

**Nieuwsbrief 236**  
**December 2020**

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**DISSERTATION DEFENSE: NADIA DE VRIES**

***Digital Corpses: Creation, Appropriation, and Reappropriation*** | Supervisors: Ellen Rutten, Esther Peeren | 2 December 2020, Aula, 14.00 hrs.

Now that everyday human life, including dying, is increasingly intertwined with digital technologies and online cultures, it is important to understand how this entanglement affects existing social norms, including those that relate to death. These social norms do not only pertain to our mourning practices (the honoring and remembering of lost loved ones on Facebook and Instagram, for example) but also to the ways in which we encounter – and engage with – images of death. Due to the large-scale shareability and malleability of online images, however, such images of death are also vulnerable to various forms of abuse. This research project focuses on three forms of such abuse – creation, appropriation and reappropriation – and investigates the power dynamics between living bodies and dead bodies that these forms of abuse reveal. Who, for instance, is the owner of a dead body once that dead body is turned into a digital image? Who is responsible for what happens to this dead body – as ‘corpse-image’ – as a result of its digitization? And what does the ease

with which such a ‘digital corpse’ is created, appropriated or reappropriated say about the agency that the dead themselves have in a digital context? Through an analysis of six digital images of dead and dying bodies, found on social media and online shock sites but also in contemporary art and journalism (such as the infamous Falling Man image that was published in the aftermath of 9/11), this dissertation offers an answer to these questions.

Nadia de Vries is a writer and cultural researcher. Between 2016 and 2020, she conducted her PhD research at the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (ASCA). She is the author of the critical memoir *Kleinzeer* (Uitgeverij Pluim, 2019; in Dutch) and the poetry collection *Dark Hour* (Dostoyevsky Wannabe, 2018; in English). She also frequently writes essays, poems, and stories for a variety of literary platforms. Her debut novel will be published by Uitgeverij Pluim in 2021.

**DISSERTATION DEFENSE: MELISSA ROMBOU**

***How to do Things with Pictures in the Museum: Photography, Montage and Political Space.***  
 Supervisors: Christa-Maria Lerm Hayes and Sophie Berrebi.  
 Online, 2 December, 16:00 hrs.

In this dissertation (conducted initially under the supervision of ASCA founder Mieke Bal), I extend J.L. Austin’s concept of the transformative nature of speech as a “toolbox” for thinking about critical art practice. Through close reading of transhistorical examples, I consider photomontage practice specifically as a language of the political imaginary. The montage image, composed from the fragments of other images, favours heterogeneity over hegemony, and as such, is ineradicably tied to challenging dominant discourse. Working from Austin’s original classes of speech acts, published as *How to do Things with Words* (1962), I propose new terms for performative strategies under the umbrella of political art: to enjoin in refusal; to consider another vantage point; to bring into consciousness through productive looking; to participate as a collective community; to make space for; and to force recognition through citation. This approach considers the intersection of artists, art institutions, curators and beholders as critical partners in the utterance, staging and reception of the visual speech act.

### VENI GRANT FOR SIMON FERDINAND

#### *Imagining Earth Otherwise*

Although Earth is now predominantly represented as a geometrical globe, historically it has been depicted in much more diverse ways. This project uses an innovative GeoHumanities approach to show how past representations of Earth from different cultures provide alternative ways of tackling global environmental change today.

### VENI GRANT FOR EVA MEIJER

#### *The politics of (not) eating animals*

In this research project I examine deliberative practices surrounding the eating of animals. I examine three case studies in order to analyse the relation between language and power and to investigate possibilities for making democratic debate more inclusive.

### EARLY CAREER GRANT MELÉ YAMOMO

Assistant Professor of Theatre, Performance, and Sound Studies, University of Amsterdam

As a specialist in Sound Studies and colonial music history in Southeast Asia, Yamomo has developed his own refreshing and interdisciplinary line of research in a short span of time. For example, he has used the very first sound recordings from Southeast Asia to analyse colonisation, decolonisation and globalisation in that region. Yamomo's research is recognised both in the Netherlands and internationally. His own compositions can be heard on podcasts and in the electronic music project *Echoing Europa – Postcolonial Reverberations* in Berlin.

