



"Stasis" by Ovidijus Talijunas

## Shadowing the Scene: Negativity in Affects, Politics, Aesthetics

*Interdisciplinary Conference on Affect and Visuality*  
*September 26-27<sup>th</sup>, 2014, Vilnius, Center for Contemporary Art*  
*Organized by the Lithuanian Culture Research Institute*

A stalker of light, an ambiguous threshold, an imprint of the real: shadow is brought to give depth and texture to a surface, only to obscure it at next choice. It frightens, hides, protects, invites play, for animals, children, performers. A creative sublime or a perpetual negative: the grave of Capa's soldier, the homoerotic of Caravaggio's paint, film noir's pick of the obscene. The hideaway and the stage of the horrendous, traumatic, lurid. The metaphor and device for clandestine wars, unaccounted economies, illicit affairs. An extension of our bodies, far from a stable entity, it is always in ubiquitous inaction. "Life's but a walking shadow" is Macbeth's answer to the death of his sleepwalking queen – how do we respond to this?

Proposing to elaborate and extend on the indexical and metaphorical notion of *shadowing*, as active process rather than empirical state or static quality, this conference invites critical and creative interventions into the conceptual bases shared by affects, aesthetics, and negativity.

The so called "affective turn" in the humanities, that posited affect as the unsignifiable intersubjective intensity of bodily potentiality akin to but in excess of emotion, has recently been criticized for a hasty dismissal of language, loose interpretations of the neurosciences, and overemphasis on non-representability. Moreover, while affect theorists productively explored how neo-liberal affectual labor and micropolitics within cinema, art, photography and media work our bodies beyond discursive registers and through non-human agents, an affectual life was seen as a positive ontological force; constitutive of a post-human condition and the possibility of affirmative politics.

Taking into account these developments but deflecting from affirmative ontological and post-human assumptions, this conference centers the notion of

aesthetics on the idea of the distribution of the sensible; “delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience” (Rancière 2006). Inviting us to rethink the visual and the political at stake in *the shadowing* – the aesthetic and affectual work of the negative – it asks:

- How are the fatal, stigmatic, horrific, and abject, which emerge as particular affects of life, its shadows, subscribed and distributed by a neo-liberal regimes of representation? Or, how do the affects of the negative define or elide contemporary forms of visual representation?
- What is the relation between ‘non-representability’ and the affects of the negative – historically, conceptually, politically?
- What specific role does the interrelation between the affectual and the aesthetic play in the current political conditions and the simultaneous visual production of such, what after Crapanzano (2006) we call ‘the scene’ (e.g. political protests, hunger strikes, city riots, AIDS/HIV epidemics, marginal wars and crises)?
- How could the negative in aesthetics and affects be employed for a reconceptualization of zones of precarity, abandonment, and disability? And how could it be rethought or imagined for a critical political engagement vis-à-vis neo-liberal projects and normative ideologies?

### **Keynote Lecture**

*“Mediating Perception and the ‘Unrepresentable’: Hearing Voices and Visualizing Negative Affects”*

Prof. Lisa Blackman, Goldsmiths, University of London

*Lisa Blackman* is Professor of Media and Communications at Goldsmiths, University of London. She is the author, among other, of *Immaterial Bodies: Affect, Embodiment, Mediation*, (Sage, 2012), *The Body: The Key Concepts* (Berg, 2008) and *Hearing Voices: Embodiment and Experience* (Free Association Books, 2001). She is the editor of the journals *Body & Society* (Sage) and *Subjectivity* (with Valerie Walkerdine, Pelgrave). She is particularly interested in phenomena which have puzzled scientists, artists, literary writers and the popular imagination for centuries, including automaticity, voice hearing, suggestion and telepathy. She is currently working on a new project, *Haunted Data: Social Media, Queer Science and Archives of the Future*.

## Conference Programme

Friday, September 26<sup>th</sup>

13:00 – 13:30      *Registration*

13:30 – 14:00      *Opening remarks*

### **Keynote Lecture**

14: 00 – 15:30      *Mediating Perception and the 'Unrepresentable': Hearing Voices and Visualizing Negative Affects*

Professor Lisa Blackman, Dept of Media and Communications,  
Goldsmiths, University of London

15: 30 – 16:00      Coffee Break

### **Session I. Historicizing affect**

Chair Nerijus Mileris, Dept of Philosophy, Vilnius University

16: 00 – 16:30      *Aesthetics and abjection in orientalist photography*  
Branwyn Poleykett, CRASSH, University of Cambridge

16: 30 – 17:00      *Debt of the dead: hunting for treasures in what was once also Western Armenia*  
Alice von Bieberstein, Dept of Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge

17: 00 – 17:30      Discussion

17:30 – 17: 45      Coffee break

## Performance

17:45 – 18:30      *True history. Joseph Beuys*  
Ute Kilter, independent artist, Odessa, Ukraine

19:30                      Dinner

Saturday, September 27<sup>th</sup>

## Session II. Affective economies

Chair Eirini Avramopoulou, Dept of Sociology, University of Cambridge

9:30 – 10: 00      *“Beautiful People”*: Collectively imprinting the psychedelic trance ethos  
Leandros Kyriakopoulos, Dept of History, Archaeology and Social  
Anthropology at the University of Thessaly, Greece.

10:00 – 10:30      *Affective enslavement of contemporary labour*  
Kasparas Pocius, Lithuanian culture research institute

10:30 - 11:00      Panel discussion

11:00 – 11:30      Coffee break

## Session III. Body vision

Chair Danute Baceviciute, Lithuanian culture research institute

11: 30 – 12: 00      *Can the other live in me? Immunity and contagion in the biopolitical frame*  
Audrone Zukauskaitė, Lithuanian culture research institute

12: 00 – 12: 30      *Bearing the unbearable: Or, destabilizing the political economy of visibility*  
Eirini Avramopoulou, Dept of Sociology, University of Cambridge

12: 30 – 13: 00      *Life, time and the anxieties of finitude in the age of biotechnology*  
Abou Farman, Dept of Anthropology, New School for Social  
Research, New York

13: 00 – 13: 30      Panel discussion

13: 30 – 15:00      Lunch Break

## Session IV. Shadowing the concept

Chair Renata Sukaityte, Institute of Creative Medias, Vilnius University

- 15: 00 – 15: 30      *A Performative Materiality of the Hypothetical*  
Mindaugas Bundza, VDU, Lithuania
- 15: 30 – 16: 00      *Images of Absence*  
Mantas Kvedaravicius, Lithuanian culture research institute
- 16:00 – 16: 30      *Aikhu senses*  
Ovidijus Talijunas, independent artist, Vilnius
- 16:30 – 17:00      Panel discussion
- 17:00 – 17:15      Coffee break
- 17:15 – 18:00      Concluding discussion and final remarks
- 19:00                      Reception