

# Expanded Cinema Symposia Spring 2009

## Expanded Cinema: History, Society, Technology

Weds April 22<sup>nd</sup> 2009

Conference Room, Innovations Centre, Central St Martins College of Art, Southampton Row, London

10:30 a.m.

*Session one will address the technological changes of avant-garde as well as mainstream forms of cinematic presentation and production and their effects on historical and contemporary interpretations of Expanded Cinema. 20-30 min illustrated papers will be followed by Q+ A with the audience.*

**David Erol Fresko Jnr (Stanford University)**

***'Multiple-Image Composition in the Age Before Griffith'***

During the 1950s, with the literal expansion of cinema's projection plane through various widescreen technologies, filmmakers began to break up the screen through a number of split-screen, or multi-image, strategies. While the novelty of the split-screen captivated audiences, critics, and a number of adventurous filmmakers, many of these practices derive from precedents established during cinema's earliest decade. Before 1908, filmmakers frequently resorted to multi-image compositions in order to enhance the monocular image's visual patina while creating a number of different effects, including, but not limited to (1) the creation of tricks and crude special effects, such as the sensation of flying, or the display of artificial depth, (2) expressive displays of character interiority by representing thoughts, dreams, memories, and premonitions (3) aesthetic embellishment that recalled previous projection schemes, such as the magic lantern, and finally, (4) the sensation of occupying two discrete spaces simultaneously, an alternate mode for the display of parallel actions, emblemized most nakedly in representations of the phone-call. Exploring filmmakers in the United States, Great Britain, and France, I argue that the use of multi-image composition during cinema's earliest period created spatiotemporal relationships of heightened discontinuity between and within both single and multi-image compositions, and engendered, even encouraged, imprecise and ambivalent rhetorical and narratological readings for audiences. Analysis of multi-image filmmaking from this period serves to deepen our understanding of the early cinema's unity of perspective (often pejoratively referred to as its "theatrical" style) by recasting the emphasis on the projection plane as a site of image organization rather than a "window on the world," and also creates a historical lineage that helps ground contemporary multi-image practice. Films to be analyzed may include UN HOMME DES TÊTES (1898), ARE YOU THERE? (1901), HISTOIRE D'UN CRIME (1901), DREAM OF A RAREBIT FIEND (1906), and CUPID'S PRANKS (1908), amongst others.

**Chris Sams (London College of Communication)**

***Stanley Kubrick: Towards an Expanded Archive***

This paper explores the Stanley Kubrick archive housed at the University of Arts, London, and considers the ways it can be utilised as a form of expanded cinema. The two key areas explored are:

- 1) The development of a 'freer' use of physical artefacts in the light of the production of a digital archive. How this is a response to Lev Manovich's notion of 'transcoding' (the infiltration of a 'computer layer' on the 'cultural layer' of cultural products in general).
- 2) Friedrich Kittler's notion of the 'doppelganger' and its implications for the Kubrick archive. How an archive can produce a 'double' of the films it represents and how this has implications for an expanded cinema.

Finally, the paper gives an example of an expanded cinema project using elements of the Kubrick archive.

**Rebecca Ross (Central St Martins & Harvard)**

***All Above: Henri Giffard's Ballon Captif at the 1867 Exposition d'Universelle***

My current research is focused on interactions between the spectacular resonance of the "view from above" and practices of intervention in the built environment. I am interested in why this perspective was so attractive and how the attention it drew relates to the distribution of power to intervene in the form of the built environment. Henri Giffard's Ballon Captif was a widely attended attraction at the 1867 Exposition d'Universelle in Paris. The tethered balloon was promoted as the ultimate panorama of Paris. The basic concept was a hot air balloon with a large nacelle that remained tethered to the ground by a 500 meter rope. The balloon was brought up and down from the court of the Tuileries, each time emptying out and re-selling with thirty new passengers holding tickets worth 50 centimes.

The exposition was intended as a kind of a coming-out for a modernized post-Haussmannian Paris and the ballon captif was promoted as the best perspective from which to experience the re-organized city. The modernization of Paris had been at least partially centered around the objectives of vision and visibility. It was therefore ideally presented, with simultaneous access to the breadth of its organization and beauty, as an image to be contemplated and appreciated from a distance, rather than interacted with or lived in.

While 19th century spectacular forms such as the panorama and zoetrope have been established as pre-cinematic, I am testing the possibility of an interrelation between related spectacular forms and pre-cursors to the establishment of professional city planning. What aspects of the new Paris – its inhabitants, and practices of urban intervention – did the tethered balloon experience emphasize and de-emphasize, to what ends, and to the advantage or disadvantage of which groups?

**Adam Kossoff (Wolverhampton)**

***Expanded Cinema: Spatialising Time and the Aesthetics of Technics***

The moving image has asserted the imaginary nearness that Heidegger feared of modern technology and that Fredric Jameson feared of the post-modern. Nearness was thought by Christian Metz and other apparatus theorists to be illusory and dangerously cathartic. Video art now creates a fetish out of nearness, disregarding the centrality of technology. By contrast, expanded cinema largely refused the solace of the immersive by introducing what I will call, with reference to Bernard Stiegler, engaging with the reciprocity of organic and inorganic, the 'aesthetics of technics'.

Seemingly induced by cinematic abstraction intruding into mainstream cinema, the brainwashing scene in *The Ipccress File* (1965) reveals the body-machine trauma at the time of the Cold War. At around the same time, using an aesthetics of technics, experimental and expanded cinema largely sought to disrupt cinema's grip on nearness. Tony Conrad's mind-affecting *Flicker* (1966) emerged from Conrad's explorations in Minimalist Music. *Flicker*, which expanded the cinema from within cinema itself, foregrounded body-machine relations (not a "cinema of expansion without camera... without screen or film stock", as Gilles Deleuze wildly claims). I will also refer to William Raban and Chris Welsby's *River Yar* (1972) and my own flicker work, *S.O.S* (2008).