### 2020 JARMAN AWARD

Michelle Gamaker was one of the six shortlisted artists for the 2020 Jarman Award. ASCA researcher Catherine Lord stars as a large man and a nun in two films in Gamaker's trilogy. In 2020 the Film London Jarman Award was split between all six shortlisted artists, a first in the Award's history.

The decision to split the prize money was a collaborative decision between the six shortlisted artists, Film London and the Jury for the 2020 Jarman Award. It reflects the solidarity of the artistic and creative community in the face of the challenging economic conditions resulting from the global COVID-19 pandemic.

<https://filmlondon.org.uk/profile/michelle-williams-gamaker>

### NEW POSTDOC: ALEKSANDRA PILETIĆ

Aleksandra is joining ASCA as a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Platform Labor project (starting 1 January 2021). She completed her PhD (cum laude) at the Institute of Social Studies of Erasmus University Rotterdam. Her doctoral research investigated patterns and divergences of neoliberal restructuring in urban contexts, focusing in particular on New York City,

Johannesburg and Stockholm. She has also conducted research on authoritarian neoliberalism in the Balkans. Her postdoctoral project is concerned with studying the dynamic, mutually constitutive relationship between digital platforms and contemporary forms of neoliberalism. In particular, she is interested in how neoliberal institutional contexts have nurtured different forms of platformization, and how platformization has, in turn, reconstituted the institutional frameworks underpinning neoliberalism.



She also holds a joint MA degree (cum laude) in Public Policy from ISS, Erasmus University Rotterdam and the Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals, as well as a BA (honors) in Philosophy from American University in Washington, DC.

### PEDRAM DIBAZAR IS BACK



Pedram Dibazar is a lecturer at Amsterdam University College, where he coordinates the first-year theme course in the Humanities and teaches interdisciplinary and laboratory courses in the curriculum focusing on urban and digital cultures. Pedram conducted his PhD at ASCA, obtained doctorate in 2016. His research integrates urban studies, cultural studies, media studies, architecture and visual culture. Pedram's current research project is about everyday practices of togetherness, ways of engaging or being with others in physical or digitally mediated situations. Keywords for the project include care, co-presence, corporeality, and visibility. Pedram is the author of *Urban and Visual Culture in Contemporary Iran: Non-visibility and the*

*Politics of Everyday Presence* (Bloomsbury, Jan 2021) and the co-editor of *Visualizing the Street: New Practices of Documenting, Navigating and Imagining the City* (Amsterdam University Press, 2019).

### CRITIQUE OF CRIMINALITY

*"The great criminal, however repellent his ends..."*

Koshka Duff (Nottingham) is the next speaker in the *Critique of Violence Series* organized by Daniel Loick. Thursday, December 3rd, 18.00 h, on Zoom

Koshka Duff is Assistant Professor in Philosophy at the University of Nottingham. She works mainly on social and political philosophy, including feminist philosophy, philosophy of race, critical theory, and the history of political thought. She is the author of the paper "The Criminal is Political" (appeared 2017 in the *Journal of the American Philosophical Association*), arguing that the concept of the criminal is used in liberalism in order to depoliticize and repress dissent, thus reinforcing unjust forms of social power.

Part of the "Critique(s) of Violence" Series: <https://asca.uva.nl/programme/seminars/critiques-of-violence/critiques-of-violence.html>

To receive the zoom link, send an email to [d.loick@uva.nl](mailto:d.loick@uva.nl)

### LA LUTTE CONTINUE

*The Activist Spectator in The Battle of Algiers (Pontecorvo 1966)*

English Department Lecture organized by Emelia Quinn | 3 December 17:00 hrs. | Online

This paper is part of a research and teaching project on European art cinema that explores the place of the animal in the theoretical culture of Cold War Europe, in particular in conceptualisations of the relationship between space and political engagement. Originally presented at a conference on Alain Badiou, it reads Pontecorvo's *The Battle of Algiers* (1966) as a form of cinema in which actions on screen produce an event in the world, and its 'truth'. The paper close-reads a central episode involving a box of white mice, and suggests their role in the production of an activist spectatorship that anticipates the Situationist street politics of May 1968.

