aired on BBC Radio 3 by Nick Luscombe and Verity Sharp respectively. He lives and works in London and Tokyo. Find out more: <https://kakinokimasato.com/>

### ***Perambulations***

Leah Fusco (Kingston University)

In traditional English law, perambulations were used to measure an area by walking around it and recording the route in writing. The ritual was practised by local parishioners, who would use young, green willow sticks to 'beat the bounds' each year. This research explores boundaries, peripheries and markers in shifting landscapes, using the case study of Northeye, a deserted medieval village in East Sussex. Once forming part of an archipelago on the southeast coast, the former island of Northeye is now agricultural marshland. This transient landscape has been subject to both long periods of deep slow-shifting change and short-term cataclysmic events. Natural and human forces have created an ephemeral environment where details are revealed and concealed through dynamic water levels. Alongside physical traces of disruption in the landscape, the historic documentation of Northeye is fragmented; lost excavation reports, inconclusive geo-

archaeological data and conflicting archival records all challenge the chronological documentation of the site's history, and the extent of the village is currently unknown. 'Northeye' attempts to perambulate this transient landscape through archival research and fieldwork, tracing historic and contemporary lines through written, spoken and visual languages, as a form of drawing. From earthworks to drainage systems, and tales passed down through generations to soil strata profiles, these lines thread Northeye's lost stories into a narrative that spans past, present and future domains.

**Leah Fusco** Based in London and East Sussex, Leah Fusco explores ideas in relation to landscape, people and time, through contemporary illustration practice. After studying BA Illustration at University for the Creative Arts, Maidstone, she graduated from the Royal College of Art in 2010 with an MA in Communication Art and Design. Her current doctoral research, supported by the London Doctoral Design Centre and carried out at Kingston University, investigates the visualisation of lost stories in transient landscapes. Drawing on geographic and historic subject matter, the research observes the shaping of past, present and future stories by physical environment, using the case study of a deserted medieval village in East Sussex. Once forming part of an archipelago on the southeast coast, the former island of Northeye now exists as agricultural marshland. This transient landscape has been subject to both long periods of deep slow-shifting change and short-term cataclysmic events. Natural and human forces have created an ephemeral environment where details are revealed and concealed through dynamic water levels. Alongside physical traces of disruption in the landscape, the historic documentation of Northeye is fragmented; lost excavation reports, inconclusive geoarchaeological data and conflicting archival records all challenge a chronological documentation of the site. Merging fieldwork and archival material, the work aims to capture multiple and concurrent timeframes and stories that shift, overlap and converge at Northeye, approaching documentary narrative as memory, speculation and experience. [www.leahfusco.co.uk](http://www.leahfusco.co.uk)

### ***Tracing Where We are Not***

Dr. Robert Luzar (Bath University)

This talk reflects on how 'trace' can be engaged through forms of gravity, bodily obstruction, irreducible points, and dislocated gestures. These idioms are taken reflectively from the artist's so-called subjective experience. The trace will be firstly approached through reflections made – or read out – from his writings on works where he uses performance in certain traceless actions. The reading now circulates on this question: how are works to be viewed that show not where One (the so-called individual as 'me') substantially is but, rather, open from where *we are not*? This question concerns senses of gravity, of undergoing times where the performance experientially stretches out, of a shared intimacy of space, of dislocating the performed gesture immanently. 'Not' is the counter-expression this ongoing event traces. In method, these reflections will occur by reading rather than writing, neither privileging (drawn) mark nor inscription; the trace will instead be read in ways that exscribe (Nancy), that echo certain changes of form, or plasticity (Malabou). The talk concludes by posing 'spaces' that artist and audience may – depending on shared effort – perceptually trace an *explosive imaginary*. That is to say an image and ensuing openness of self-becoming other – there where we are not, not individually substantive, not purely 'me'. Tracing this instead: the image of where we co-appear and co-exist.

**Robert Luzar** is an artist, writer and educator living in Bristol, UK. His works and research address conditions, actions and decisions engaging 'events' that are ongoing and take form in daily life; and uses a range of media, from live-art events, performance, painting, installation, projection, video, and Internet venues. He is Senior Lecturer in Fine Art at the Bath School of Art and Design, Bath Spa University (UK), and holds a PhD (through practice) from Central Saint Martins (UK). His works are exhibited internationally in venues such as: Palazzo Loredan Venice (IT), Torrance Art Museum (USA), DRAWinternational (FR), Katzmann Contemporary (CA), KCCC (LTU), Künstlerhaus Dortmund (DE), Nunnery Gallery (UK), and Talbot Rice Gallery (UK). [www.robertluzar.com](http://www.robertluzar.com). *Untitled* and *A-lighting Steps, Balls and Chords* use video, action, space, and unconventional forms of drawing to reflectively show where and how certain works as 'events' take place. Actions such as stepping and falling are presented as materially reduced, reflective, ongoing, and, paradoxically, ending. Notions of end, point, subjective locations (of standing, squatting, or lying down) are juxtaposed with elemental lines, dots, and architectures (room, gallery). The artist is physically given to audiences prosaically, of holding certain spaces and passing time. In *Untitled* the drawing is first made by hand using willow charcoal; and, after having been drawn, the artist shows himself to audiences live by standing still – or as much as possible. Empty handed, the artist moves downward though 'imperceptibly', moving slow enough that his actions appear unmoving to audiences; at best the artist makes a few steps backwards and in as improvised a manner as his bodily weight dictates. In *A-Lighting Steps, Balls, and Chords* the idiom of "making steps" is presented in a scene of going forward and back, shifting side to side. The artist follows shadowy lines cast by an electrical chord. The lightbulb makes him appear in becoming virtually two, shadowy other and dwarfed subject. The very process, of trying to show and reveal the work entirely, from start to (endless) finish, is therefore given through complex distortions, as expressed through details of smudging and partly removing a pre-made wall-drawing, of playing with shadows that shift into darkness and, in plain light, become traceless.