Engaging with the aesthetics of technics these works draw attention to how moving image technology constructs and orientates time and space; that is, in essence, spatialising time.

**1 p.m.**

**Lunch Break**

**2 p.m.**

**Session two will look at the shifting social context of expanded cinema; a live form that seeks to situate and activate the spectator in many ways. 20-30 min illustrated papers will be followed by Q+ A with the audience.**

**Lawrence Daressa (California Newsreel)**

'Expanded Cinema as 'Social Change Media': California Newsreel since 1968'

A Politics of Space, A Space for Politics: California Newsreel at the Site of Reception 1968-2009

This paper locates expanded cinema practices within an emerging politics of space. It will do so by tracing the quixotic 41 year quest of California Newsreel to "activate the site of reception." It will scrutinize four specific strategies to create "a place for a public:" situationist guerilla cinema, *ouvrieriste* film-as-tool, Web 2.0 "digital democracy" and locative media-based architecture. It will ask if one way to expand cinema might be to use less cinema not more.

**Lauren A Wright (The London Consortium)**

Present: Spectatorship in Expanded Cinema, the 1960s and Today

*PRESENT – this word stands primarily for two others: "here" and "now". Both function as linguistic "shifters", their meaning being absolutely specific to the place and time of their enunciation, yet constantly changing with their context. They are inextricable from one another; the experience of the present is always one of coexistence, of different times, bodies, objects and spaces interpenetrating and bumping up against one another. Both are also intrinsic to Expanded Cinema, which engulfs spectators into the heterogeneous and shifting spaces and times of the work. My interest is primarily in the latter: Expanded Cinema creates an extended and multiple present in which many different times, or durations, coexist, including those of spectators.*

*My paper will interrogate this dual present with critical reference to Michael Fried's ubiquitous essay "Art and Objecthood" (1967). I will expand the essay's present – briefly looking backward to Gotthold Lessing, then Bertolt Brecht, pausing on Robert Smithson's film *Spiral Jetty*, and continuing forward to Amy Granat and Drew Heitzler's film installation *T.S.O.Y.W.* (2007). In so doing, I will consider the consequences of Fried's negative definition of "literalist" (minimalist) art's "presence", versus modernist painting and sculpture's "presentness", for understanding artist's constructions of spectatorial experience, in the 1960s when the concept of Expanded Cinema was explicitly formed, and today. Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* film represents an important historical, theoretical, and formal fulcrum between minimalism, avant-garde filmmaking of various sorts in the 1960s, and contemporary artists' film work, which refers (overtly or implicitly) to these earlier practices. Despite its 200 minutes, *T.S.O.Y.W.* engages succinctly with relevant issues of media, image/sound relations, installation, intertextuality, and art history, each of which represent durations. Using these examples, I will argue for the utility of Fried's argument for considering the spectatorship of Expanded Cinema in terms of a multifarious and expanded present.*

**William Raban (London College of Communication)**

'Structural Film: Expanded Cinema and Reflexivity'

*Using film examples, William Raban will give a personal account of EXPANDED CINEMA, demonstrating how some of the multi-screen and film performance works came into being and will describe their relationship within a broader reflexive film approach. The paper will argue that Expanded Cinema has to be defined by its attempt to become a performative medium and should not necessarily include all multi-screen projections and installations. Expanded cinema is an attempt at subverting the conventional cinematic codes where there is always a marked distinction between the time of production and the time of exhibition. Uniquely perhaps, Expanded cinema is always in the "present tense". It is cinema as live performance but though this is always the goal, it*

*is always thwarted to some degree by the constraints imposed at each projection and to other chance factors.*

4pm Questions to speakers

4.30 pm: Drinks Reception

**The Symposium will be followed by:**

## **“Fractured Light”**

**A programme of Australian film video and multi-projection curated by Sue.k.**  
Conference Room, Innovations Centre, Central St Martins College of Art, Southampton Row,  
London (6.30 pm)

### **Symposium Speakers:**

**Lawrence Daressa**, a graduate of Yale and Oxford Universities, has been Co-Director of California Newsreel since 1974 and is President of its Center for New Documentary. He has served as Chair of the National Coalition of Independent Producers and a founding board member of the Independent Television Service. He sits on the board of the San Francisco Cinematheque and produces his own experimental documentaries

**David Fresko** is a PhD student in Stanford University’s Art & Art History Department with a concentration in film studies. He received his MA in film studies from Emory University and his BA in film studies from Wesleyan University.

**Adam Kossoff** is an artist and writer based in London. His moving image work addresses and questions the relationship of the moving image to different spatial and technological contexts. He is currently Senior Lecturer in Film and Video at the School of Art and Design, University of Wolverhampton.

**William Raban** lives and works in London. After studying painting at St Martin’s School of Art, he started making films in 1970 and became involved in the London Filmmakers’ Co-op. His work has been associated with landscape film, expanded cinema and more recently, a documentary approach to filmmaking. Raban is currently Reader in Film at the London College of Communication.

**Rebecca Ross** is Interactive Design Tutor / Senior Lecturer at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design and a PhD Candidate in Urban Planning at Harvard Graduate School of Design

**Chris Sams** is an artist, writer and teacher living and working in London.

**Lauren A Wright** is a curator, research and writer. She is currently completing her PhD thesis, *Generosity of Viewing: Duration in the Spectatorship of Art* in the London Consortium Postgraduate Programme in Humanities and Cultural Studies, and is Director of the cultural research organisation Consortium Projects and Assistant Director of the media arts organisation Furtherfield.org.