Dr. Erica Sheen is a senior lecturer in the Department of English and Related Literature at the University of York (UK). She teaches and researches in the Renaissance and in cinema, especially American and European cinemas in the Cold War. Her book, *Shakespeare and the Institution of Theatre: the Best in this Kind* (2009), is published in Palgrave's Shakespeare Studies series. Edited collections include *Literature, Politics and Law in Renaissance England* (with Lorna Hutson, Palgrave 2004) and *The Cinema of David Lynch* (with Annette Davison, Wallflower 2004). Her next book is titled *Cold War Shakespeare*. She is co-organiser of the Cold War Cultures network, and of the NWO-funded international network Shakespeare in the Making of Europe 2014-16.

### (RE-)CONNECTING POPULAR MUSIC STUDIES IN TIMES OF CRISES

Online IASPM PopTalk Wednesday 9 December 2020 from 17:00–19:00. Registration via Oliver Seibt, [F.O.Seibt@uva.nl](mailto:F.O.Seibt@uva.nl), <https://www.iaspmbenelux.org/news-3/iaspm-benelux-presents-pop-talks>

In May of this year, IASPM Benelux should have held its international conference in Antwerp (Belgium). For well-known reasons this was postponed to October, but also this is not to be. Our conference will happen next year, in October 2021, but we want to stay connected with you! Therefore, IASPM Benelux is launching an online colloquium series we're calling IASPM Pop Talks.

We are pleased to invite you to the first event in the series, "(Re-)Connecting Popular Music Studies in Times of Crises," which will take place online on Wednesday 9 December 2020 from 17:00–19:00. A selection of popular music scholars and representatives from the Benelux region will share reflections on the ways they and their work have been affected, negatively or positively, by the new practices and policies of the pandemic period, the consciousness-raising that has been occurring globally around gender, music/sound in relation to the climate crisis, and populism as a potential threat to democracy. We will reserve a sizable portion of the event for open discussion as well.

We are pleased to announce the (preliminary) program:

- Kristin McGee (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen) – Aestheticizing the Climate Emergency in Music Video
- Marion Wasserbauer (Universiteit Antwerpen) – Flexibility and leitmotifs: Reflections on traveling through academic disciplines, zooming in on LGBTQ-topics, and background music
- Koos Zwaan (Hogeschool Inholland) – *Education in time of crises: Living Labs as a vehicle for designing solutions to wicked problems, but where's the music?*
- Britt Swartjes (Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam) – *Uncertain festival futures: How festival organizers navigate loss in times of crisis*
- Berend Schans (VNPF) – *Covid-19 impact on Dutch venues and festivals*
- Sydney Schelvis (Universiteit van Amsterdam) – *Club Corona: Reimagining and romanticising club culture when there is none*
- Melanie Schiller (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen) & Mario Dunkel (Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg) – *Crisis as obstacle and opportunity: Popular music and populism in Europe during the Covid-19 pandemic*

Please notify us of your attendance before 4 December 2020 via Oliver Seibt ([F.O.Seibt@uva.nl](mailto:F.O.Seibt@uva.nl)). Upon registration, you will receive the Zoom link (ID and password).

## **PUBLIC SPHERES: IN THEORY AND IN BELARUS**

*Webinar in the framework of the series New Histories of Public Spheres and Public Actions | Wed 09 Dec 2020 17.00 - 19.00 - Via Zoom | Registration: fabrizio.borchi@eui.eu*

This work-in-progress talk proposes a move from linear private/public distinctions to a new three-dimensional model of public spheres. Drawing on the sociology of regimes of engagement, it suggests that we can gain a richer understanding of the public by paying attention to multiple pathways that lead from the personal to the collective, each with its own implicit understanding of what it means to be an individual and what is involved in coordinating actions with others. This approach is then illustrated with observations about the ongoing Belarusian protests, discussing the choreography of demonstrations, the role of Telegram and Viber groups, flag-making practices, and courtyard communities.

Mischa Gabowitsch is a historian and sociologist based at the Einstein Forum in Potsdam, Germany. He holds a BA and MA from Oxford and a PhD from the School of Advanced Social Studies (EHESS) in Paris, and is an alumnus fellow of the Princeton University Society of Fellows and past editor-in-chief of the Russian journals *NZ* and *Laboratorium: Russian Review of Social Research*. His most recent book publications in English are *Protest in Putin's Russia* (2016) and *Replicating Atonement: Foreign Models in the Commemoration of Atrocities* (2017). He has edited several books in Russian and German on war memory and commemoration in Russia and beyond, the most recent of which came out in November. He is currently working on a history of Soviet war memorials as well as a book on Victory Day celebrations since 1945, and also has various projects related to pragmatic sociology and specifically the sociology of regimes of engagement.