### ***I was dying. That much was certain. The rest is fiction\*.***

Helen Kirwan (UCA)

The recurring themes in my artistic practice are memory, memorial, fragment and trace. My recent videos *Fragment and Trace* and *Memory Theatre 2* show a person mourning the loss of a loved one by endlessly

performing futile tasks bordering on the absurd. The repetitions express the physical traces of mourning and the work examines time, space and existence through an enquiry into what is memory and how might it function and be represented. It posits the idea of the trace as a mark that has barely been made or that may disappear, and questions was something there, and was something left behind? The sensorimotor and haptic elements of these performative encounters serve also as metaphors for searching, yearning and navigation: tools for orienteering and personal mapping in the fog (of bereavement). The work is underpinned by an exploration of Schlegel's 3 radical concept of the philosophical fragment. Schlegel's fragment aims at fragmentation for its own sake; is a distinct entity, characterised by a concept of its own. It is a dynamic process of thinking that is both self-defined and simultaneously defining itself and which opens up questions about the relation between the finite and infinite, unity and chaos. Thus, the fragment, as a shard of memory, oscillates between past and present. The video title *Memory Theatre*, was inspired by Simon Critchley's book of the same name and by his exploration of the writings of Frances Yates and Michel Harr. Critchley posits that whilst memory is repetition, it is not a mere recitation but repetition with a difference; more akin to transportation or motion. Further, that the brilliance of Hegel's insight was to conceive of memory as '...something permanently moving. A wheel that turns, returns and turns again. Hegel's memory theatre was a kind of perpetuum mobile, a permanently recreating and re-enacting loop.'<sup>4</sup> Thus, knowledge of the Absolute, achieved through recollection, was a totality, endlessly creating novelty out of itself, as a vast living organism.

**Helen Kirwan** work is practice based and the recurring themes in her conceptual practice are: memory and memorial and fragment and trace. Most of **Kirwan** research has been into Schlegel's concept of the fragment as a dynamic process of thinking that is both self-defined and simultaneously defining itself and which opens up questions about the relation between the finite and infinite, unity and chaos. However, **Kirwan** recently gave a talk at the Towner Gallery Eastbourne which delves deeper into the concept of memory as such, especially Hegel's notion of memory as a kind of 'perpetuum mobile'.

\*(Simon Critchley, 2014)

## ***Performativity and image formation***

Dr Azadeh Fatehrad (UCA)

Taken Judith Butler's concept of 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution' that 'the mundane way in which social agents constitute social reality through language, gesture and all manner of symbolic social sign'; this paper provides models for understanding how social agents affects our making as artists. How do social barriers and the modes of social temporality retrain our freedom of making? On the one hand, artists operate in a field of almost limitless possibility and permission; globalisation and digital technology seem to collapse the boundaries of time periods, space, styles and concepts, allowing total freedom. On the other hand, we all seem locked into an inescapable economic, political and ecological endgame.

This paper refers to the series of cross-disciplinary workshop titled 'Performativity and image formation' that took place in collaboration with the Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance (February-June 2016). 'Performativity and image formation' was designed to analyse different elements that are involved in 'social agents' in our everyday life. More particularly 'Performativity and image formation' aimed to establish a new dimension of looking at registered images or news documentary scene by exploring artistic movement of body in space- exploring the gestures of body- hand, facial expression in photograph produced by news channels in conflict zones such as in war / protest i. e. in Aleppo. A two channel video and series of performance was outcome of collaboration with artists Jakob Rowlinson and dancers Alina Pappi, David Rodriguez, Massimo Monticelli, Stephanie D'Arcy Collins, Evie Oldham and Olivia Thynne which would be included in the paper presentation.

**Dr. Azadeh Fatehrad** is an artist and curator based in London. Her research engages with the feminist history of Iran from 1909 to the present. Fatehrad's research, artistic and curatorial practice are intertwined around a process of gathering information and generating new imagery in response to archival material she discovers. Fatehrad has made extensive use of archival material including those held at the Weltkulturen Museum, Frankfurt am Main; the International Institute of Social History (IISH), Amsterdam; and the Institute for Iranian Contemporary Historical Studies (IICH), Tehran. Fatehrad has curated diverse series of public programmes including exhibitions, conferences and workshops such as 'Hengameh Golestan: Witness 1979' at The SHOWROOM London (2015), as well as 'The Feminist Historiography' at IASPIS, Stockholm (2016). She has presented academic papers at a variety of conferences and symposiums, such as 'The Neo-traditionalist: Representation of women in post-revolutionary Iran', Moderna Museet, Stockholm; 'Communal Social and Inter-Political Stage of Curatorial Practice', Sharjah Art Foundation, UAE; and 'Challenging Gender, Embracing Intersectionality' at Kingston University, London. Fatehrad is currently curator of *Beyond the Frame* in partnership with Iniva, UAL, and the Liverpool Biennial. She has exhibited her work internationally in London, Vancouver, Amsterdam and Tehran. [www.azadehfatehrad.com](http://www.azadehfatehrad.com)