

Speakers for AHSC Annual Symposium October 27, 2012

1. Robert Drury King assistant professor in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at Sierra Nevada College (Nevada, USA)

A Report on the Philosophical Foundations of the Body in Somaesthetics: From Early Modern Roots in Self-Consciousness to the Autopoiesis of Contemporary Biology of Cognition.

One of course notes that in the Early Modern period a certain dualist conception of mind-body natures, whether in notions of self-consciousness or personal identity, etc., figured as the dominant philosophical discourse (here one might favorably consult the recent work of Udo Thiel (Oxford University Press, 2011)). Early Modern philosophers such as Locke, Leibniz, Wolff, Descartes and Spinoza, a whole range of Cartesians such as Arnauld and La Forge, lesser known thinkers like Cudworth, Pufendorf, Samuel Clarke, etc., figure prominently in the construction of this discourse. For such thinkers, consciousness is always self-consciousness and any attempt to interpret or construct philosophical foundations of knowledge must take place on the basis of such a consciousness.

In my paper, I review some of the classical versions of this position and show the ways in which it establishes the fundamentals of modern thinking, broadly construed. I focus energies in this early part of the paper on listing and explaining the philosophical presuppositions of the classical versions of this position and on how it structures the philosophy of the body during this time and on into the later modern philosophies, e.g., Kant, German Idealists as well as the British empiricist and logical positivist reactions against this German line of thinking (this I will do briefly for sake of space). Next, I present the constructivist and autopoietic alternative to this account, one which I will argue provides a new and compelling foundation for somaesthetics. To do this, I will focus on the work of biologist-philosophers Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela. Their autopoietic theory is a constructivist position on the body. For Maturana in particular, and I will explain this in the main part of my paper, concepts of consciousness and self-consciousness (indeed, including any notion of the body derived from these foundations) are completely inadequate foundations for theories of the body because these notions are themselves derived from our autopoiesis (which I explain in detail in terms of Maturana's biology of cognition). For the constructivist, we are structure-determined systems who in our acts of living (bodily, in terms of "sensorialities") have selected an ontogeny of self-consciousness, one derived from a phylogenetic history of living in our bodies. I explain this theory in the paper and speak to its uses as a foundation for the main claims of any somaesthetical account of the body, stating why we ought to prefer the autopoietic account as a foundation for any theory of the body.

Then proceeding in a chronological order we would have a paper on medieval concept of somatic soul.

2. Vanessa Crosby, Ph.D. Candidate in Religious Studies at Northwestern University

In Death's Mirror:

The Somatic Soul and the Construction of Late Medieval Subjectivity

During the late Middle Ages *memento mori* art became a popular genre among patrons wishing to prepare for the good death. Images of death, often gruesome depictions of decomposing corpses, were held up as mirrors as a reminder of the viewer's mortality. This paper will draw on the case study of John Baret's memorial chapel in Bury St Edmunds which centered on the tomb of Baret, which depicts the deceased as an emaciated cadaver. Drawing on recent theories of the medieval "somatic soul," it will examine the way the tomb interacted with the spectator within the spatial and liturgical setting of the chapel. By eliciting particular gestures and affective responses, the tomb inscribed upon the body of the spectator lessons in living and dying well. These lessons were comprehended not solely intellectually, but in a manner that incorporated and disciplined the entire sensorium of the Christian subject.

Then on to the Counter-Reformation with corporeal devotion.

3. Jamie Buettner, M.A. Candidate in Art History at California State University, Fresno (CSUF)

Embracing Jesus: Corporeal Devotion of "Brides of Christ" in Counter-Reformation Imagery

In the Counter-Reformation Church, the body increasingly became the privileged space of mystical discourse. Embodied spirituality was also central to pictorial representation of female piety. As post-Tridentine contemplative saints, Teresa of Avila, Margaret of Cortona, and Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi, required an intimate portrayal. Artistic representation gave somatic expression to a new tenor of submissive feminine religious interiority. Women's visionary experiences were rendered through corporeal and highly gendered gestures. Saints were revealed as the passive recipients of bodily manifestations of stigmata, levitations, and transverberations. Additionally, women were depicted as actively reaching for and embracing the very tangible body of a virile Jesus. Sensorial and indeed erotic embraces were a seductive element for male artists, tied to a culture, which associated *female* with *body* and *emotion*. Nevertheless, scenes of physicality between Christ and his "brides" stimulated affective devotion and created an unprecedented vision of a relational faith for all Counter-Reformation worshippers.