Should you wish to attend the webinar via Zoom, please register by 9 December 2020.

## **PERFORMING MOVING IMAGES**

### *Access, Archives and Affects*

On Friday December 11, from 14:30-16:30, the Moving Images: Preservation, Curation, Exhibition research group will host Senta Siewert (guest researcher at the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis).

She will present her research project and her recently released book *Performing Moving Images: Access, Archives and Affects* (published by Amsterdam University Press and Eye Filmmuseum within the "Framing Film" series). During the presentation, Simona Monizza (Experimental Film Curator at Eye Filmmuseum) will join Senta for a discussion on their collaboration since the beginning of the research project. After the presentation there will be a programme of experimental films.

Due to corona and travel restrictions, we will host a hybrid presentation. While Senta will present online, Simona will be present in the cinema where the film screening will take place too: Cinema 4 at Eye Filmmuseum (IJpromenade 1). There is currently a

capacity of 21 seats. Both parts will also be streamed via Zoom.

Please RSVP to EyeAcademic@eyefilm.nl and indicate if you intend to follow the meeting from home or in Eye. Once we know who will follow from home, we will share a Zoom-link for that. Registrations are on a first-come, first-served basis so register early (and in case you cannot make it in the end, please let us know so we can give your seat to someone else). Before the meeting, please check Eye's Corona measures here: <https://cloud-academic.eyefilm.nl/s/NDKBxW4aPLK7MJW>

## **URBAN MOVIES: AMERICAVILLE**

*Livecast 11 December | 18:30 – 19:30 | Pakhuis de Zwijger. Online docu (freely available online for 3 days starting December 9th) + after talk co-organized by Esther Peeren in collaboration with ASCA.*

Hidden among the mountains north of Beijing, a Wild West-themed gated community promises to deliver the American dream to its several thousand Chinese residents. In *Americaville*, Annie Liu escapes China's increasingly uninhabitable capital city to pursue happiness, freedom, romance, and spiritual fulfillment in the town; only to find the American idyll harder to attain than what was promised to her. At the Livecast we will talk about the documentary with a.o. director Adam Smith James.

## **DUTCH CRITICAL RACE THEORY & PRACTICE**

*ASCA Critical Race Theory Seminar organized and chaired by Praveen Sewgobind | 15 December 2020 | 14:00-17:00 hrs. | Online*

Having traveled across the globe and through its racial spatio-temporal configurations, we will for the final session focus on that tiny country along the North Sea, where Dutch innocence remains to be paired with what many feel is the annual reenactment of slavery.

Much, however, has changed since Philomena Essed published her groundbreaking book on everyday racism in the Netherlands, three decades ago. A new generation of woke and outspoken people of colour and white people have begun to raise their voices and demand changes to what is seen as enduring structural racism. During this session we will discuss how race and racism functions in our lives as we lead them here, at this university, in this city, and in this particular country. The host would finally like to remind all participants that this series was merely an attempt to continually reassess our own criticality towards ourselves and among others. Critical race theory, in other words, is not merely a discipline, but a life-long practice of transformative change.

Readings:

Gloria Wekker. *White Innocence: Paradoxes on Colonialism and Race*. Duke University Press (2016) > Pages 1-80.

Audiovisuality :

Aamer Rahman (Fear of a Brown Planet) - Reverse Racism

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dw\\_mRaIHb-M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dw_mRaIHb-M)

Further reading:

Isabel Hoving & Philomena Essed (Editors). *Dutch Racism*. Editions Rodopi B.V. (2014)

### ASCA THEORY SEMINAR: URGENT MATTERS

*Session on Critical Race Theory organized and chaired by Tamara Browne, Nadica Denic, Rebecca Robinson, Praveen Sewgobind. 17 December 2020, 4-6 pm.*

The organizers will discuss sections from Gloria Wekker's *White Innocence* and Saidiya Hartman's *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*, and show how these texts relate to their own projects.

### UNHINGING THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK:

*Platform for the Study of Transnational Life Writing Fifth Annual Symposium | Friday 4 December 2020 9.00 – 17.00 | Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam Main Building 5A00 + online via Zoom Webinar. Free of charge, but please register before 1 December. <https://clue.vu.nl/en/newsagenda/news-archive/2020/okt-dec/201204-unhinging.aspx>*

Speakers and abstracts (in order of appearance)

**Anna Poletti**, Associate Professor Comparative Literature, Utrecht University

Autobiography, mediation and transnationalism: Behrouz Boochani's *No Friend But the Mountains*

Behrouz Boochani's award-winning *No Friend But the Mountains: Writing from Manus Prison* is a hybrid work of life writing, composed on illicit mobile phones and secretly transmitted to a team of translators and supporters via WhatsApp. Documenting and theorizing the violence of Australia's indefinite mandatory detention in camps on remote Pacific nations of people seeking asylum, *No Friend But the Mountains* is a uniquely transnational intellectual and aesthetic project. Its composition was enabled by digitally networked technologies that were able to evade the blanket of censorship imposed on Australia's offshore detention centres by Government policies that limited access to the prisons by journalists, human rights organizations, and international monitors. The book's title—a Kurdish saying that refers to the powerful connection between the Kurdish people and the mountains of their homelands—signals that the writing and thinking of the book is imbedded in and enabled by Boochani's identity as a Kurdish journalist forced to flee Iran. At the same time, *No Friend But the Mountains* is a work of theory and life writing that is profoundly transnational; it responds to and seeks to understand the logics of the nation state, citizenship and border policing as techniques of power that produce new forms of violence which transcend national boundaries and jurisdictions, creating complex networks of implication, responsibility, and hierarchies. Drawing on my arguments about autobiography and mediation in my recent book (*Stories of the Self* (NYU Press, 2020)), a forthcoming collection of essays I commissioned on *No Friend But the Mountains for Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly*, and my experience teaching the book in an international

classroom in the Netherlands, I will examine *No Friend But the Mountains* as a work that exemplifies the role of media technologies in the act of living—and the emergence of—transnational life.

**Vera Alexander**, Senior Lecturer in European Cultures and Literatures, Groningen University

Figures of Mobility and the Crisis of Connection

In this presentation I locate life stories of mobility in an ongoing crisis of connection and connectivity. I read figures of mobility such as the visitor, the tourist and the refugee as ambivalent signifiers of place and belonging that problematise any simple dichotomy of Self versus Other and Here versus There. Making reference to contemporary poetic travel writings by Warsan Shire and Kapka Kassabova as well as photography and other media, I argue that the relational nature of life narratives needs to be considered not only in binary terms of social connections between human beings, but as a triad that embraces the precarious relationship that connects human beings to place as well as notions of time and duration. Place relations are subject to utopian idealisation and polarised affective projections as they are constitutive of identity construction. Since these are subject to constant change and reconfiguration, the notion of mobility and its obverse, stagnation, need to be reconceptualised as fundamental dynamic aspects of belonging.

**Giles Scott-Smith**, Professor of Diplomatic History, Leiden University

Between Colonial and Post-Colonial? Ivan Kats and the Perils of Cultural Diplomacy in Cold War Indonesia

Is it possible to overcome colonial legacies if you promote post-independence cultural autonomy? Ivan Kats was a Flemish/American cultural entrepreneur who developed a profound interest in Indonesia and the development of its national cultural identity. From the 1960s to the 1990s he pursued a book publishing project through his Obor Foundation, that looked to bridge the ethical gap between the resources of Western cultural imperialism and the poverty of the post-colonial culture industry. This presentation places Kats as a 'double personage' (Bourdieu) between different worlds, to explore both his projects and motivations.

**Gloria Wekker**, Professor Emerita, Gender and Ethnicity, Utrecht University

Families navigating Empire

In my presentation I will present excerpts from recent, autobiographical work, which emphatically is work - in - progress. These excerpts will eventually become part of a mixed genre work, based on historical and anthropological knowledge, on non-fiction and fiction. This type of work is currently understood under several different headings, among which "critical fabulation" is prominent. It is a term used by Saidiya Hartman, signifying a writing methodology that combines historical and archival research with critical theory and fictional narrative. Central in my presentation will be different migrations within my multi-ethnic

Surinamese family, which encompasses enslaved people, Jewish plantation owners, Native Surinamese. I will talk about transnational, geographical migrations but also about migrations of the heart, where individuals overstepped ethnic boundaries which had long been understood as foundational to empire, to plural societies, which needed to be governed as if the boundaries around different ethnic groups were “natural”. Concretely I will read prose and poetry and reflect on the nature of “critical fabulation”.