Continuing still with counter-reformation, early Baroque period.

4. Dr. Livia Stoenescu, Professor of Art History (adjunct faculty) California Lutheran University, Los Angeles

Recuperating Christ's Body for Modern Art: Annibale Carracci's Experimentation with the Pietà theme

In his exaggerated attention to the body of Christ in the various renderings of the Pietà, Annibale Carracci (1557-1602) insists upon the centrality of the relationship between body, mortality and aesthetics in transmitting his reform ideas into the indexical loops of pictorial art. Within this historical framework, it is compelling to think that Annibale's Christ - his body, his agony and the increasingly excessive emotional attendance required to complete the monumental paintings of the Pietà - is articulated as a corrective to the passivity and loss of individuality in post-Tridentine religious imagery. I argue that Annibale enacts the very process by which - under new pictorial conditions -

the body surpasses the realm of objective time and historical narrative toward a mysterious virtue within Christ's dead body.

We then have a chronological jump to the modern period... so we can construct this gap not as a lacuna but as juxtaposition of conception of body/mind between the early modern and the modern period. We can start with Megan Ewing and proprioception.

5. Megan Ewing Ph.D. Candidate Princeton University, German Literature

Event Score as Somaesthetic Practice: The Collage Books of R.D. Brinkmann

The paper profiles the psychogeographic, somaesthetic practice of West German poet and artist Rolf Dieter Brinkmann (1940-1975) which produced the collage books composed between 1970 and 1973.¹ These works represent a significant development of the performance model of the poem characteristic of postwar American avant-garde poetry.² In this model, the poem becomes an event score, thus engaging process-based works like John Cage's 4'33" and American Conceptual art practice as models and intertexts. Brinkmann's unique contribution consists in a radical attention to his sensory apparatus: the collage works are the notation in text and image of his body's movement through space over the delimited time period of his *dérives* (the event). They provide in unrelenting detail images of a multiplicity of sensory modalities, and so transcend the late modern conception of a mere five senses. The paper will focus in particular on his attention to the somatic or interoceptive senses, the feelings of the body touching upon itself: proprioception, kinaesthesia, and the vestibular sense. Through readings of Merleau-Ponty and contemporary scholars of phenomenology, the paper demonstrates how an awareness of these allows the author-artist to become aware of the connection between embodiment and intentionality, and ultimately, sensation and writing, the body and image production.

The on to involuntary bodily movements...

6. Elise Archias assistant professor of art history at the University of Illinois, Chicago.

"You in the black pants: I want you"

Vito Acconci's performances made between 1969 and 1972 are distinctive for two

¹ These are: *Rom, Blicke* (1979) [*Rome, Views*], *Erkundungen für die Präzisierung des Gefühls für einen Aufstand: Reise Zeit Magazin* (1987) [*Reconnaissances for the Specification of Feeling for an Uprising: Travel Time Journal*] and *Schnitte* (1988) [*Cuts*]. All were published posthumously by the German publishing house Rowohlt. They have been called "collage books," "Materialbände" and even "Unbücher" for their serial depiction of an immediate and discontinuous present that refuses any ordering principle.