**Vilan van de Loo**, independent writer and researcher  
Exploring the New Political Correct: Colonial Violence in Aceh

Central in my presentation is the possibility of creating a transnational understanding of heroism. To answer this question I will focus on the military Aceh expedition of 1904. Nowadays the Dutch East Indies seems to be reduced to a narrative of military violence during the process of decolonisation, although there is an awareness of the tradition of colonial violence as well, especially in Aceh. The framing of both histories of violence is the same: the officers of the KNIL were more or less war criminals, and the Acehnese were helpless victims. This leads to a postcolonial self-image of superiority among the Dutch: 'look how good we are to be able to see how bad we have been'. With the exploration of contemporary sources and with the use of a specific military view, the original framing is now fading. My presentation will focus on a new way of looking at the history of the military Aceh expedition of 1904, commanded by Frits van Daalen (1863-1930). I will place this new approach in the context of the early twentieth century's national need for colonial heroes— from which the Acehnese were excluded. I will also discuss how this related to the making of a civil servant (Van Daalen became governor of Aceh) and take a look at the vulnerable position of Van Daalen. As the highest-ranking Indo-European officer he stood out. What do we see, if we look at the expedition through his eyes, and what does that mean in the way the colonial past is judged? Would it be possible to create a transnational understanding of heroism during this expedition?

**Halleh Ghorashi**, Professor of Diversity and Integration, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

BLM: A transnational movement that changed the Dutch landscape

In this lecture I will discuss how Black Lives Matter, as a transnational movement, has changed the Dutch landscape regarding the existence of institutional racism and cross-racial solidarities. In the last 25 years, I have been engaging with the life experiences of refugee and migrant women (through various forms of narratives methodology). In these studies these women narrate a strong presence of exclusionary mechanisms (both blatant and subtle) within the Dutch context. Yet, until recently, the existing implicit and growing explicit forms of racism in the Dutch public space had not led to a public recognition of the existence of structural forms

of racism in the Netherlands. In an earlier work, I showed the historical and societal reasons behind the denial of racism in the Dutch context despite the fact that racist acts and statements in the public space had gained a strong presence. I argued that this was partly based on the historically rooted idea of the superiority of Dutch culture in the Dutch migration discourse (which Wekker conceptualized as cultural archive) and its link to the categorical framing of migrants as ‘a problem’ in Dutch society. This history together with a positive self-image of the Dutch as progressive had made it almost impossible for people to accept the notion that racism was part of the Dutch self-image. But something shifted with the arrival of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in the Netherlands. I argue that Dutch society can take advantage of this momentum to transform its non-reflective progressive image into critical self-reflection and actions aimed at the inclusion of diverse groups by addressing institutional racism beyond “good intentions”.

#### ART BASED LEARNING DIALOGUES

*Online, 14 December 2020, 5 pm.*

We claim that art shall change the world. What role do artist-educators have in this process? How does ABL contribute to creating creative interventions to build futures worth living in and worlds worth fighting for? Drawing from the sessions in the masterclass, we invite Mieke Bal, Fabilola Camuti, and Jeroen Lutters, to reflect on the need for creativity in the 21st Century and the key challenges that we must overcome to unleash the creative turn.

#### CULTURAL PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY

On Thursday 21st and Friday 22nd of January 2021, the Humanities Faculty of the Open University of the Netherlands in collaboration with the Huizinga Institute, the Netherlands Research School for Cultural History, organizes the international conference 'Cultural perceptions of safety. Reflecting on modern and pre-modern feelings of safety in literature, philosophy, art and history'.

This two-day conference will bring together scholars from eight different countries and various humanities disciplines to pursue fluctuations in conceptualizations, expressions and feelings of safety over time as well as in cultures of surveillance and safety practices. Speakers will address a variety of topics, ranging from narratives and visual discourses of (un)safety, to representations and imaginations of places and spaces of safety and regulations to ensure safety.

You can now register for the online conference. The conference is open to scholars, PhD's and research master students from all humanities disciplines and those from other disciplines that are interested in the study of cultural perceptions of safety. You can register for the complete conference program or certain timeslots via the website. For registration and the full conference program go to the

<https://www.ou.nl/en/web/cultural-perceptions-of-safety>.

Confirmed keynote speakers

Prof. dr. Nils Büttner

Nils Büttner is a professor ordinarius of Art History at the State Academy of Arts Stuttgart and member of the Centrum Rubenianum vzw. He specialises in the visual culture of Germany and the Netherlands from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries. He has published monographs on Hieronymus Bosch, Pieter Bruegel, Rubens, Rembrandt and Vermeer, as well as a History of landscape painting and books on the history of drawings and prints. He has also written numerous catalogue essays and has served as a curator for several museum exhibitions.

Prof. dr. Eddo Evink

Eddo Evink is Professor in Philosophy at the Open University in the Netherlands and Assistant Professor in History of Modern Philosophy at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Groningen, the Netherlands. His main areas of research contain phenomenology, hermeneutics, metaphysics, philosophy of the humanities and philosophy of art. He recently published *Transcendence and Inscription. Jacques Derrida on Metaphysics, Ethics and Religion*, Nordhausen: Traugott Bautz, 2019.

Prof. dr. Beatrice de Graaf

Beatrice de Graaf is professor of History of International Relations and Global Governance at the University of Utrecht. Her research focuses on how states and societies try to maintain high levels of security and how these attempts relate to core values and institutions (democracy, freedom, rule of law, constitutional and responsible government). She studies the emergence of and threats to such security arrangements from the 19th century until the present, including in times where both the effectiveness and the legitimacy of these arrangements were at risk. She currently leads the "Securing Europe" (SECURE) project, funded by an ERC Consolidator Grant. Beatrice is a member of The Netherlands Academy of Sciences (KNAW) and is a fellow in the ISIS Files project/Program on Extremism at the George Washington University.

Dr. Debra Benita Shaw

Debra Benita Shaw is a Reader in Cultural Theory at the University of East London where she teaches Architecture and Photography. She is a critical posthumanist concerned with issues of gender, social structures and the politics of space and has published widely in the fields of cultural and urban theory, science and technology studies and science fiction criticism. She is the author of *Women, Science and Fiction* (2000), *Technoculture: The Key Concepts* (2008), *Posthuman Urbanism: Mapping Bodies in Contemporary City Space* (2018) and is the co-editor of *Radical Space: Exploring Politics and Practice* (2016). She is a founding member of the Centre for Cultural Studies Research at UEL and principal editor of the *Radical Cultural Studies* book series for Rowman & Littlefield International

## SPELLBOUND: MAGIC AND SPIRITUAL RITUALS

*Call for papers: Kunstlicht vol. 42 no. 1-2 | Deadline for proposals: December 15, 2020*

There is no doubt that the magical\*, as well as the spiritual, is a point of perennial interest in pop-culture. Currently it has returned in a neoliberal disguise urging the purchase of crystals, essential oils, and the burning of Palo Santo, promising a balanced state of mind. The consumerist frenzy surrounding such objects often disregards the labour conditions under which these objects are produced, as well as the ecological devastation their manufacturing or extraction brings about. This new-age spiritualism mixes a variety of practices from far-reaching geo-zones often as an aesthetic addition to Western life. Moreover, in its focus on consumerism, it seems to be the twenty-first century version of indulgence. Such an indulgence, promising protection from suffering in purgatory, was usually granted by the Catholic Church in exchange for good deeds or the recital of prayers. However, in the late Middle Ages, the Catholic Church monetized this exchange, earning the church a fortune. This practice – although outlawed in 1567 – remains present in the current hype encouraging us all to 'indulge' in a plethora of spiritual objects. In return for an investment of capital, the myriad benefits of such objects can be ours.