² In 1974, Jerome Rothenberg proposed that a new model for American poetry had developed after World War II: "Since the 1950s [...] we have been working increasingly with a performance model of the poem, for which the written versions serve as the notation of the score." The performance model in question arises for Rothenberg as he considers the problem of a "coercive propositional language," one that attempts mastery of the world, rather than "participates" in it. Language thus calls for participation *qua* performance. The resulting poem reminds us that it does not solely consist in its notation or even its utterance, but rather in "the totality of the event," which includes its prior or potential enaction in the world. In this model, the poem on the page functions as the score for an event. Brinkmann disengaged himself from the German literary and art worlds the German satellite of the American post-war poetry scene to which this performance model belongs, and is arguably "the most important bridge figure between contemporary German and American culture" (Michael Jennings).

reasons: their inclusion of involuntary bodily movements like flinching, gagging and sweating and their direct expression of desire for the audience in such forms as following, photographing, or whispering raunchy fantasies about them into a microphone. This paper will explore the implications of aligning unintended reflex action with desire, arguing that Acconci's choices were a critical response to the phenomenological emphases of minimalist sculpture and dance, then dominating American art discourse. Minimalism resulted in works of art that foregrounded the basics of sensory perception but downplayed the pleasures and demands that had traditionally recognized the presence of an art viewer. Acconci's potentially rude gestures were a way of insisting that social desire was as fundamental to the dynamics of a work of art as the awareness of one's body in space, and that if his late modernist viewers were no longer sure what they wanted from art, this art would make very clear that it unambivalently, uncontrollably wanted them.

In accordance with the conference theme, this paper addresses the ways that Acconci's manner of representing the body suggests ways of thinking about art as a form in which knowledge is shared.

**7. Derek Murray , Assistant Professor, History of Art and Visual Studies
University of California, Santa Cruz**

“Post”

This essay examines the proliferation of the prefix "post-" in relation to burgeoning art discourses, specifically as it relates to the notions of so-called "post-black" and "post-feminist" cultural production. Focusing on the work of artists born in the 1970s who hail from a post-Civil- Rights and post-Second-Wave-Feminist era, this research examines how they may be diverging from the strategies of previous generations—in an effort to create a new ethical aesthetics of the body. Using a comparative approach, this essay argues that the work of these artists does not signal a post-racial/post-feminist moment. Rather, it heralds an aesthetic as well as a conceptual shift in the use of black and female bodies in visual representation.

On to the city as body capable of gesture...

8. Mary Thomas Ph.D. Candidate, Visual Studies, University of California, Santa Cruz

*“Extending the Embodied City: Finding East L.A. in Asco’s *Asshole Mural*”*

In the proposed paper, I examine how the urban space of East Los Angeles is presented in *Asshole Mural*, a 1975 performance by the artist collective Asco. The performance follows two others in which the collective demonstrated an ongoing commitment to contending with the wall as more than mere surface and made the possibility of the built environment's subjecthood visible. The performances, titled *Walking Mural* and *Instant Mural*, commented on limitations of the wall as an object and activated the urban space within East Los Angeles as a unique body capable of movement and gesture. By naming a sewer drainpipe in Malibu a monument to East Los Angeles in *Asshole Mural*, Asco not only endows the barrio with symbolic functions which mimic those belonging to the human body but also realizes East Los Angeles' presence and conceptual embodiment beyond its geographic boundaries.

Ending with future directions for somaesthetics in the realm of the cyborg.

**9. Jane Chin Davidson Asst. Professor of Contemporary Art/Art History
University of Houston**

Microscopic Visions: Geraldine Ondrizek: Recording from the Structures With In

Geraldine Ondrizek's 2012 exhibition entitled *Recording from the Structures With In*, engages the viewer through the affective sensibilities and aural aspects of her performative installations. The viewer of her signature work *Cellular* (2008-09) experiences the intimacy of the sound of human cells dividing whilst watching the video document of the embryonic development of spider eggs. Opening simultaneously at the University of Houston, Clear Lake and at Miami International University, NASA's historic aeronautic communities of Houston and Miami, the expression of *Cellular* illustrates the conflicted relationships among "self" and nature, biology and culture, bodies and environment. Continuing the exploration of the "artifact-organism" envisioned by Donna Haraway, Ondrizek's artwork evokes the biopolitical borders of identity between the animal and machine – the new soma-aesthetics of material feminism's ontological contexts and integrated circuits for art and science.