This critique draws on critical academia of colonialism, capitalism, ecology and gender studies. As much as the current interest emphasises the continued manifestation of these systems of hierarchy, exploitation and control, these spiritual and magical practices can also be weaponised. Recently, in academia there has been a focus on European witches and Indigenous practices to draw up histories of violence and carve out space for future ecologically aware practices. Such academic practices propose 'the magical' (or spiritual, religious, esoteric) to be a fundamental threat to the logic of colonialism, capitalism, ecocides, and gender constructs, and attempt to enchant a disenchanted world. The magical, in essence, also describes the unexplainable, the undefinable, that might arise out of thin air as slight promise of change.

In the twenty-first century, we have witnessed a steady increase in interest in magic within contemporary art practices around the world. Through the performance *Drift* (2020), Jennifer Tee proposes new rituals to discuss the intersectional relationship between the climate crisis and its impact on marginalized communities. Using performed poetry and movement, she mimics the ecological processes of recycling and looping. Another artist that comes to mind is L, whose practice revolves around making 'spells'. They fill glass bottles with mineral oil and objects such as light bulbs, flower petals, plastic dinosaur toys that either sink or float, as in the work *Spell for Divine Presence* (2019). Additionally, the artist Tabitha Rezaire incorporates teaching on auras, the power of intuition, and tarot readings into her

installation *Satellite Devotion* (2019). Artists uncover and highlight ancestral knowledges and suggest new rituals for a dying Earth. While on one hand, the surge of spiritualism can be interpreted as cruel appropriation, on the other, artists make room for the magical and the spiritual to counter colonial-scientific knowledges, and to build bridges to the nonhuman.

This issue of *Kunstlicht* begins with the observation that practitioners of ‘magic’ in the widest interpretation of the word, adhere to rules, rituals, spells, recipes, or instructions. Written down, carefully translated, or transferred orally, these rituals tie magic to cyclical behaviours, bound in tradition. Whereas magic is often viewed as an invisible power, it often requires physical tools. Hence, object and performance, tool and ritual, parallel one another tying the spiritual and the magical to art. At this intersection, this Call for Papers raises the question of which rituals we need now.

To elaborate, we welcome writing on contemporary magical engagements, whether that be artistic practices that spark new magic rituals, essays which expound why our contemporary society is in need of some magic, or articles that critique this current within art history itself. Do you want to question how fleeting magic can provide meaning and certainty, or how the format of rituals and spells can create pathways for change? Perhaps you are interested in the enchanted objects used in contemporary rituals, or critical of their commodification and provenance. What does it mean to write a spell, cast a spell, or make a tool for the practice of magic?

Proposals (200-300 words) with attached résumés can be submitted until December 15th 2020 via [redactie@tijdschriftkunstlicht.nl](mailto:redactie@tijdschriftkunstlicht.nl). Selected authors will be invited to write a 2000–3,000-word paper (excluding footnotes).

Authors and artists who publish in *Kunstlicht* will receive three complimentary copies. Unfortunately, *Kunstlicht* is not able to provide an author’s honorarium. Two articles will be selected to be available online. Two years following publication, papers will be submitted to the freely accessible online archive. The editorial board reserves the right to decline contributions.

*Kunstlicht* is a volunteer-run academic journal for visual art, visual culture, and architecture, founded in 1980. It is affiliated with the Arts & Culture department of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, but operates from an independent foundation. *Kunstlicht* is published three times a year, and features both scholarly and artistic contributions.

### **LNVH DISTINGUISHED WOMEN SCIENTISTS FUND**

We are pleased to announce that this year as well, women scientists can benefit from the LNVH Distinguished Women Scientists Fund. This travel grant is intended for female postdocs, up to 3 years after obtaining a PhD and residing and working in the Netherlands, who would like to travel abroad within the framework of their research. Curious about previous laureates? Do check our website <https://www.lnvh.nl/dws-fund>

These are different times because of Covid-19, in which travelling abroad for research is not self-evident. Because of the current travel restrictions and changing conditions, there will be room for the laureates to plan their trip (in consultation with the LNVH) at a later moment. In the (adjusted) attachments you will find the terms and conditions, as well as an application form for this year’s call. Six laureates will be selected. Applications can be submitted until December 17th, via [info@lnvh.nl](mailto:info@lnvh.nl). We kindly ask you to spread this message amongst colleagues and others who might be interested.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us by phone at 030 600 1360 or via [info@lnvh.nl](mailto:info@lnvh.nl).